

THE LOCALIZED HISTORY PROJECT

@AAARI-CUNY

Scope and Sequence: *Civil Rights Organizing*



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The Localized History Project, housed at the Asian American/Asian Research Institute@CUNY, is a youth led and community driven participatory history collective working to uplift working class, solidarity-oriented, and peoples' history of Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian New Yorkers. We are funded via City Council's Educational Equity Action Plan to help produce New York City's first ever Asian American Studies program!

Within our digital archive, we published exhibits researched, created, and written by New York City youth researchers ages 16-22. These exhibits cover the histories of New York City's specific and emergent Asian American history. We uplift intersectional communities, including the Chinese Latino diaspora, and the Indo-Caribbean diasporas of NYC. See our exhibits at www.localizedhistoryproject.org, and follow us @LocalizedHistory!

LOCALIZED HISTORY PROJECT TEAM

Shreya Sunderram (Director and Founder)

Shreya is the founder and director of the Localized History Project, and a former NYC high school history teacher of six years. She founded LHP in response to her experiences in the history classroom and to create a space for teachers and youth to produce more just, anti-colonial curricula. In addition to LHP, Shreya is a PhD Candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center; her dissertation traces South Asian Diasporic counter-schooling movements in the US and UK. Outside of LHP, Shreya loves reading fantasy and sci-fi books, and dog-watching in Prospect Park.

Ravi Vora and Clarissa Kunizaki (Co-Youth Directors)

Ravi is a high school senior and has been a member of LHP for over a year. He enjoys collaborating with fellow researchers and learning about AAPI political movements. As Youth Co-Director of Policy Research & Advocacy, he looks forward to working alongside policymakers and teachers to ensure that the archival projects are taught effectively and critically. **Clarissa** is a high school senior and has been part of LHP since its inception. She enjoys researching local histories centering AAPI diasporic identity and cross racial solidarity. As Youth Co-Director of Community and Historical Research, she hopes to foster joy and exploration with fellow youth and community members to uncover radical histories.

Ana Serna (Assistant Director, Community Organizing)

Ana is LHP's Assistant Director of Community Organizing. Ana is a former labor organizer and grassroots archivist in Jackson Heights and East Elmhurst. Her scholarly and community work focuses on domestic worker organizing, transnational solidarity movements, and activist storytelling in the Filipino diaspora of NYC.

Eva Schmidt (Assistant Director, Youth Programming)

Eva is LHP's Assistant Director of Youth Programming. Entering her third year with the project, she is excited to continue to find ways to amplify histories of AANHPI communities and peoples with our youth researchers. Relocated from the Sonoran Desert, she is a CUNY alum and is involved in the dance and theatre community here in NYC!

Josie Naron (Archivist)

Josie is LHP's Archivist. She received her MA from NYU's Archives and Public History program. Her work is interdisciplinary and draws on oral history and public history, often focusing on the intersections of social movements and the arts. Josie is a transplanted Midwesterner who has called Brooklyn home for almost 8 years. In her spare time, she loves watching the Mets (mostly lose), caring for her adopted alley cat, and making zines.



....and most importantly

22 New York City public school student Youth Researchers ages 16-22 from four boroughs, representing South Asian, East Asian, Southeast Asian, Indo-Caribbean, Central Asian, and Pacific Islander identities.

A NOTE FROM THE YOUTH DIRECTORS:

WHY TEACH THIS HISTORY

Hi! Our names are Ravi and Clarissa. We are the Youth Directors of the Localized History Project. The Localized History Project ethos is grounded in a love for inclusivity and community. It centers young people as pedagogues and as agents of transformative change. **We define localized history as histories drawn from archives—both traditional and intimate, family oral histories, and the memories of our neighborhoods, friends, and elders.**

Specifically, by learning histories relevant to students' neighborhoods, families, and identities, we are encouraged to challenge oppressive systems and build equitable ones that better serve us all. Localized history challenges us to be more connected to each other, and encourages us to participate in the world around us.

More than ever, we need to learn localized Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander history. As ethnic studies remains under attack, implementing local Asian-American Pacific Islander studies into New York City classrooms is essential. However, we do not believe in teaching a version of AAPI Studies that pits us against other communities of color, or working class New Yorkers. Thankfully, AAPI History has always been that of labor organizing, solidarity building, and collectivity. Be it the 1998 Taxi Workers' Strike, exchanges between B.R. Ambedkar and W.E.B. Du Bois, the Chinatown Art Brigade, labor of Filipino nurses and Vietnamese nail salon workers, or the musical beats of Richmond Hill's Indo-Caribbean communities, we've continued to make waves of influence locally and within broader global lineages of resilience.

Thus, New York City is a historic site of critical AAPI history, and we want this history taught in our schools. Uplifting these struggles for justice provides all of us models for collective liberation. Moreover, illuminating vibrant contributions of AAPI's combats notions of otherness and omission of marginalized narratives.

The AAPI community has and will continue to be a powerful force in our nation and city. We hope you will join us in honoring our stories by bringing our youth-driven, community led histories to life in your classrooms.

Thank you!

Clarissa and Ravi



Localized History Project Excerpts:

LOCALIZING CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORIES

The exhibits included in this booklet draw from frameworks and standards in US history curriculum, as well as Government and Economics. The topics included particularly deal with immigration and migration, civil rights and labor organizing by Asian American communities, and cross racial solidarity. Each of the exhibits trace national phenomena like migration, but end with a localized history connection. The excerpts provided center the US History, but we encourage a deep dive into the entire exhibit to learn the localized NY connection.

20th Century History

**The Photographic Resistance of Visual
Historian Corky Lee**



**It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers
Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown
Garment Workers' Strike**



**Community Organizing and
Health Access in New York
City's Chinatown in the 1970s**



The Photographic Resistance of Visual Historian Corky Lee

11.10 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE/DOMESTIC ISSUES (1945 – present): Racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities were addressed by individuals, groups, and organizations. Varying political philosophies prompted debates over the role of the federal government in regulating the economy and providing a social safety net. (Standards: 1, 4, 5; Themes: ID, TCC, SOC, GOV, CIV, ECO)

11.11 THE UNITED STATES IN A CHANGING WORLD (1990 – present): The United States' political and economic status in the world has faced external and internal challenges related to international conflicts, economic competition, and globalization. Throughout this time period, the nation has continued to debate and define its role in the world. (Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5; Themes: TCC, GOV, CIV, TECH, EXCH)

12.G2 CIVIL RIGHTS and CIVIL LIBERTIES: The United States Constitution aims to protect individual freedoms and rights that have been extended to more groups of people over time. These rights and freedoms continue to be debated, extended to additional people, and defined through judicial interpretation. In engaging in issues of civic debate, citizens act with an appreciation of differences and are able to participate in constructive dialogue with those who hold different perspectives.



The Photographic Resistance of Visual Historian Corky Lee

By: Amelia Eng

Excerpt from: "Introduction"

Amelia Eng is a senior at Brooklyn Technical High School, and a proud fifth-generation NYC resident! This is her first year as a Youth Researcher for the Localized History Project, and she has been deeply invested in exploring the ways artistic disobedience can be used in community building and documenting the past. As an aspiring artist and a Chinese American, Amelia wants to move towards unearthing her own roots, and learning more about how her story blends into the diverse tapestry of the AANHPI diaspora.

Whether you know it or not, you have likely seen one of Corky Lee's photographs. While he was an iconic fixture of many of New York City's different boroughs, community institutions, and streets, there's perhaps no neighborhood that Corky is more associated with than Chinatown. Corky and his camera seemed to capture everything: the activities of daily life, labor and anti-police protests, student movements, uprisings, celebrations, and all of the moments in between. Looking back at his body of work, it seems almost impossible that he could have been everywhere and covered as much as he did. But because he was, our understanding of history, both local to New York City and spanning across the US, is sharper and more vivid.

This exhibit does not attempt to tell Corky's story in its entirety. There are books, scholars, and testimonials, as well as Corky's own works and words, that we can turn to for that. Instead, it offers an overview of his early years, some of his artistic and political inspirations, and his legacy. As you read through it and take a close look at some of Corky's most memorable photos, we hope it inspires you to go out into your own neighborhood: to talk to your neighbors, to learn their struggles, and to document what it means to live in a community.

Excerpt from: "Growing Up in Queens"

Corky Lee (September 5, 1947–January 27, 2021) was born and raised in Queens. He was born as Young Kwok Lee (李扬国); his nickname, "Corky," was brought about as a result of constant mispronunciations, solidifying awareness of his American-born Chinese identity at a young age.¹ Though most accounts of Corky's artistic and political development begin during his years as an undergraduate at Queens College, his years growing up in Queens likely had a profound impact on the kind of work he would go on to do. His parents' jobs — his father's work as a welder-turned-laundryman, and his mother's sewing work — clearly incubated a love for finding dignity and beauty in working-class trades.



Corky Lee's extended family in front of Lee Laundry in Queens. Corky is in the back row, far right.



A group Asian Americans, including descendants of Chinese railroad workers, recreating an iconic photo on the 145th anniversary of the first Transcontinental Railroad's completion at Promontory Summit, Utah.

Friends of Corky attest that one of his earliest realizations about the connection between the erasure of Chinese-American history and photography, which took place in middle school. As a student in the New York City public school system, at Van Wyck Junior High School in Queens, Corky was taught many uncritical founding myths about America.² He first noticed the omission of Asian stories from mainstream history when he saw a famous textbook picture that illustrated the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Despite the fact that an overwhelming 90% of the laborers who worked on building the railroad were Chinese,³ the photo instead celebrated the white men who drove in the final, purely ceremonial golden stake.³ Corky would do his part in amending this historical inaccuracy in 2014, when he gathered more than a hundred Chinese-Americans, including some direct descendants of railroad workers, at Utah's Promontory Summit. Posing the gathered crowd for a picture, he told them: "We're Chinese Americans. We're Asian Pacific Americans, so let me hear it! We came today to reclaim American history."⁴ In many ways, whether quietly or through a megaphone, Corky proclaimed that ethos for his entire career.

1. "Corky Lee: Unofficial Asian American Photographer Laureate," Lowell Milken Center, November 6, 2023

2. Raymond Douglas Chong, "CORKY LEE – in Pursuit of Photographic Justice," AsAmNews, October 10, 2020

3. Lesley Kennedy, "Building the Transcontinental Railroad: How 20,000 Chinese Immigrants Made It Happen," HISTORY, May 2019

4. Lex Paull, "The Man Behind the Lens: The History and Legacy of Corky Lee," Reporter Magazine, January 30, 2026,

The Photographic Resistance of Visual Historian Corky Lee

By: Amelia Eng

Excerpt from: *“Documenting the Lower East Side”*

In the mid-1970s, New York’s rapidly growing Asian immigrant population faced mounting bigotry, discrimination, and police violence. Some of the events preceding this include the Korean War, which had occurred decades before (1950-1953) and intensified anti-Asian sentiment. This era popularized the narrative of the “Yellow Peril,” a manifestation of xenophobic ideas that Asian individuals would “steal” American jobs and “invade” U.S. civilization.¹ Between the Vietnam War and the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, this time period also came with a rise in dehumanization of the Asian American community. Our archive covers in detail the uprisings and class resistance against war, poverty, and government disinvestment that occurred between the 1960s and 1970s.

Corky Lee’s adolescent years were shaped by the turbulent social and political climate of the long 1960s. What we find remarkable about his work is that he took it upon himself to bring to life both the everyday and the political of New York City’s Asian American communities. For instance, Corky was accepted as a VISTA volunteer in 1969 to aid under-served communities of the Lower East Side through the Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, a social service agency with an office in Chinatown. Through his work as a housing advocate, he came into daily contact with social and political injustices in the Chinese immigrant community and began photographing examples of society’s ills. Here, he observed how affordable housing in Asian enclaves was scarce, and how gentrification pressures from real estate developers were threatening Chinatown’s local community and culture.² Corky turned to his camera to capture the neglected infrastructure and lack of equitable housing in Chinatown by taking “photographs of the deplorable conditions” in the Lower East Side as a community organizer.³ Lee believed that representing such inhumane conditions like overcrowding in a visual format would instill more empathy in viewers, and could lead to stronger conviction that change was necessary.⁴



When we look at Corky’s photographs, we can feel the way in which the everyday is centered and politicized. In other sections of this exhibit, we can see Corky’s documentation of protests, which are explicitly political in nature. But what is striking about his work is how he was able to build bridges between his lens and the audience, demonstrating how the everyday is political. Scenes that were taken for granted as ordinary—Asian elders sitting in a cramped living room, or a child peering out from behind his mother working in a garment factory—became narratives and unique stories through his lens. These stories teach us to question the ordinary and look more intentionally for the context that wrought such conditions.

1. Marie Myung Ok Lee, “The U.S. Military’s Long History of Anti-Asian Dehumanization,” Korean Quarterly April 18, 2021

2. CAAAV, “Chinatown’s Housing Evolution,” CAAAV Digital Archive, 2015

3. Neil Genzlinger, “Corky Lee, 73, Photographer Who Chronicled Asian-American Life, Is Dead,” The New York Times, January 29, 2021

4. “The History-Making Legacy of Asian American Photographer Corky Lee,” PBS NewsHour, May 11, 2024

The Photographic Resistance of Visual Historian Corky Lee

By: Amelia Eng

Excerpt from: "Photographing Protest Movements"

In Corky Lee's career as a community photographer, he documented many pivotal moments in social movement organizing in Asian American history. Two such moments were the 1975 and 1982 mass mobilizations against anti-Asian violence in New York City and Detroit, respectively following the beating of Peter Yew and the murder of Vincent Chin. Emerging from a national political milieu of intensified anti-Asian sentiment following the US's defeat in the Vietnam War,¹ Corky Lee's photography of these movements and the everyday people they mobilized is a testament to the collective organizing and resilience of the Asian American communities of NYC and beyond.



Peter Yew

On April 26, 1975, growing racial tensions in Chinatown came to a head with the police brutalization of Peter Yew.² Yew – a 27-year-old engineering student – had attempted to intervene as police officers beat a 15-year-old on Bayard Street involved in a minor traffic dispute. He was then assaulted by the police, dragged to the 5th Precinct, stripped, and assaulted a second time.³ Asian American communities nationwide mobilized quickly after Yew was jailed on unclear charges without any due process, sparking the beginning of a mass movement against police brutality in Chinatown.⁴

In a protest at City Hall in response to this injustice, Corky Lee captured a moment when one protester had been attacked by police officers, his face streaked with blood. Lee's photograph landed on the front page of the New York Post, igniting conversations across Chinatown that bridged generations and backgrounds, and cementing Lee's legacy as the movement's unofficial visual historian. From that point on, he would continue to submit pictures to further his photojournalism in publications such as the Downtown Express, the Chinese American Times, Unity & Struggle, and East Wind.⁵ Corky's photography worked to both preserve a historical record of the protest and also escalate local and national outrage over the beating of Peter Yew. Ultimately, authorities were pressured by the public to drop all charges against Yew, marking a turning point in the fight for Asian American civil rights.



1. Karen Ishizuka, "Looking Like the Enemy: Political Identity & the Vietnam War," Pacific Council on International Policy, May 7, 2019.

2. "Who Was Peter Yew?" AAPI History Museum, n.d.

3. Teaching People's History, "May 19, 1975: Peter Yew/Police Brutality Protests," Zinn Education Project, n.d.

4. Leslie Maitland, "2,500 Chinese Protest Alleged Police Beating Here," The New York Times, May 13, 1975

5. Getting Together Publications, Inc., "East Wind Spring-Summer 1982 Front Cover," Museum of Chinese in America, 1982

The Photographic Resistance of Visual Historian Corky Lee

By: Amelia Eng

Excerpt from: "Corky Lee and Education"

Corky Lee's camera preserved some of the most iconic images of a Chinatown alive with activism: demonstrations against the Vietnam War, police brutality, exploitative employers, predatory landlords, and more. Through his camera's lens, he affirmed the neighborhood's pivotal role in Asian-American social justice history.

As both a former New York City public school student and a concerned community member, Corky often documented student protests and youth activism, especially around issues of education. In 1971, students and a teacher from Junior High School 65 gathered at Chatham Square to demand bilingual instruction—a landmark moment in Chinatown's push for equitable education. Nearly three decades later, that vision took a major leap forward when Shuang Wen Academy opened in 1998, becoming one of the nation's first public Mandarin-English dual-language schools and a model for bilingual learning across the United States.¹



Excerpt from: "Conclusion: Corky Lee's Legacy"

In more recent years, Corky's photography gained more mainstream acclaim, but those who knew him knew his legacy years before that. Corky worked tirelessly to create a visual history of social movements well into the 2000s. He was there at a candlelight vigil held in Central Park after 9/11, documenting the surge of xenophobia against Sikhs. And when there was a Women's March against the presidency of Donald Trump in 2017, Lee was right in the middle. His presence was loved, admired, and respected by countless individuals in Chinatown and beyond: not just for the artistry of his photographs, but for his dedication to community.

Even as the pandemic raged in New York in 2020 and 2021, Corky was still in the streets — masked, but with his camera in hand. He spent these years photographing anti-Asian hate protests, a cause he had documented for years but that had gained renewed visibility in pandemic times. After likely contracting COVID-19 while covering a Guardian Angels action against anti-Asian hate crimes, Corky passed away in 2021 from complications from the virus. As I sat down to read about Corky for this exhibit, something that struck me was the care with which he was remembered after his passing by so many different people in his orbit. Jennifer Takaki, the director and producer of the documentary, *Photographic Justice: The Corky Lee Story*, reflected on her friend by saying, "Everybody felt special to Corky. He united people and made them proud of who they were. It's very rare to meet someone who seems to have all the time in the world for everyone. Corky was there for everyone."¹ Production designer Wing Lee, a friend of Corky's since their days organizing in Chinatown in the 1970s, also noted, "He was more than a photographer. He was a history maker."²



1. Corky Lee and Mae Ngai, "Corky Lee's Chinatown," excerpted from *Corky Lee's Asian America: Fifty Years of Photographic Justice*, republished on China Books Review, April 18, 2024

2. Katie Gee Salisbury, "A walk through Corky Lee's Chinatown," *PBS American Masters*, July 26, 2024

The Photographic Resistance of Visual Historian Corky Lee

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Excerpt from: **"Conclusion: Corky Lee's Legacy"**

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We leave you with the powerful words of Taiyo Na, a friend and collaborator of Corky's. In his tribute to Corky, "Outlive Us All," Taiyo writes:

"COVID and government neglect killed Corky. He'd been photographing our community for over 50 years. This pandemic shouldn't have stopped him. The Viet Nam War years didn't. NYC going bankrupt didn't. The Reagan years didn't. Those recessions didn't, but the pandemic did. I wanted him to meet my newborn. Even though he wore all the PPE, COVID and government neglect killed him. Racism killed him. The work killed him.

That work where if you knew him you heard it. He told you he came up with the name "Basement Workshop" in the early '70s because they met in the basement in Chinatown. He told you about Grace Lee Boggs howling across the Washington Monument, and he told you about the Kochiyamas testifying at the Redress & Reparations hearings. He told you about the Peter Yew protests, the Vincent Chin demonstrations, the Grain of Sand reunion concerts, the post-9/11 portraits of the Sikh community, the Filipino World War II veterans testifying for benefits, the Promontory Summit 150th anniversary photo. And yet he also took a photo of you while you were on the block, on the train, at your first heritage festival, your first Day of Remembrance, your first rally, your first new year, doing the dance, at the parade, singing the song, at the gallery, by the fire hydrant, through the storefront window, with the children and grandparents. He'd shoot you, get your name down on a notepad, get you a print if he could, and remember your face next time. He never forgot a face. And he'd tell you why you in that shot mattered, why you were worth the time and place," (Na, 2021).

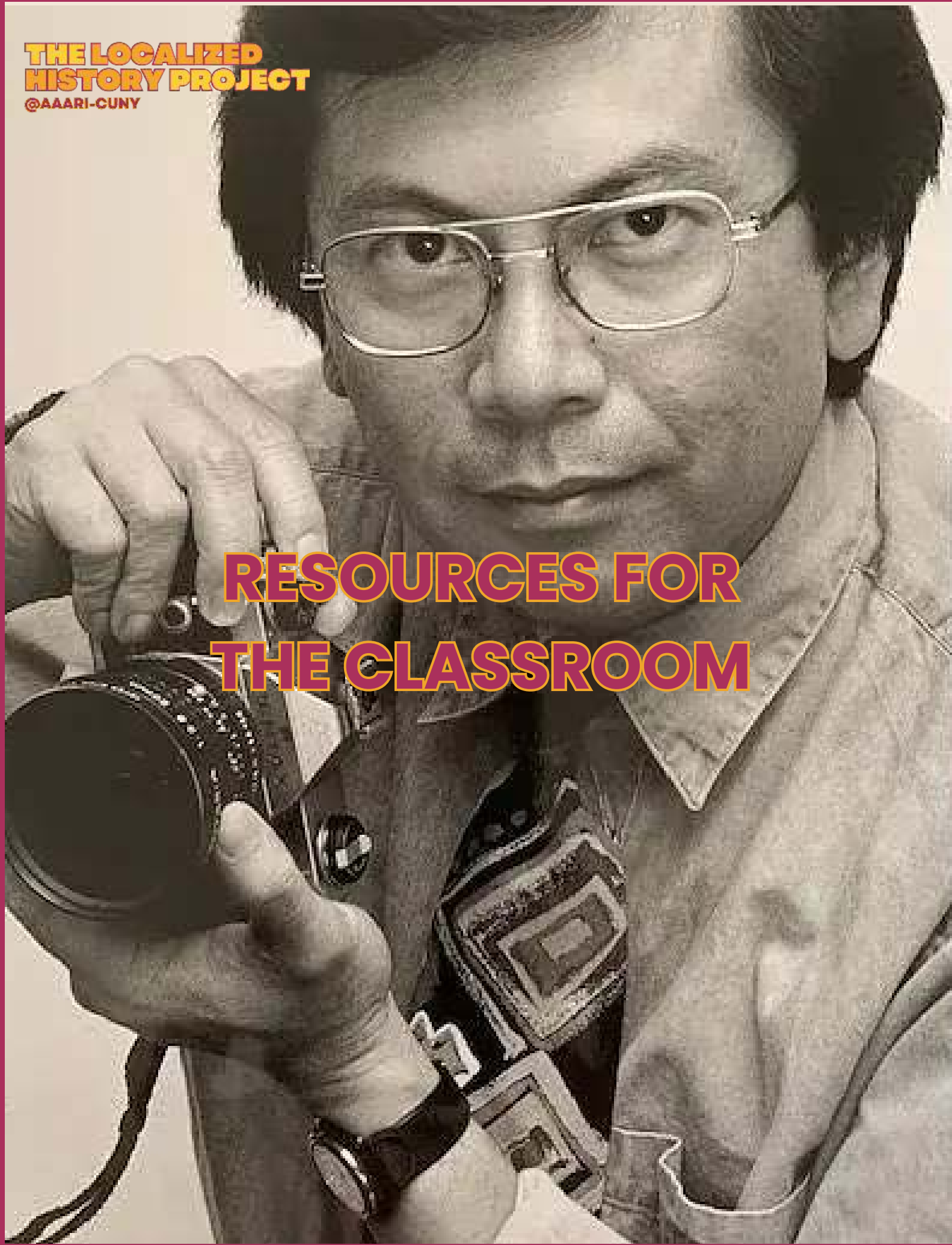
**Read Amelia's Full Historical Exhibit at
<https://localizedhistoryproject.org/exhibits/photographic-resistance-visual-historian-corky-lee>**

1. Taiyo Na, "Outlive Us All: Corky Lee, 1947-2021," UnMargin, 2021

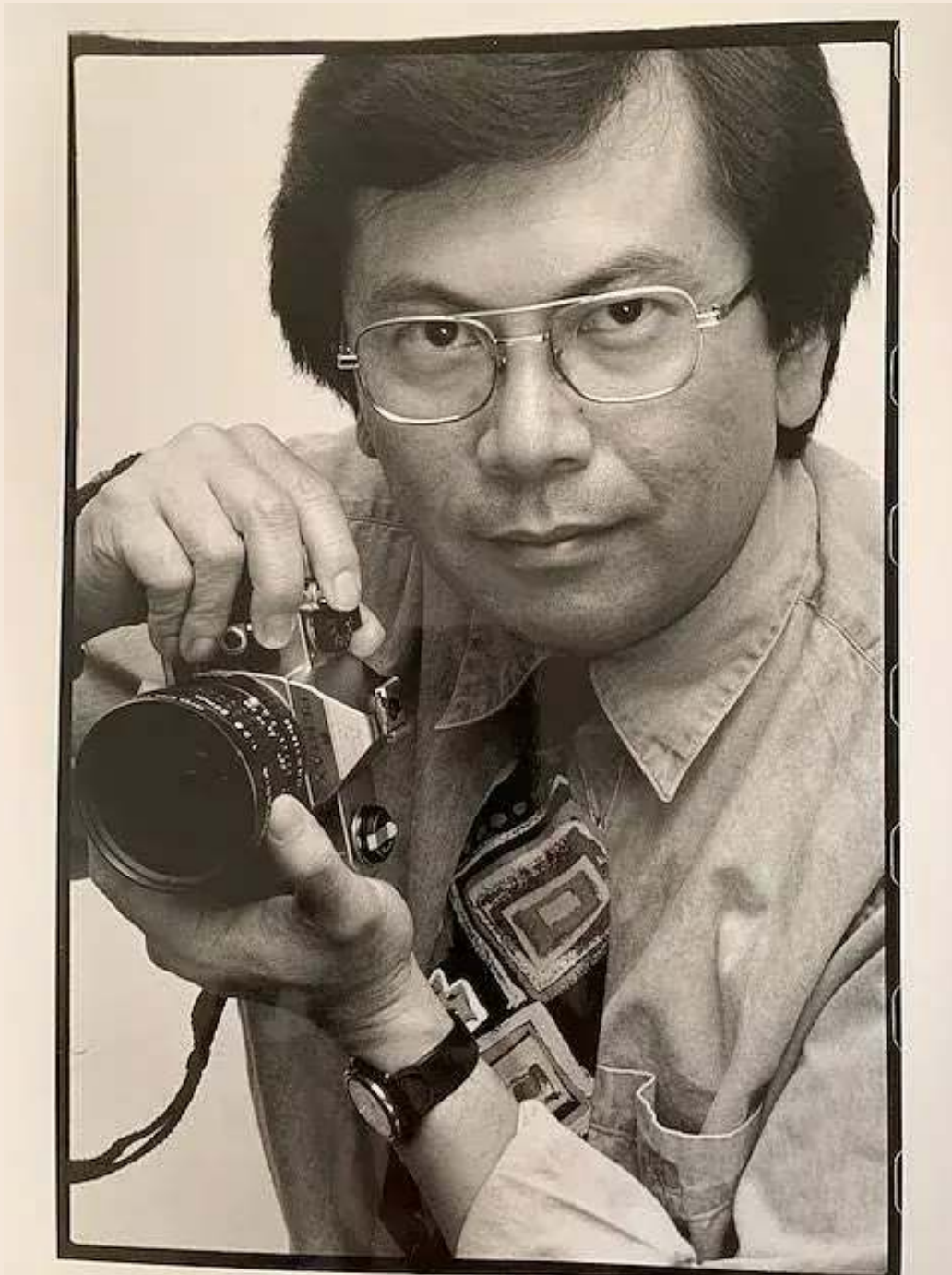
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**RESOURCES FOR
THE CLASSROOM**



primary sources:



A self-portrait of photographer Corky Lee with his film camera.

Photograph by Corky Lee, housed in the Asian American Arts Alliance. Date and rights unknown.

primary sources:



Corky Lee's extended family in front of Lee Laundry in Queens: Corky Lee's father (second from left), his paternal grandmother (seated), his mother (in blue jacket), flanked by her sons John (to her right), Richie (waving), Corky (back row, far right), and Jimmy (to his right). The others are the families of Louie Lee, his father's nephew, and Poy Lore, a childhood friend of his mother. Jamaica, Queens, New York, c. 1962.

Photo courtesy of John J. Lee. Rights status unknown, but usable under Section 107 of the Copyright Act (Fair Use).

primary sources:



A group of Asian Americans, including descendants of Chinese railroad workers, recreating an iconic photo on the 145th anniversary of the first Transcontinental Railroad's completion at Promontory Summit, Utah c. 2014

Photograph taken by Corky Lee, made available by Corky Lee Estate. Rights status unknown.

primary sources:



A photograph of Corky Lee's mother's cousin, and his wife, in their home on Mott St. His mother's cousin was barred from entering the United States via the Chinese Exclusion Act c.1978-1981.

Photograph taken by Corky Lee, made available by Corky Lee Estate and published by Corky Lee's Asian America.

primary sources:



A photograph of a Garment Worker and their child, c. 1976,

Photograph taken by Corky Lee, made available by Corky Lee Estate and published by Corky Lee's Asian America.

primary sources:



A protester bleeds after an altercation with police in New York during the Peter Yew solidarity protests in 1975. The photo was published on the front page of the New York Post that day.

Photograph taken by Corky Lee, made available by Corky Lee Estate and published by New York Empire State Plaza.

primary sources:



20,000 marchers protest the police beating of Peter Yew in New York's Foley Square, c. 1975.

Photograph taken by Corky Lee, made available by Corky Lee Estate and republished by "Corky Lee's Asian America: Fifty Years of Photographic Justice" (2024).

primary sources:



Students and a teacher at Junior High School 65 rally for the need for bilingual education at Chatham Square. Chinatown, NYC. c. 1971

Photograph taken by Corky Lee, made available by Corky Lee Estate and published by New York Empire State Plaza.

primary sources:



Corky Lee with his camera at the Women's March against Donald Trump in Midtown Manhattan, January 2017.

Photograph taken by David "Dee" Delgado, source and rights unknown.

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Taiyo Na, "Outlive Us All: Corky Lee, 1947-2021," UnMargin, 2021, <https://www.unmargin.org/outliveuscorkylee>.

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

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It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "Waves of Chinese Immigration"

Clarissa Kunizaki is a senior in high school and a founding member of the Localized History Project. As the Youth Co-Director of Community and Historical Research, she seeks to foster joy and exploration with peers to uncover radical histories.

In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, was passed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. It provided passage for highly skilled immigrants to come to America, relaxed restrictions on property and business ownership, and abolished the immigration quota system based on country of national origin. Previous racist immigration laws, like the Chinese Exclusion Act, had severely restricted Asian immigration, providing passage for only small numbers of Chinese male laborers.

Though the Chinese Exclusion Act may be the best known, there were other notably xenophobic immigration restrictions written into 19th- and 20th-century law. The Page Act of 1875 effectively banned the immigration of Asian women out of apparent "concern" for them as a vulnerable population, citing issues such as potential human trafficking as justification.¹ Section 3 of the Page Act explicitly bans immigration "for the purposes of prostitution," in addition to granting immigration officials the power to determine if an Asian woman had migrated "for lewd and immoral purposes." This had the twofold effect of making 19th-century Asian immigration a largely male-only option, while also creating a public perception of Asian women as "sexual deviants."² The latter, in particular, has had enduring effects of gendered violence and misogyny, the legacies of which we can still see today.

As such, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was monumental not only for allowing a greater influx of Asian immigration in general, but particularly women, as they were able to come in unprecedented numbers. This shift in gendered demographics would shape the Asian-American labor force and create the conditions possible for new immigrants to grow their families. New York City was a key site for this wave of immigration. Specifically, the Lower East Side's Chinatown was appealing for many Chinese immigrants. Chinatown had been established by 1890, and streets like Mott, Pell, Doyers, Bayard, Mulberry, Elizabeth, and eventually, Bowery and Canal, became key sites of settlement.

With the surge of Chinese immigrants, many Chinese immigrant men in New York City gravitated towards well-established industries, such as the Chinese restaurant business. By 1970, approximately one-third of them were employed in that industry.³ But simultaneously, as the Chinese restaurant business became increasingly competitive, low-paid, and unstable, the garment industry of the 1960s and 1970s was on the rise. Textile manufacturing soon emerged as the new economic engine of Chinatown. Consequently, a majority of newly arrived Chinese immigrant women became part of the garment workforce. The emergence of work within this highly gendered industry clashed with traditional standards of women as occupants of the domestic sphere.

Some questions to consider:

- **What are your favorite parts about your neighborhood?**
- **How has your neighborhood shaped your cultural identity?**
- **Where do you find community within your neighborhood?**



1. Katherine Hajar, "Chinese Women, Immigration, and the First U.S. Exclusion Law: The Page Act of 1875," San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, August 2, 2022

2. Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

3. Xiaolan Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948-92*

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union"

New York City garment factories—and more broadly, garment factories worldwide—have often been sites where gender, class, race, and citizenship collide.¹ To fully understand the labor sphere that Chinese New Yorker immigrant women began entering in the 1960s, it is essential to root their experiences within a broader lineage of immigrant, working-class women's struggle.



Inside the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

On June 3rd, 1900, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (often referred to as the ILGWU) was founded by a coalition of representatives from local textile unions across New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Newark. Most of the union's initial membership were Jewish immigrant women from Eastern Europe, some of whom had been socialists, active unionists, or otherwise politically active in their home countries.² The union rose to be one of the largest and most influential unions in American labor history.

Historically, the ILGWU was a union largely comprised of immigrant women, and it fought for the labor rights of immigrant minority women. The union was committed to serving its core constituency of immigrant, working-class women. While garment work had evolved from its largely Jewish base of the early 1900s, the ILGWU remained committed to serving their (by 1982) majority Chinese and Hispanic membership. Ms. May Ying Chen explains how the ILGWU actively celebrated and created community among their workers:

Historically, the ILGWU was a union largely comprised of immigrant women, and it fought for the labor rights of immigrant minority women. The union was committed to serving its core constituency of immigrant, working-class women. While garment work had evolved from its largely Jewish base of the The ILGWU, was really a union of immigrants, and Local 23-25 had a huge Hispanic population. So, the Hispanic workers, in 1982, their employers had already signed a contract, so they had already gotten the wage increases, work benefits. But they were mobilized to come to the park to support the Chinese workers. And in 1982 and after, there were a lot of programs, cultural exchanges, and activities that brought the two groups of workers together. Whenever we had a party in the Local [23-25], we would have Chinese food, and we would have Spanish food. And there was a lot of that kind of exchange even though they couldn't speak the same language.

Union materials, flyers, so on were translated into different languages so that the immigrants whose first language was not English could understand, read the newsletter, we would put notices in the Chinese newspapers and other Spanish ethnic newspapers and so on. Another thing is that we would lobby in local and federal level for reforms to help immigrants. Actually, the first job I ever had in the ILGWU was in the mid-90's, they were the first, and I guess almost union, to set up a department to actually help immigrants with their papers. So we helped workers apply for citizenship, to sponsor their families, and in some cases to fight raids in the factories when they wanted to deport undocumented workers.

Then after, in 1986, there is what was the last congressional law, that had a legalization program for the undocumented, and we set up a big program to legalize thousands of union members who were undocumented. And so between 1986-1987, and the 1990's, we filed a lot of applications, got people their green card, and really helped a lot of workers of all backgrounds—not just Chinese, but Spanish, and Haitian, and Caribbean: whoever needed it, we would help them."

Historian Xiaolan Bao writes that, although there "is no convincing historical evidence to determine the exact year the ILGWU began organizing Chinese workers in New York's Chinatown," we can trace back these initial organizing efforts to the 1950s.³ Bao spotlights Wing Fong Chin, one of the first Chinese ILGWU members, who believes that these initial steps towards unionization were "met with resistance."⁴ Ms. Chin gave examples of Chinatown employers who would hide garments in factory basements, or compel workers to go home early if union organizers were to visit on a given day during this time.



1. See: Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & A Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*; Daniel Bender, *Sweated Work, Weak Bodies: Anti-Sweatshop Campaigns and Languages of Labor*

2. Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism*

3. Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky*.²

4. *Ibid*, p. 152.

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: *"The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union"*

The Garment Factory

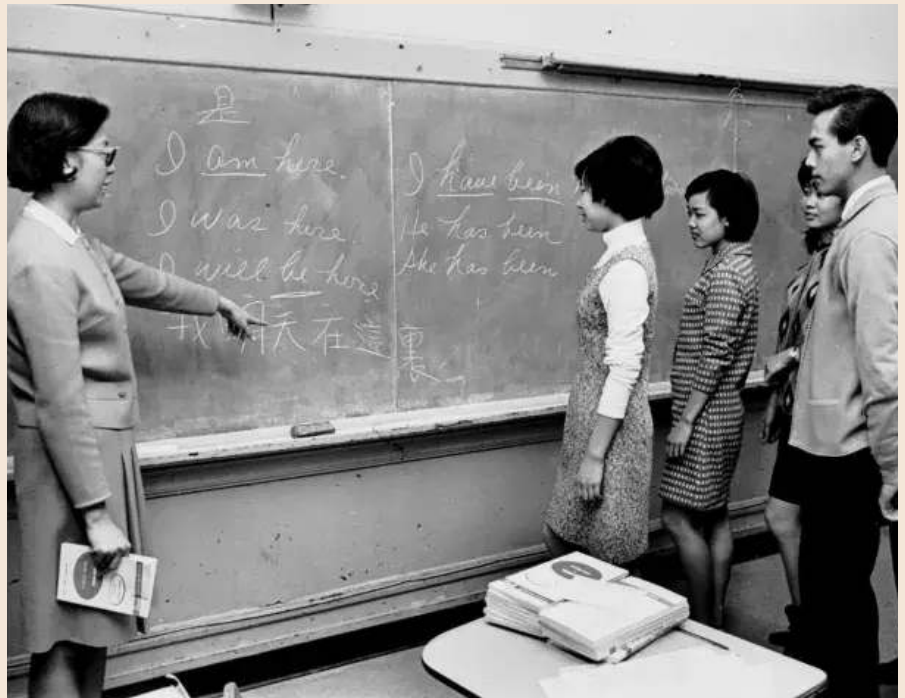
By the late 1970s, four out of ten Chinese families in New York had at least one family member working in the Chinatown garment shops. Approximately 85% of the Chinese adult female population working in the "ethnic economic sector," a term which refers to an immigrant or minority business which exists within a general economy, were garment workers.¹ By the year 1982, there were 500 garment factories employing 20,000 workers. Most of these laborers were immigrant women from the Fujian and Guangdong provinces of China, in addition to Hong Kong and Taiwan. This was a drastic change from the early 1960s, where there were a mere 50 garment factories that employed 2000 workers.² Garment jobs were readily available and were considered stable work for newly immigrated Chinese women, as they were plentiful and did not require English fluency. It is reported that in 1992, considered the peak year of the Chinatown garment industry, Chinese-American garment contractors had opened nearly 600 garment factories, of which nearly 28,000 ethnically Chinese union laborers worked.³

In conversation with River 莹莹 Dandelion, Alice Ip, a former garment worker and labor organizer, shares that, **"We did it for our livelihoods. The garment shops were in such a high demand for workers that they gave us the opportunity to learn. So even if your hands shook and you were scared, you had to do it."**⁴ While not all garment jobs were unionized, those that were held had particular significance. Such jobs would allow families to reap benefits that were not available to members working in other industries, such as the restaurant industry.⁵ For example, resources like healthcare, English classes, citizenship classes, retirement savings funds, and social events were common for unionized workers.⁶

Reflecting on these secondary benefits of union membership, Dr. Xiaolan Bao poignantly notes:

"Since the garment industry was the only unionized industry in the Chinese community, and the ILGWU was the only institution in New York's Chinatown that could afford to offer its members family health insurance, joining the union became indispensable for workers and their families. Workers who had benefited from special union programs and those who had received the timely support of union officials in their fight against unscrupulous employers also had positive memories."⁷

From the testimonials of workers and from scholars' accounts of their time organizing with the ILGWU, we can see how the union supported its members in myriad ways, both within the workplace and outside of it. They not only backed their fight for workers' rights, but also actively empowered garment workers as immigrant women of color to challenge existing power structures and to build new forms of community with each other.



1. Bao, Holding Up More Than Half the Sky.

2. Ibid., 97.

3. Wai Wah Chan, Chinatown Heroes: Manhattan Chinatown in the 1990s, p. 24.

4. River 莹莹 Dandelion, "How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History," The Margins, May 1, 2019

5. aaaricuny, "We Are One: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Strike, 30 Years Later (English Panel),"

6. "Garment Shop Advocates" in "Tenement Women: Agents of Change," Tenement Museum digital exhibit

7. Bao, Holding Up More Than Half the Sky, p. 154

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "Inside the Garment Factory"

Many Chinese-American families had ties to the garment factories. As such, they became an intimate extension of the community itself. Garment factories were typically owned and run by local Chinese male community members. Female workers were more often than not subordinate to their male counterparts, and it was not unheard of to be employed by a husband or brother-in-law. In this way, the garment factories exemplified the idea of the workplace as family.

Replicating the structures of community and family within the garment factory, though, was not always idyllic. As the shop floor became an extension of the Chinese-American community itself, complex tensions arose. Although shared experiences and identities could build trust between the vulnerable population of newly immigrated families, this dynamic of similarity could also be weaponized by employers to maximize their profits and legitimacy. Chinese male bosses often played on Confucian values and ethnic ties to instill worker loyalties, which limited workers' capacity to report unsafe working conditions and abuses. Confucian values encourage patriarchal standards and following orders from men, meaning female workers would be expected to be beholden to their male employers. Family-like atmospheres were also fostered by employers' use of *gam chihng*, a Cantonese term meaning "emotional ties," which further reinforced paternalistic relationships.

Employers would also impose the idea that, since "blood was thicker than water," as historian Xiaolan Bao writes, garment workers should remain silent in the face of unfair treatment due to shared ethnic background. Whether in fear of unemployment, physical retaliation from employers, or blacklisting from their community, garment workers could not safely voice out concerns. Mrs. Zheng, a former Chinatown garment worker who was interviewed by Bao, notes her experience after confronting her employer for verbally abusing other workers: ***"I became the victim... in addition to the barrage of curses, they [employers] turned the huge electric fan to blow to my face... The wind blown out of the fan was so strong I felt terribly dizzy by the end of the day... Realizing my hopeless and helpless position, I left the shop. For quite a long time, I was blacklisted in Chinatown."***

Mrs. Zheng's treatment was common for those who spoke out against workplace abuses. The threat of social ramifications, in addition to workplace retaliation, perpetuated a system wherein the loss of community support and sustenance was not worth risking. Language access further isolated many workers like Mrs. Zheng. Though the ILGWU had historically translated many of their materials into the languages of their workers — Yiddish, Italian, Spanish, and later, Chinese, depending on the decade — the working world (outside of Chinatown) was still overwhelmingly conducted in English. While the garment industry's lack of English requirements was one of the initial reasons that recent arrivals joined it in such high numbers, it proved to be a double-edged sword. Isolated by cultural and language barriers from the dominant English mainstream, Chinese employers could persuade their workers to quietly surrender to them, limiting their pursuit of improved benefits and rights.¹



From the physical perspective, garment work was extremely straining. Chinatown garment workers often worked long hours in tightly packed factories to make a living. Injury was common, and poorly ventilated facilities often led to the spread of viral and gastrointestinal disease among garment workers.² The tightly packed physical environment of the factory workplace enabled employers to perpetrate labor law violations, such as stealing wages.³ These issues were prevalent throughout the garment industry's history.

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1. The Kheel Center ILGWU Archives, Cornell University, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, "We Are One,"
 2. Aaron Mok, "How the Asian American-led 1982 garment strike shaped three decades of labor activism," Prism Reports, June 8, 2021
 3. Barbara Koh, "Alterations Needed: A Study of the Disjunction Between the Legal Scheme and Chinatown Garment Workers," Stanford Law Review (February 1984)

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "Motherhood and Care on the Shop Floor"

Despite exploitative and deeply concerning workplace dynamics, garment workers continued to persevere and built their own sense of belonging with one another. May Ying Chen, a labor organizer who helped lead the 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike, highlights that the unique communal space of the factory helped facilitate such belonging.

"The factory became this very social space, because in the old days, the traditional rules for women is that they should stay home and listen to their husband, family, mother-in-law, and so on. And, I think that when they [garment workers] started to go out to work, a lot of the community felt 'oh, this is bad because they're going to be working with all these women, and gossip, and meet other people, and turn against their family.' So there was this kind of... but they were making family to support their family, which is a positive. So I think there was this culture that as long as they were just going to the workplace, and then going home, and not staying out late at night or doing anything that was so-called bad, it was fine for them to work in the workplace. So the relationships they had in the workplace were very deep, because they were with these coworkers all day and the coworkers also gave them a lot of advice about where to shop, where to take your kids to the doctor, you know all those very practical day-to-day things that working mothers needed to know."¹

The idea of "making family to support their family" how many women working in the garment factories approached their daily lives. For lunch, the vast majority of workers would bring leftovers from family dinners and would eat in the factory together.² And starting in the late 1970s, when growing numbers of garment workers started moving to other boroughs and commuting to work, rather than living nearby in the neighborhood, employers began providing pots of free communal rice.³

It is also important to understand the impact the garment industry's piece rate system had on garment workers. In contrast to hourly wages, piece rate was the system in which garment workers earned income strictly based on how many pieces of textile they could sew each day. The piece rate system proved problematic for many. For instance, when new styles of textiles were introduced, which could occur numerous times in a day, employers would set piece rates as low as possible in order to maximize their own profits, cutting workers' wages in the process.⁴ This led to many workers pushing themselves physically in order to maximize textile production output, as they were driven by the objective of making more money for their families.⁵ Some went to such lengths as to bring home textiles and sew at home.⁶

Ms. Quan was a lead organizer of the 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike. In "Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown," she details her perspective of the piece rate system: **"I call the piece rate system the system of being both the slave and the slave driver. You're the slave because you're the one doing the work. But you're the slave driver too, because you force yourself to work faster and faster, believing that the more pieces you sew, the more money you earn."⁷**

After years of unsafe working conditions, underpayment, and denial of essential benefits, in 1982, the dam broke. Working life had become increasingly unsustainable for garment workers in Chinatown, especially after their employers refused to sign a new contract with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Faced with the challenge of improving their sub-standard working conditions, garment workers had to organize and unify to fight against deeply entrenched, gendered assertions that women were subordinate to men, while also overcoming ethnic loyalties in their workplaces. While Chinatown employers were confident that they could maintain control over their workers through intimidation and prevent the union from strengthening its influence, they would soon be proven wrong.



1. May Ying Chen, interviewed by Clarissa Kunizaki, New York City, January 6, 2024.

2. Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky*, p. 112.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky*, p. 28.

5. Sing Kong Wong, "2008.040.027 Oral History Interview with Sing Kong Wong," by Museum of Chinese in America staffer

6. May Ying Chen, interviewed by Clarissa Kunizaki, New York City, January 6, 2024.

7. Katie Quan, "Memories of the 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown," *Amerasia Journal* 35:1 (2009): pp. 76-91

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "Rising Up Like Tigers"

"When fire sings the hairs on the skin of the women workers, they will rise up like tigers."

Chinese proverb, as told to Katie Quan by the husband of a garment worker

In May of 1982, negotiations for a new contract began, covering about 150,000 already-unionized ILGWU workers in four states across the Northeast.¹ If successful, the new contract would be in effect from June 1, 1982, through May 31, 1985.² Some of the demands that they included were an increase in minimum wage, an increase in holiday pay, and a twelfth paid personal day.³ They also demanded increased employer contributions to services like health and welfare funds, retirement funds, and health services plans. Recognizing the importance of civic participation, the proposed contract also included a provision to guarantee payment of wages during jury duty. Within Chinatown, Jay Mazur, the manager of Local 23-25, helped lead negotiations with Chinatown garment factory employers, of whom over 500 were represented by the Greater Blouse, Skirt and Undergarment Association (GBSUA).⁴ The employers, frustrated by the asks of the new contract and believing that it would endanger their ability to stay in business, formed a coalition. There, they decided to "overwhelmingly reject the contract" on June 10th, 1982.⁵

This rejection proved problematic, as the livelihoods of Chinatown garment workers became immediately jeopardized. To express their grievances, employers who refused to sign the new contract advocated for their own counter-demands. Among these counter-demands included three fewer holidays off, no increase in holiday pay, no minimum wage increase, and a shift from 35 to 40 work hours per week.⁶ Yet, the union had little flexibility and willingness to consider their counter-demands because it had been widely accepted by other manufacturers, contractors, the union and its members.⁷ Organizers found themselves at an impasse: without any movement on their contract demands, the idea of a mass strike became not just a dream, but an inevitability.

As many Chinese families had multiple members in the garment factories, the upcoming strike became both a personal and community-wide event. Shop owners faced the prospect of solidarity strikes by restaurant, laundry, and domestic workers.⁸ The possibility of a strike expanded to the entire Chinatown community. Katie Quan recounted that **"Everybody was talking about the strike. The whole community was talking about it. People called each other at night to talk about it on the phone. They talked about it on the subways and in grocery stores when they were shopping."**⁹



專衣工友
第二次示威大集會
維護我們的工會合約
衣廠不能再開門 立刻簽訂工會合約！
日期：七月十五日 星期四
時間：早上八時四十五分
地點：華埠芬蘭公園
(和富街夾茂利街)
工友們來參加示威大會，我們的團結就是最大的力量，維護工會合約，
要求所有的僱主立刻簽約！每間工廠的每一位工友返工之前一定要去公園，
讓我們站在一起！
國際女服華衣公會 23-25 分會

GARMENT WORKERS RALLY I I
TO DEFEND OUR CONTRACT
No More Lock-out!—Sign the Contract
PLACE: COLUMBUS PARK (WORTH & MULBERRY STS.)
Date: Thursday, July 15, 1982
TIME: 8:45 A.M.
— Attend the Rally to defend our New Contract and show our Unity.
— Demand EVERY EMPLOYER sign.
— Protect our Rights and our Benefits.
Our Unity is our Strength.
Don't go to Work - Go directly to the Rally.
ALL Workers from EVERY Shop
MUST Attend This Rally.

LOCAL 23-25 **WE ARE ONE WE ARE ONE**

1. Kathryn Dowgiewicz, The Kheel Center, "The Chinatown Struggle of 1982," The Kheel Center ILGWU Collection,

2. Ibid

3. Bao, Holding Up More Than Half the Sky, p. 198.

4. Dowgiewicz, The Kheel Center, "The Chinatown Struggle of 1982."

5. Ibid

6. Bao, Holding Up More Than Half the Sky, p. 198.

7. Ibid

8. Ibid

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "The Strike"

June 24th Rally

On the humid summer day of June 24th, Chinese garment workers streamed into Columbus Park.¹ By 8:30 in the morning, the park and surrounding streets were overflowing.² The rally garnered support from the entire community, and local community leaders and workers made speeches in support and solidarity. Following the rally, the crowd marched through Chinatown. By the end of the day, most employers signed the contract. However, a small group of employers still did not cooperate, forcing a two-day shutdown of the industry.³



It is clear from photos like the two above that strike organizing was actively brought to life and sustained by the presence of Chinatown garment workers themselves. Their displays of laughter, smiles, and kinship signify the sheer level of joy they found in community and mutual support. Given that historical displays of such joy tend to remain isolated from mainstream narratives of Asian Americans as people solely defined by struggle, seeing our Chinese women elders exhibit such authentic joy in their efforts is deeply refreshing and inspiring.

July 15th Rally

In addition to the June 24th demonstration, a second rally was organized a month later and took place on July 15th, 1982, to push the last of employers to sign the new contract. Once again, 20,000 workers participated. Within hours, most employers finally caved in, but the union and workers did not give up until all had signed. The Local 23-25 set an ultimatum for July 15th for employers to sign the contract before they mobilized workers to strike.⁴

By the morning of July 15th, 90% of all shops had signed the new contract.⁵ At midday, shops who had not signed the contract were immediately placed on strike.⁶ The campaign was so successful that the strike lasted only a few hours, and by the end of the day, all employers had signed the contract. Chinatown garment workers won their fight, shocking their employers, who expected them to follow traditional values in staying out of the public eye.⁷ It is also essential to note the fact that though the strike was led by Chinese garment workers themselves, other ILGWU members of other racial backgrounds—namely, Black and Latina women—joined the strike in solidarity to support their Chinese union comrades.



1. Quan, "Memories of the 1982 ILGWU strike," 85.

2. ILGWU, "We Are One," 6:37.

3. ILGWU, "We Are One," 17:34.

4. ILGWU, "We Are One," 18:10.

5. ILGWU, "We Are One," 20:59.

6. ILGWU, "We Are One," 21:12

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpt from: "Stitching Threads for AAPI Activism"

"We workers must be united. It's not yet spring, unless all flowers blossom. We cannot rely on a single worker's, but we need all the workers together."

Shui Mak Ka, union steward of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

The strike played a crucial role in improving the Chinese-American garment workers' representation in the workplace and community. The contract mandated an hourly salary rate of \$1.10 instead of a piece rate paid system. Following the strike, the Local 23-25 devoted significant resources to strengthen its relationship with Chinese membership. With a focus on community building, the Local 23-25 provided free and accessible English classes, immigration paralegal work, transportation, and health services.



Chinese-speaking staff were also hired to better advocate for garment workers. These changes extended to not just working conditions, but the community overall. Moreover, it made a significant statement on the intersectionality between race, class, and gender of garment workers. Previously, Chinese employers believed their shared ethnic background guaranteed their workers' loyalty. They assumed that, as "traditionally-raised women," Chinese garment workers would not stand against them, as Chinese men. The 1982 strike showed clearly that when workers' rights are at stake, minority workers will act against oppression, regardless of ethnic ties.

Katie Quan, a lead organizer of the strike, explains that the strike is also part of a larger conversation regarding the importance of Asian-American strength and visibility: **"There is definitely agency and power amongst Asian women... It doesn't need to be a thing that's to be fearful about."**¹ Considering stereotypes that exist about Asian-American women being submissive to injustice, acknowledging the strength of garment workers during the strike is inspiring. The success of efforts made by Chinese garment workers lay the foundation for future generations to be empowered in protesting for their rights. Locally, Chinese garment women continued to be the major force behind the garment industry's prosperity and upheld stability for their families. They played an indispensable role in sustaining the New York City garment industry's leading position in the nation's garment production and their community.²



Consider the following questions:

- Why are instances of organized labor activism important?
- What is the significance of representation in workers' organizing?
- How did language access play a role in organizing Chinatown garment workers? Where do you see connections in other immigrant communities?

1. Brajmot Kaur, "40 Years Later, Labor Leaders Remember NYC Chinatown's Garment Worker Strike," NBC News, May 15, 2022.

2. Bao, Holding Up More Than Half the Sky, p. 2.

It's Not Yet Spring, Unless All Flowers Blossom: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike

By: Clarissa Kunizaki

Excerpts from: "Weaving Collective Memory and AAPI Consciousness"

The garment industry was undoubtedly a major economic and social force within New York City, but by the end of the 20th century, it was in decline. Data from the Chinese Garment Manufacturers Association shows that there were 300 garment factories in 1997; by 2000, they had dwindled to a mere 120.¹

Two main forces exacerbating this decline were globalization and 9/11's impact on New York City. Above all, I would be remiss to not highlight the ways in which clothing manufacturing largely shifting abroad deepened the abusive conditions that the Chinatown garment workers fought against in their own shops.² Across the Global South—a term I intentionally use to point towards enduring legacies of imperial violence and economic exploitation worldwide—vulnerable women and young girls toil in sweatshop conditions to meet the growing global demands of overconsumption.³ In her oral history with fellow youth research Navipa, Showun talks about her own work experiences in conditions that were similar to that of the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster.



The final blow to the Chinatown garment industry were the 9/11 attacks. Sociologist Margaret Chin explains that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, because "Half the workers lived outside Chinatown," most "couldn't commute to work."⁴ She added, "A lot of owners didn't live there either," and those who did live in the neighborhood faced frequent issues of no electricity or phone service within the factories.⁵ The same infrastructure issues that made commuting impossible also turned order fulfillment into a volatile proposition, as roads, subways, and other transportation were essentially closed throughout Lower Manhattan and across the bridges into Brooklyn.



Despite the industry's disappearance, many in the Chinatown and Sunset Park communities continue to commemorate the 1982 struggle. Tequila Minsky of amNY wrote a beautiful article about a celebration that took place the summer of 2022, capturing photos and reporting on the similar vein of local community joy that took place in 1982. The event celebrated the enduring triumph of the 1982 Chinatown Garment Workers' Strike, showcasing cultural dance and art activities, and providing a meaningful space for former garment workers to share their own stories. As Minsky writes, **"Sitting in a slightly shaded area, retired Chinatown garment factory workers wearing ILGWU caps listened to the speakers. Between speakers, cultural entertainment by the Red Silk Dancers transformed the ambiance. At the commemoration, there were tents with art activity opportunities for children."**⁵

Read Clarissa's Full Historical Exhibit at
<https://localizedhistoryproject.org/exhibits/its-not-yet-spring-unless-all-flowers-blossom-1982-chinatown-garment-workers-strike>

1. Wei Wah Chan, *Chinatown Heroes: Manhattan Chinatown in the 1990s*, p. 30.

2. Florence Palpacuer, "The Globalization of New York's Garment Industry" in *A Coat of Many Colors: Immigration, Globalization, and Reform in New York City's Garment Industry*, ed. Daniel Soyer

3. Cornell University Library, "Social Fabric: Land, Labor, and the World the Textile Industry Created," Hirshland Exhibition Gallery at the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, 2022-2023

4. Eveline Chao, "A Makeover for Chinatown's Garment Industry," *The Margins*, January 7, 2014

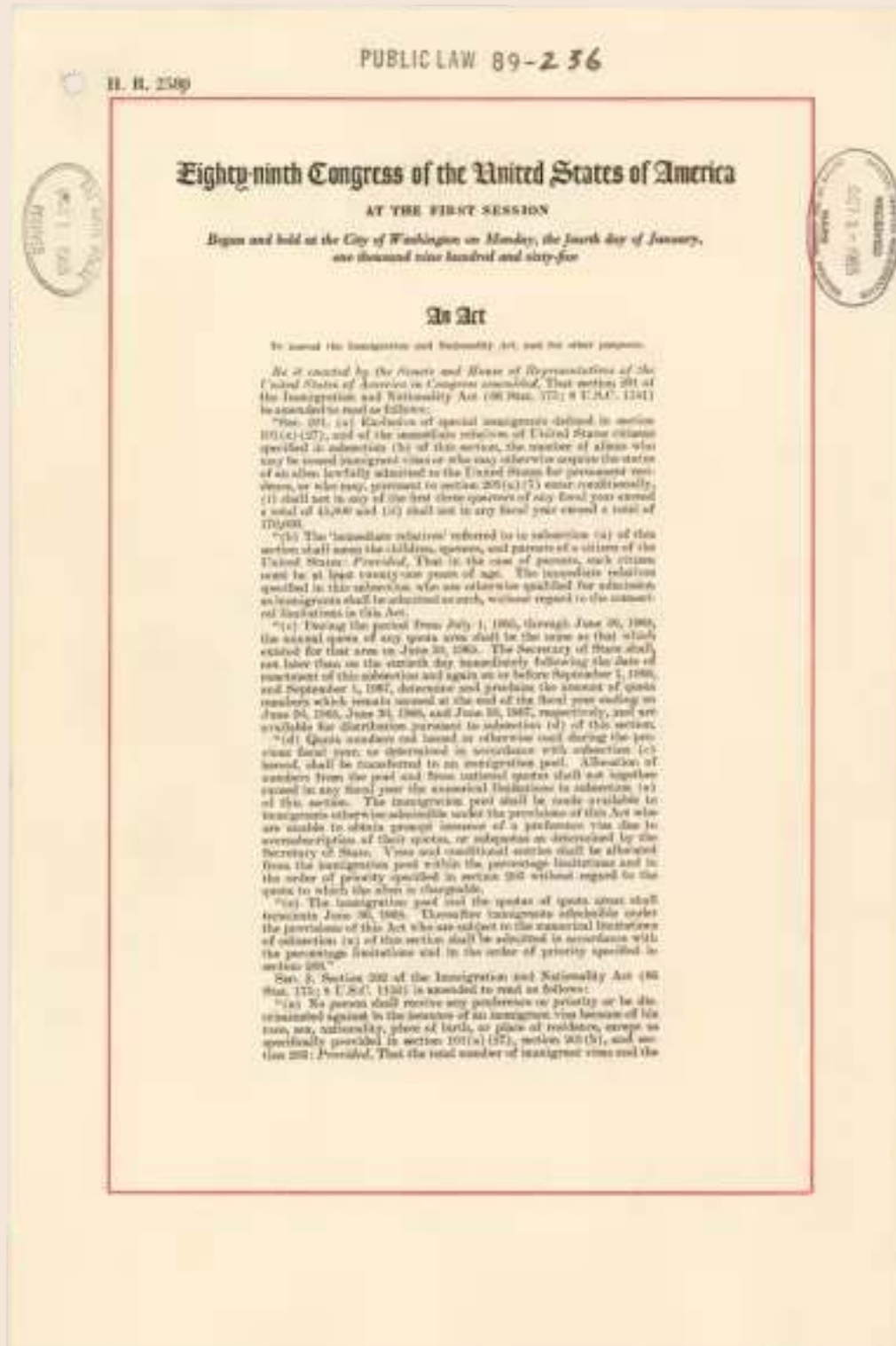
5. Tequila Minsky, "We Are One: Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the 1982 Garment Workers Chinatown Rally," amNY, July 6, 2022

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**RESOURCES FOR THE
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primary sources:



The text of Public Law 89-236: An Act to Amend the Immigration and Nationality Act, and for Other Purposes.

Records of the U.S. Congress, Record Group 11, held in the National Archives.

primary sources:



A sign held on the picket line, featuring the ILGWU logo painted onto a wooden backing, c. 1960s-1990s

Featured in "Ladies' Garments, Women's Work, Women's Activism," exhibit at New-York Historical Society (2019). Fair Use under Section 107 of the Copyright Act.

primary sources:



Chinese American Voters League of ILGWU Local 23-25. Kathy Andrade, Salvadoran-American union activist, is pictured at far left.

Photograph by Emile Bocian, accessed via "We Are One: Honoring Immigrant Garment Workers," permissions granted via by Museum of Chinese in America.

primary sources:



**An English class for Asian American ILGWU members of Local
23-25, December 15, 1968.**

Housed in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union
Photographs (1885-1985) at The Kheel Center for Labor-
Management Documentation and Archives. Fair Use under
Section 107 of the Copyright Act.

primary sources:



The interior of a Chinatown garment factory, c. 1979–1984.

Photograph by Robert “Bud” Glick, featured in “A Makeover for Chinatown’s Garment Industry” (2014). Rights unknown.

primary sources:



Sewing machine operators, mostly women, work at long, paired tables overseen by managers. Work baskets fill the space between chairs and scraps clutter the floor around their feet. The mix of cheap, skilled and unskilled labor fueled garment manufacturing growth. The industry doubled in size from 1900 to 1910, making it increasingly cost-effective to bring many who had worked at home into larger garment factories.

Housed in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Photographs (1885-1985) at The Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives. Fair Use under Section 107 of the Copyright Act.

primary sources:



Sewing machine operators, mostly women, work at long, paired tables overseen by managers. Work baskets fill the space between chairs and scraps clutter the floor around their feet. The mix of cheap, skilled and unskilled labor fueled garment manufacturing growth. The industry doubled in size from 1900 to 1910, making it increasingly cost-effective to bring many who had worked at home into larger garment factories.

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primary sources:



May Ying Chen distributing union literature about upcoming activities and union benefits to fellow garment workers, c. 1980s.

Photographer unknown. Included in "How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History" (The Margins, 2019.) Photo courtesy of May Chen, rights unknown.

primary sources:

車衣工友

第二次示威大集會

維護我們的工會合約
衣廠不能再關門 立刻簽訂工會合約！

日期：七月十五日 星期四
時間：早上八時四十五分
地點：華埠新會布公園
(和富街夾茂比利街)

工友們來參加示威大會，我們的團結就是最大的力量，維護工會合約，
要求所有的僱主立刻簽約！每間工廠的每一位工友返工之前一定要去公園。

讓我們站在一起！
國際女服連衣公會23-25分會



GARMENT WORKERS RALLY II TO DEFEND OUR CONTRACT

No More Lock-out!—Sign the Contract

PLACE: COLUMBUS PARK (WORTH & MULBERRY STS.)
Date: Thursday, July 15, 1982
TIME: 8:45 A.M.

- Attend the Rally to defend our New Contract and show our Unity.
- Demand EVERY EMPLOYER sign.
- Protect our Rights and our Benefits.

Our Unity is our Strength.

Don't go to Work - Go directly to the Rally.
ALL Workers from EVERY Shop
MUST Attend This Rally.

LOCAL 23-25 **WE ARE ONE WE ARE ONE**



Garment workers strike poster calling ILGWU members and supporters to rally at Columbus park on Thursday, July 15, 1982 to defend their union contracts.

House in the Chinese Sportswear Workers Social Association Collection at the Museum of Chinese in America. Permissions granted via Museum of Chinese in America.

primary sources:



Striking members of ILGWU Local 23-25, wearing union hats, gather in Columbus Park on June 24, 1982 to demand a new contract.

Photographer unknown, Housed in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Photographs (1885-1985) at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives.

primary sources:



Members of ILGWU Local 23-25 share disposable union hats on the day of the 20,000 person rally in Columbus Park, July 24, 1982.

Photographer unknown, Housed in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Photographs (1885-1985) at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives.

primary sources:



Members of ILGWU Local 23-25 on strike in New York City's Chinatown, c. 1982.

Photograph by Robert Gumpert, included in Katie Quan's "Memories of 1982 ILGWU Strike in New York Chinatown" (2009).
Rights unknown.

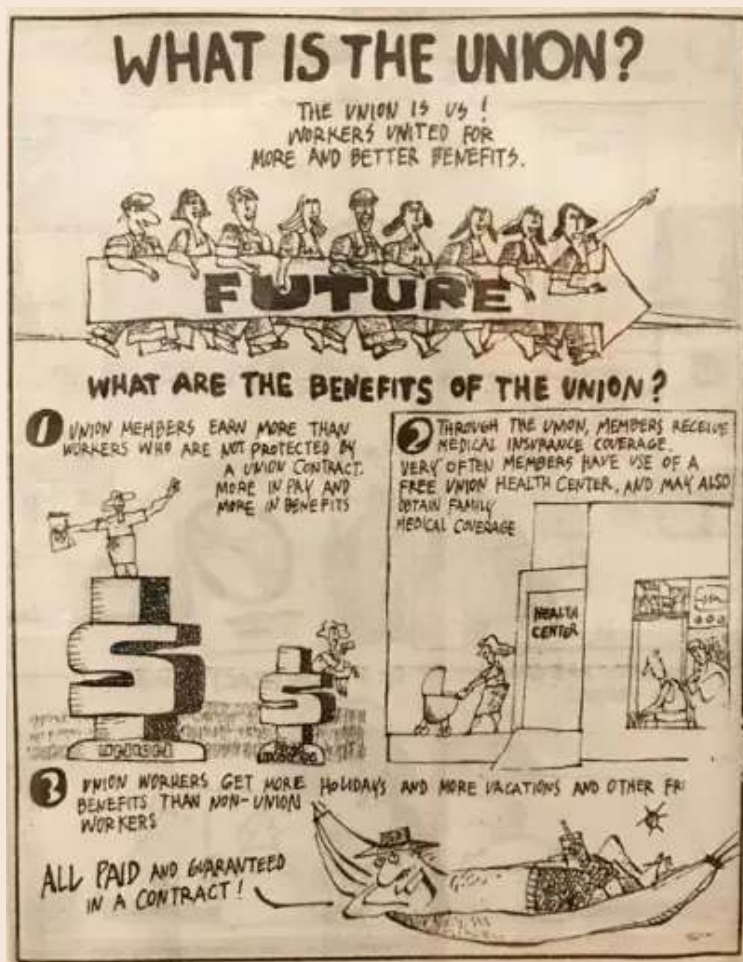
primary sources:



An ILGWU English language class taught by Daniel Lam at a community space in the Transfiguration Parochial School in Chinatown, c. 1980s

Photograph by George Colon, provided courtesy of George Colon and Kathy Andrade. Included in LaborArts' "We Are One: Honoring Immigrant Garment Workers."

primary sources:



An informational poster created by ILGWU Local 23-25 to inform potential members, largely Chinese immigrants, about the benefits of union membership. Both English and Chinese versions were created.

Included in "City of Workers, City of Struggle Lesson: "We Are One" New York Women's Activism in the Garment Industry, 1909-1990" (Museum of the City of New York), published by The Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives.

primary sources:



The interior of a clothing store in Chinatown covered in dust and debris from the collapsing towers post-9/11.

Photograph by Xiao Min Yu. Originally published by the Museum of Chinese in America in the "Recovering Chinatown: 9/11" Collection. Permissions granted via Museum of Chinese in America.

primary sources:



Dance performers with red flags at the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the 1982 Garment Workers Chinatown Rally.

Photograph by Tequila Minsky, included in "We Are One: Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the 1982 Garment Workers Chinatown Rally." Rights unknown.

secondary sources:

Katherine Hajar, "Chinese Women, Immigration, and the First U.S. Exclusion Law: The Page Act of 1875," San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, August 2, 2022

Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

Xiaolan Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948-92*

Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States*

Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense & A Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*

Daniel Bender, *Sweated Work, Weak Bodies: Anti-Sweatshop Campaigns and Languages of Labor*

Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism*

Wai Wah Chan, *Chinatown Heroes: Manhattan Chinatown in the 1990s*, p. 24.

River 莹莹 Dandelion, "How Chinese American Women Changed U.S. Labor History," *The Margins*, May 1, 2019

aaaricuny, "We Are One: The 1982 Chinatown Garment Strike, 30 Years Later (English Panel),"

"Garment Shop Advocates" in "Tenement Women: Agents of Change," Tenement Museum digital exhibit

The Kheel Center ILGWU Archives, Cornell University, International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, "We Are One,"

Aaron Mok, "How the Asian American-led 1982 garment strike shaped three decades of labor activism," *Prism Reports*, June 8, 2021

Barbara Koh, "Alterations Needed: A Study of the Disjunction Between the Legal Scheme and Chinatown Garment Workers," *Stanford Law Review* (February 1984)

Kathryn Dowgiewicz, The Kheel Center, "The Chinatown Struggle of 1982," The Kheel Center ILGWU Collection,

Brajmot Kaur, "40 Years Later, Labor Leaders Remember NYC Chinatown's Garment Worker Strike," *NBC News*, May 15, 2022.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

11.10 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE/DOMESTIC ISSUES (1945 – present): Racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities were addressed by individuals, groups, and organizations. Varying political philosophies prompted debates over the role of the federal government in regulating the economy and providing a social safety net. (Standards: 1, 4, 5; Themes: ID, TCC, SOC, GOV, CIV, ECO)

11.11 THE UNITED STATES IN A CHANGING WORLD (1990 – present): The United States' political and economic status in the world has faced external and internal challenges related to international conflicts, economic competition, and globalization. Throughout this time period, the nation has continued to debate and define its role in the world. (Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5; Themes: TCC, GOV, CIV, TECH, EXCH)

12.G2 CIVIL RIGHTS and CIVIL LIBERTIES: The United States Constitution aims to protect individual freedoms and rights that have been extended to more groups of people over time. These rights and freedoms continue to be debated, extended to additional people, and defined through judicial interpretation. In engaging in issues of civic debate, citizens act with an appreciation of differences and are able to participate in constructive dialogue with those who hold different perspectives.



Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: "Formation of Chinatowns and Chinese Immigration to the United States"

Born and raised in NYC, Abby Chen is a NYCPS student at the Clinton School who hopes to use her experiences in the school system to create a more culturally inclusive and responsive environment as an ASAP youth leader with the Coalition for Asian Children and Families (CACF) and the Localized History Project. She hopes to highlight stories of solidarity and intersectional histories, highlighting youth and AAPI activism. She is interested in exploring the intersection of Asian American History, public health, and environmental science in the future! Outside of AAPI advocacy, Abby enjoys spending time with her dog Sadie, editing her school newspaper, and watching TV!

New York City's Chinatown is just one of many Chinatowns that exist throughout the United States. Much like other Chinatowns, it is in a dense urban area populated by a vibrant, diverse community. Located on the Lower East Side in between three bridges, Chinatown exists side by side with other historically ethnic enclaves, including Little Italy, nearby. To understand the uniqueness of New York City's Chinatown, though, it is useful to understand how and why Chinatowns emerged nationally.

Chinese immigration to the West Coast is a fairly well-known historical phenomenon: first seeking work in California's gold mines, then later railroad and infrastructure construction, many Chinese immigrants made their way to the western United States.¹ There, they faced xenophobic, often-violent hostility from other workers. In response to the rising tensions between white workers' racial anxieties and Chinese workers attempting to build a new life in America, the government intervened to protect white workers' belief that Chinese workers were "job stealers." The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prevented Chinese immigration for 10 years, and set a precedent for dramatically limiting Chinese immigration for decades beyond that.² It prevented Chinese people in the United States from becoming citizens, which made building community for Chinese Americans increasingly difficult. The Act also made it near-impossible for women and children to immigrate, making it difficult for Chinese male workers to start families or maintain family ties.

The formation of Chinatowns in the northeast, like New York City's Chinatown, began to expand rapidly following increasing anti-Chinese, anti-immigrant violence on the West Coast in the late 1800s.³ With the promise of more job opportunities and diversity than areas on the West Coast, many Chinese Americans moved to New York City and began to build a community around Mott Street in the 1870s. Though growth slowed following the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, restaurants in Chinatown continued to grow and flourish on Mott and Pell Street.

With the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, and with the exclusion laws and immigration quotas lifted, NYC's Chinatown and its population began to grow rapidly.⁴ The 1965 Act prioritized the immigration of "highly skilled" AAPI workers, marking a distinct shift in immigration policy. It made pathways to immigration and citizenship easier and allowed families to immigrate as a unit. But it also perpetuated stereotypes about Asian American immigrants, including the Model Minority Myth. The Model Minority Myth is a stereotype that positions Asian Americans as the "model minority" in comparison to other minority groups, including Black and Hispanic people.⁴ It focuses on the success of Asian Americans, removing credit for real accomplishments achieved through merit by Asian Americans as portraying them as "natural." While masked as a "positive stereotype," this stereotype overshadows the racism and discrimination that the Asian American community faces. It can also prevent struggles within the Asian American community from being seen, including health disparities.



1. Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and Him Mark Lai, eds, *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present*, 1st ed. University of California Press, 2006.

2. History.com, "Chinese Exclusion Act," History, August 24, 2018. <https://www.history.com/articles/chinese-exclusion-act-1882>

3. Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, eds., *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*, Stanford University Press, 2019.

4. Tom Gjelten, "The 1965 Immigration Act: Opening the Nation to Immigrants of Color," *History Now*, Issue 52 (Fall 2018)

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: "Health Issues and the Diverse Lower East Side"

The Lower East Side, the neighborhood that surrounds Chinatown, has been a diverse immigrant community since the early 19th century.¹ In the mid-19th century, one of the earliest immigrant populations which settled there were Germans. As the German population rose in the city's class and social hierarchy in the late 1800s and began to slowly move uptown, other white ethnic immigrant groups moved in. Eventually, Eastern European Jewish and Italian populations also began to put down roots in the neighborhood in the late 19th and early 20th century.² These groups are often overly centered in stories about the neighborhood, particularly when talking about the history of tenements. However, Black, Puerto Rican, and Chinese communities also had – and continue to have – a large presence in the Lower East Side, and have worked together to overcome many financial, health, and legal struggles on the Lower East Side.

Many historic Chinatowns were built in "undesirable" parts of their cities, packing people into buildings with old infrastructure and poor sanitation. This population density and a lack of health insurance meant that health issues and the spread of infectious diseases was and continues to be a prevalent issue in Chinatowns. Large amounts of goods were transported in and out of these neighborhoods to support restaurants, hand laundries, and other businesses, increasing traffic pollution and further exacerbating health and respiratory issues. New York City's Chinatown featured predominately tenement-style buildings, which often were tightly packed with residents, had poor sanitation and ventilation, and offered little light or clean air.³ These were ideal conditions for the spread of respiratory diseases, including tuberculosis. Decaying buildings and spotty health services further contributed to the fact that in 1970, New York's Chinatown had one of the highest rates of tuberculosis in the country.

Some key community groups that emerged in the late 1960s, including the Young Lords and I Wor Kuen, would eventually organize around access to TB testing and treatment. These health care-focused initiatives, along with other community issues like education and housing, led to health advocacy becoming a pillar of these groups' missions. Though Chinatown's position in the Lower East Side, surrounded by other immigrant and working-class communities, sometimes led to tensions, it also allowed for the possibility of true community solidarity. These instances are highlighted in the collaboration between the Young Lords and I Wor Kuen in fighting for accessible health care services in Chinatown.



1. Carolyn Ratcliffe, "A Thin Green Line-Time line of The Lower East Side-Tompkins Square Area," L.E.S.P.I. (Lower East Side Preservation Initiative)
2. Joyce Mendelsohn, *The Lower East Side Remembered and Revisited*, Columbia University Press, 2009.
3. Stuart Marques, "The Early Tenements of New York—Dark, Dank, and Dangerous," NYC Department of Records & Information Services (DORIS) Blog, May 17, 2019.
4. Laura Dellplain, "Yellow, in Peril: How Public Health Discourse on Tuberculosis (TB) Reveals, Refines, and Reinforces the Racial Stigmatization of Asian Americans," Honors Papers at Oberlin College, 2012.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: "The Black Panthers, I Wor Kuen, and the Young Lords: Community Activists"

In the larger context of the Civil Rights Movement, the Black liberation movement, and the New Communist Movement of the 1960s, many new revolutionary organizations arose. These included student activist groups, as well as groups organized around particular racial or ethnic identities. These groups included the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, and I Wor Kuen, among others. All three groups emphasized providing direct services to their communities in various ways, including health care. I Wor Kuen, in particular, was an important presence in New York City's Chinatown in the late 1960s and 1970s. It's useful to understand a little more about each group and how they were founded in order to better understand how they shared political ideas and collaborated.


The Black Panthers

Founded in October of 1966 in Oakland, California, the Black Panther Party (BPP) — formally known as the Black Panther Party for Self Defense — critically influenced the work of both the Young Lords and I Wor Kuen (IWK).¹ The BPP had a far reach in many areas: challenging white political power, providing community services or "survival programs", and protecting Black people from police brutality by all means, including armed self-defense. The party, founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, wanted to go beyond the liberal Civil Rights Movement's demands to integrate Black people into American society. Instead, they called for fundamental changes in society itself: for Black Power, rather than white acceptance. Local chapters organized "survival programs" as community mutual aid, offering free breakfast, sponsoring schools and legal aid offices, and organizing health clinics. Women, although underrepresented in how we commonly think of the Panthers — often as armed, and usually as male — ran most of their survival programs.²

The BPP articulated their mission in what was known as their Ten Point Program, a model which was a clear influence on other radical groups' creation of their own ten (or twelve) point programs, including IWK and the Young Lords. Below is "What We Want" — the list of demands initially included in the Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program.

October 1966
Black Panther Party
Platform and Program

What We Want What We Believe



Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense
Black Panther Party

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community.
We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.
6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.
We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.
We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.
8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.
When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

1. The Black Panther Party: Challenging Police and Promoting Social Change," Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture

2. Samuel Josephs, "Whose Revolution Is This? Gender's Divisive Role in the Black Panther Party," Georgetown Journal of Gender & the Law 9.2 (2008). See also: Robert James Seither, "Women in the Black Panther Party: An Internal Struggle for Power, Equality, and Survival," TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship Vol. XVII, April 2015.

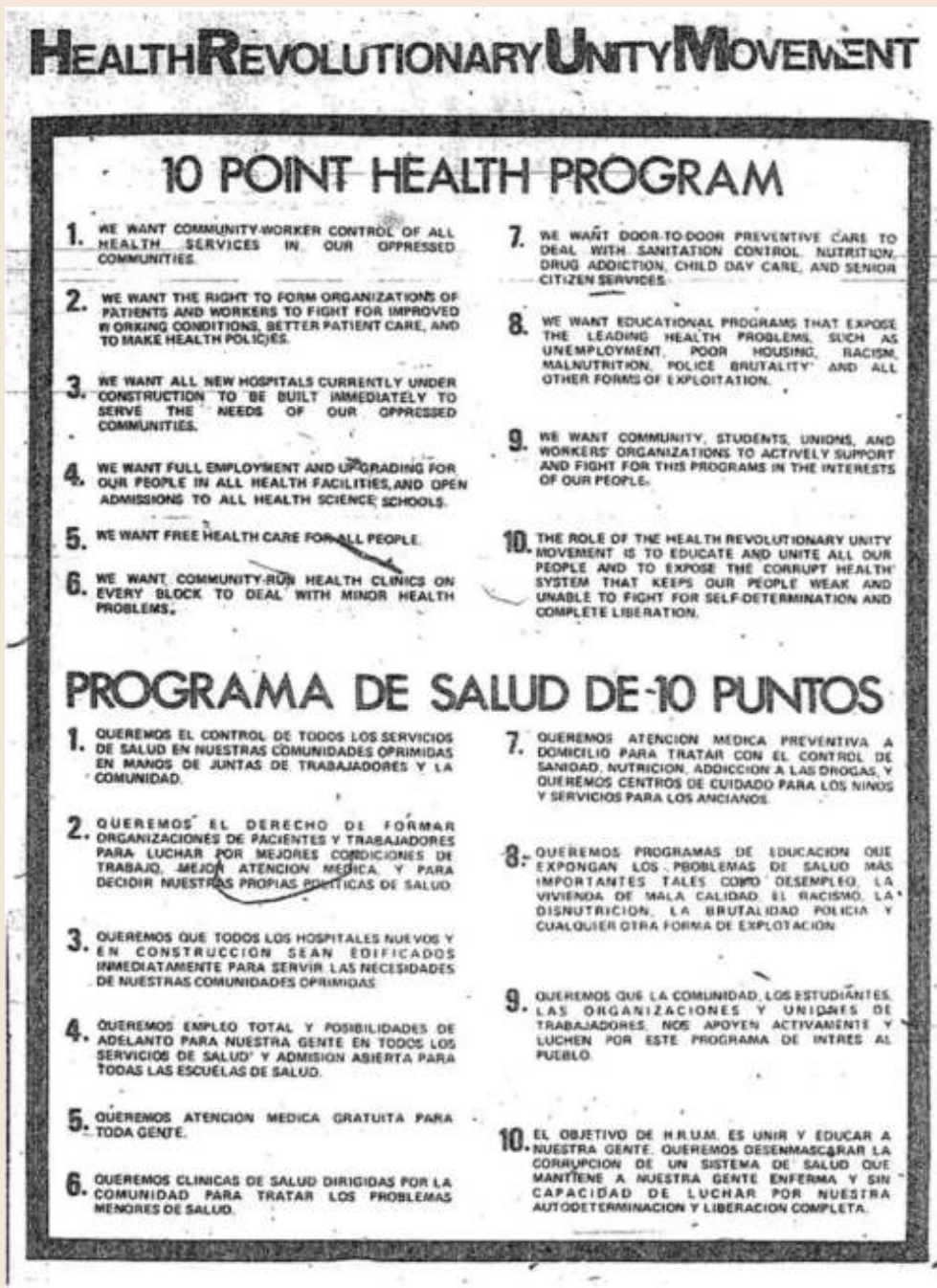
Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: *"The Black Panthers, I Wor Kuen, and the Young Lords: Community Activists"*

The Young Lords

The Young Lords were established by José "Cha-Cha" Jiménez in 1968 in Lincoln Park in Chicago, Illinois. Modeled after the Black Panther Party, their members were originally part of a Puerto Rican street gang that morphed into a community-based organization.¹ They advocated for healthcare, education, employment, and housing in minority communities. They also demanded Puerto Rican self-determination and collaborated with other revolutionary nationalist groups, including the BPP and IWK. Eventually, the Young Lords expanded from Chicago to New York City's East Harlem, and grew to be a multi-ethnic and LGBTQ+-inclusive organization. Some initiatives of the Young Lords in both cities included free breakfasts for community members, Puerto Rican community centers, and free health clinics – on which they often collaborated with other groups, including IWK.² Like both I Wor Kuen and the Panthers, the Young Lords had monthly newspapers with political editorials and listings of their events and community services, published both in Chicago and New York City. Interest in healthcare advocacy in the Young Lords' New York chapter was especially piqued as Mingo El Loco, who helped organize events for the Young Lords, died of stab wounds after an ambulance took over an hour to arrive to East Harlem.³ This was an issue of medical racism and city neglect that resonated with several areas in the city, including the Lower East Side.



The Young Lords' focus on health care and hospital access for their community also led to the occupation of the South Bronx's Lincoln Hospital in 1970, a protest meant to disrupt the understaffing and poor treatment that many Puerto Ricans experienced there.⁴ Their health activism was summed up in their Ten-Point Health Program (see above).

1. Johanna Fernández, "BEGINNINGS: José 'Cha Cha' Jiménez and the Roots of Rebellion," in *The Young Lords: A Radical History*, University of North Carolina Press, 2020. [P](#)

2. Maria Guadalupe Partida, "Research Guides: A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States: 1968: The Young Lord's Organization/Party," Library of Congress, 2017. <https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights/young-lords-organization>.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: "The Black Panthers, I Wor Kuen, and the Young Lords: Community Activists"

I Wor Kuen

The last of the three organizations to form, I Wor Kuen (IWK) was a Marxist-Leninist organization formed in New York in 1969, and a key organization involved in starting the Chinatown Health Fairs.¹ The organization emphasized unity amongst oppressed people and solidarity with other groups, including the Young Lords. IWK was composed of a diverse Asian and Asian-American population: working people, elders, students, and even working-class youth. Their community work consisted of education initiatives and community-based programs, often publicized in Getting Together, the IWK's bilingual newspaper published in both Chinese and English.² The newspaper both educated the public on local and global political issues, and also helped organize the public by bringing awareness to community-based initiatives or resources. The IWK eventually expanded to both coasts as a result of a merger with the Red Guard Party in San Francisco, another city with a large AAPI population. Throughout the group's lifespan, it critiqued capitalist society and hoped to bring attention to the injustices and oppression marginalized groups experienced due to U.S. imperialism, including health disparities and poor living conditions. These were issues directly addressed in the services provided at the Health Fairs. Similar to the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, I Wor Kuen articulated their group's mission statement around a twelve-point program.³ Point seven, as seen below, highlights health advocacy as part of their goals.

Though there were ideological differences between all three groups, they shared many common political principles and a commitment to taking care of their own communities. Comparing and contrasting their guiding principles – and how they manifested in the local work they did in neighborhoods – may be a helpful way to think about cross-racial solidarity.

I WOR KUEN

12 Point Platform and Program

Asian people in America have been continuously oppressed by the greedy, traitorous gangsters of our own communities and by the wider racist exploitative American society. We have been bombarded by the media (newspapers, T.V., radio and schools) with false ideas about how we should accept our position in this society. They have tried to brainwash us and have even coerced us into going overseas and fighting against our own people in S.E. Asia.

But, Asian Americans have been fighting back against the oppression of the country ever since we first tasted the bitterness of America's racism and exploitation. The long and heroic history of the Asian American struggle inspired and strengthened us in our purpose. No longer can we endure these oppressive conditions. We cannot let our ancestors' struggles go down in vain. We know who are our real enemies and friends and we have found new strength for we are joining our sisters and brothers within this country and around the world to fight for freedom and justice against the rulers of this country.

We have tried the peaceful means of petition, courts, voting and even demonstrations. But our situation remained the same. We are not free.

We want to improve the living conditions of our people and are preparing to defend our communities against repression and for revolutionary armed war against the gangsters, businessmen, politicians and police. When a government oppresses the people and no longer serves the needs of the people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one.

We are working for a world of peace, where the needs of the people come first, which is without class distinctions and is based upon the love and unity of all peoples.

The following 12 points are what we are fighting for:

- 1. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ASIAN AMERICANS.**
The masses of Asian people in America live in ghettos which are like small colonies. The American capitalists continually attempt to make profit off us by trying to starve our entire way of life for their own benefit. We want liberation from this enslavement so we can determine our own destinies.
- 2. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL ASIANS.**
Western imperialists have been invading and colonizing countries in Asia for the past 500 years. American imperialism, concentrating in Asia is now engaged in the most sadistic and genocidal war of aggression the world has ever seen. We want an immediate end to American imperialism.
- 3. WE WANT LIBERATION OF ALL THIRD WORLD PEOPLES AND OTHER OPPRESSED PEOPLES.**
People of color, Asian, Black, Brown, Red are all fighting for liberation from America's racist oppression. Millions and millions of white people are also rising up to fight our common oppressor. We recognize that only when the oppression of all people is ended can we all really be free.
- 4. WE WANT AN END TO MALE CHAUVINISM AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.**
The thousands of years of oppression under feudalism and capitalism have created institutions and myths of male supremacy over women. Men must fight along with sisters in the struggle for economic and social equality and must recognize that sisters make up over half of the revolutionary army. Sisters and brothers are equal, fighting for our people.
- 5. WE WANT COMMUNITY CONTROL OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND LAND.**
These institutions in our communities such as the police, schools, health, housing, transportation, sanitation, anti-pollution, and welfare must be controlled by and serve the needs of our people and not be geared to the making of money. We want an end to our community being used to make profit for outsiders, such as slumlords and financial agencies.
- 6. WE WANT AN EDUCATION WHICH EXPOSES THE TRUE HISTORY OF WESTERN IMPERIALISM IN ASIA AND AROUND THE WORLD WHICH TEACHES US THE HARDSHIPS AND STRUGGLES OF OUR ANCESTORS IN THIS LAND AND WHICH REVEALS THE TRULY DECADENT EXPLOITATIVE NATURE OF AMERICAN SOCIETY.**
The American imperialists have tried to justify their world empire by covering up the inhuman deeds they perpetrated in Asia and to the rest of the Third World. They also try to brainwash us in school with racist history which does not tell of the degradation, oppression and humiliation Asians and other Third World People have been forced to suffer in America. We want to learn of the heroic and inspiring struggles Asian people have conducted throughout the world as well as in America.
- 7. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING AND HEALTH AND CHILD CARE.**
The institutions of housing, health and child care are set up only to make money for landlords, doctors, hospitals and drug companies. We want housing, health and child care that gives us life and not slow death.
- 8. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND ALL ASIANS.**
Our Asian brothers and sisters in America's racist jails should be set free for they were not tried by their peers (other Asian brothers and sisters). Political prisoners are jailed because they fought for their freedom and basic rights as human beings. They all must be set free.
- 9. WE WANT AN END TO THE AMERICAN MILITARY.**
The American military machine is butchering people throughout the world, especially in Asia. The end of the American military will be one of the greatest events in the history of the liberation of mankind. We want all Asian Americans exempt from military service.
- 10. WE WANT AN END TO RACISM.**
White racism has been oppressing Third World People for the past 500 years. Although we recognize and firmly support the progressive white people in the anti-imperialist struggle, we should continue to struggle against white racism on all levels. The racism among Third World People toward each other is being broken down and a new unity is being created in our struggle against our common enemy.
- 11. WE WANT AN END TO THE GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES OF AMERICA.**
From its beginning, America has been a robber country. It stole land by the use of armed force from native Americans, Chinese and Latinos, and other peoples. America can now only maintain its present boundaries both internally and externally by the threat and use of violence. We want free passage of all people to and from America. The people of the world have built America, and they must now determine its destiny. America has also tried to blind those who live here as to the realities of socialism by reprinting information from and travel to the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Albania, North Korea, and North Vietnam. We want open boundaries and an end to immigration and immigration harassment.
- 12. WE WANT A SOCIALIST SOCIETY.**
What exists in America today is a society where one man in order to survive must exploit his fellow man. We want a society that works for the fulfillment of human needs. We want decent housing, health, child care, employment, sanitation and old age care. We want a society where all men or women will die due to lack of food, medical care or housing, where each gives according to his ability and takes according to his need.



1. "History of I Wor Kuen" in Statements on the Founding of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist), 1978. Republished in the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line. See also: "The New Communist Movement: Origins and Early Groups, 1969-1974, in The Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line

2. Eveline Chao, "How Asian-American Radicals Brought 'Yellow Power' To Chinatown," Gothamist, Oct 19, 2016.

3. I Wor Kuen, "I Wor Kuen's 12 Point Program and Platform," History is A Weapon, 1969.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: *"I Wor Kuen and the Young Lords' Health Advocacy"*

The healthcare advocacy of both IWK and the Young Lords occurred in a time period where healthcare globally was rapidly shifting. Post-World War II, changes in the structure of US medical care along with growing instances of documented medical discrimination in the age of civil rights advocacy also stirred growing discontent in many minority communities.¹ Events, including shifting away from the privatization of healthcare in Cuba and rapidly increasing rates of disease in migrant populations, led to demands for improved healthcare, especially in marginalized communities.² Veterans returned from war with injuries and disabilities that required longer-term care than the state could provide. And insurance access, particularly for seniors or for low-income communities, was spotty, and the idea of a public safety net (Medicare or Medicaid) was tangled in Cold War-era anxieties over any public services being equivalent to "community" or "socialist" medicine.³

By the time Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the American presidency in 1963, some changes were coming. While LBJ's "Great Society" did fund some new community health clinics and finally managed to sign Medicare into law, the 1960s into the 1970s saw small, local medical practices – which often waived or reduced costs for low-income community members – go under, and be replaced by mainstream hospitals and large medical research institutions.⁴ Remaining private practices often shifted to offer "luxury healthcare." Due to the increasingly for-profit-dominated health care system, lower income community members often relied on free city public health resources.⁵ These were often not actually concentrated in areas that needed them most, like East Harlem and the Lower East Side pre-1970. In the absence of the city or the state providing the services that people needed, community groups often stepped in to serve their own people. Organizations like the Young Lords, the BPP, and I Wor Kuen all faced similar questions: how could they build community structures that would fill gaps in healthcare, and how would they reach the people who needed them most?

For all three groups, having their own newspapers or newsletters was a key part of directly reaching people. The IWK's *Getting Together* publication was a tool for strengthening coalitions, both bringing attention to available community services and writing editorial coverage on why they were so needed. As mentioned in the prior section, the bilingual English-Chinese newspaper emphasized language accessibility, and involved young people in the writing and translation of the publication.

In the July 1970 Issue of *Getting Together*, a newspaper clipping reads:

"I WOR KUEN has increased its efforts to serve the community through TB testing. Door-to-door Tine testings being done twice a week or more, and a survey of community health problems and facilities has been incorporated into the program. I WOR KUEN has also acquired the facilities of the X-RAY truck recently liberated by the Young Lords Organization in New York City, and will be used for follow up of positive Tine tests." (Tine tests are now outdated, but at the time of publication, they were one of the most common ways to screen for tuberculosis. The testing mechanism also benefited from being small and relatively portable, meaning that community health groups could easily administer them themselves.)

From this excerpt, we can see that the publication not only hopes to advertise their services to the public, but also to highlight minority community organizations building solidarity and recognizing their shared struggles. While New York had public health services that could come directly to neighborhoods, the trucks that screened for TB would often come unannounced, during hours when working-class community members were busy, or not at all. Often, providing services in one minority community was framed as taking them directly from another. The Young Lords sharing their TB testing resources with the AAPI community on the Lower East Side is a direct argument against that myth.⁶ The excerpt in *Getting Together* explicitly highlights this, combating narratives of anti-Blackness or the model minority myth that attempted to pit minorities against each other. Instead, they proclaimed:

"This is an example of how revolutionary groups of different races can cooperate to together SERVE OUR PEOPLE".



1. David Barton Smith, *The Power to Heal: Civil Rights, Medicare, and the Struggle to Transform America's Health Care System*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016.

2. Johanna Fernández, "DISEASES OF POVERTY," in *The Young Lords: A Radical History*, University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

3. Jason Karlawish, "Alzheimer's Disease Patients Are The Last Casualties Of The Cold War," *Forbes*, July 30, 2016.

4. Fernández, "DISEASES OF POVERTY," 2020.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: "The Chinatown Health Fair"

In August of 1971, the health care services provided by organizations like I Wor Kuen and a desire to mobilize the community through health care advocacy led to the first Chinatown Health Fair. Growing discontent with the few services provided by the city, especially to immigrants, made it deeply significant that the first Chinatown Health Fair provided both bilingual and bicultural services.¹ The Fair was influenced by the larger Civil Rights Movement, and used the gathering as a way to advocate for rights including health care — and beyond.² The first Health Fair was a labor of love for community organizing, involving collaboration between I Wor Kuen, Basement Workshop members, local churches, activist and photographer Corky Lee, and more.

It was especially important to I Wor Kuen members that the Health Fair provided bilingual health access. To help, they mobilized bilingual youth — younger, radical Chinese Americans — to help translate and provide services. A New York Times article published on August 1, 1971, reads: "The youths offered their services as interpreters for the non English speaking, to help take the mystery out of modern medicine. The young people feel that often when a person is not given an explanation of a finger-prick test, for example, he is liable to fear the unfamiliar procedures."³ Many youth involved came from Asian student organizations from universities, such as the Chinese Students Association at Columbia University. Similarly to the bilingual articles published in *Getting Together*, the inaugural Health Fair emphasized the growing importance of language-accessible resources in an era of growing immigration to the United States.

The Health Fair adapted to meet the needs and culture of its surrounding community. They offered services targeting the diseases that were most prevalent in Chinatown: tuberculosis, but also conditions affecting the elderly, families, and smokers, like lung cancer information or blood pressure testing. They aimed to meet language needs, as well as Chinese cultural practices. Booths at the Health Fair didn't just include Western medicine, but also health care that aligned with Chinese cultures, including a booth where community members could receive herbal medicine treatments and acupuncture.⁴

The Health Fair went beyond just providing health services. It also emphasized educating individuals on their rights beyond a once-yearly community gathering, advocating for community health services, including the Chinatown Health Clinic. The CHC opened the same year as the first Health Fair, founded and run by bilingual volunteers, who were community members, students, doctors, and nurses. The center was part of a larger national community health center movement, with centers opening in Boston, Massachusetts and Mound Bayou, Mississippi in prior years.⁵ It was renamed as the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center in 1999, to honor Charles B. Wang, a philanthropist who provided support to the clinic.⁶ The center was run originally out of a church on Mott Street, and has since expanded to include locations in Flushing, a permanent location in Chinatown, and more.⁷



1. "About Us: Charles B. Wang Community Health Center," Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, 2024.
2. Melanie Yu, Joselyn Cueto, Yi Tuo, Jose Monzon Barillas, and Ashley Mejia, "Basement Workshop - Virtual Asian-American Artists Museum," 2021.
3. "Youths in Chinatown Open Health Fair," The New York Times, August 1, 1971.
4. "Bringing Health Care to NYC Chinatown," Museum of Chinese in America, 2026.
5. National Museum of American History, "The Story of the 1971 Chinatown Health Fair," YouTube, July 28, 2020.
6. "About Us: Charles B. Wang Community Health Center," CBWCHC, 2024.
7. "Bringing Health Care to NYC Chinatown," MOCA, 2026.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: *"The Fight for Gouverneur Hospital"*

While the original 1971 Health Fair emphasized providing preventative health services, including TB testing, blood tests, and X-rays, by 1973, the fair had expanded its mission. While providing the same services, it placed more emphasis on a larger goal of educating community members on all of their rights, including housing and health care access.

The Gouverneur Hospital, which was under a period of construction when the first Health Fair took place, was one of the only city-owned, full-service hospitals serving the Chinatown and Lower East Side communities.¹ Understanding its role in the neighborhood is crucial to understanding the state of health care access in Chinatown in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the multiracial coalition which came together to advocate for it. Though it was state-of-the-art when it first opened around the turn of the century, by the 1960s, Gouverneur had seen better days.² In 1961, its hospital accreditation and ability to provide inpatient service were both removed. Beth Israel, a large city hospital, took over its outpatient services, but their priorities were very different than those of neighborhood activists. The Hospital Council of Greater New York had been attempting to shut down Gouverneur in various forms since the 1950s. Their proposed replacements for the care it provided were nowhere near adequate for the services, both routine and emergency, that a large, diverse neighborhood like the Lower East Side required.



The city's main roadblock in their attempts to close Gouverneur Hospital was the Lower East Side Neighborhood Association (LENA): a coalition of Asian, Black, Hispanic, Italian, and Jewish community members. This coalition represented all the different waves of immigration that Chinatown and the Lower East Side had experienced in the first sixty-odd years of the twentieth century. The LENA coalition focused on the gaps in the hospital's inpatient and outpatient services, the labor conditions at the hospital, and the hospital's lack of translators and bilingual medical staff.³ These issues were a key factor in the community needs that the Chinatown Community Health Fairs would address.



As seen in the above photograph, which declares that "1/4 of the workers at the new Gouverneur must speak Chinese!", many members of LENA advocated for the city to hire bilingual workers and for the hospital's staff to reflect the neighborhood it served.⁴ Many members of LENA went on to found the Lower East Side Health Council South, which continued to take up these issues throughout the 1970s.

1. "CASE STUDY: GOUVERNEUR HOSPITAL," Migration Policy, n.d.

2. Lower East Side Preservation Institute, "Request for Evaluation of the Former Gouverneur Hospital at 621 Water Street," September 26, 2023.

3. Hongden Gao, "Community Struggles for a New Gouverneur: Tackling the Deeper Roots of the City's Unequal Hospital Care," The Gotham Center for New York City History, January 5, 2021.

4. Rudy Johnson, "Gouverneur Hospital to Open in '72, Protesters Told," The New York Times, November 17, 1971. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/11/17/archives/gouverneur-hospital-to-open-in-72-protesters-told.html>

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: "The Fight for Gouverneur Hospital"



In the photograph left, Corky Lee, a photographer and neighborhood activist involved in the creation of the Community Health Fair and the Charles B. Wang Community Clinic, documented the protest.

Following the establishment of the "New" Gouverneur in 1972, the hospital began to produce newsletters aimed at educating and engaging the community.¹ Similar to I Wor Kuen's Getting Together, the paper was bilingual, providing English as well as Mandarin translations of the paper. The paper demonstrates the continued need for communication, and highlights the media as a tool for community-building and creating transparency. These values were key to fostering a service that truly reflected community needs.

In the English-language issue of the Gouverneur Newsletter reprinted to the left, published within the first nine months of the hospital's reopening, the writers highlight "community struggle" as key to the creation of the hospital. They emphasize the reliance on community health centers in areas like the Lower East Side. In particular, they discuss a neighborhood health center affiliated with Gouverneur, and the federal requirements that these centers involve community members. These seem to indicate some interest, at least, in a participatory approach to running the health center.

However, the article also mentions tensions between private "medical empires" and community needs, which had led to the closure of health centers in major urban areas, including Los Angeles, Denver, and Boston. They make reference to the struggle to maintain community needs while dealing with capitalist-driven medical empires, which prioritized profit over people. Truly community-run clinics like the Charles B. Wang Community Health Clinic, previously known as the Chinatown Community Health Clinic, did not face these same challenges. However, the inclusion of this item in the newsletter already demonstrates efforts at transparency and including community voices. Moreover, the article "Health in China" highlights an attempt to incorporate traditional medicine and bicultural health services into city-run hospital services, including acupuncture.



1. John Sibley, "New Gouverneur Opens As the 19th City Hospital," The New York Times, September 22, 1972.

Community Organizing and Health Access in New York City's Chinatown in the 1970s

By: Abby Chen

Excerpt from: *"Conclusion: Legacies of Health Advocacy"*

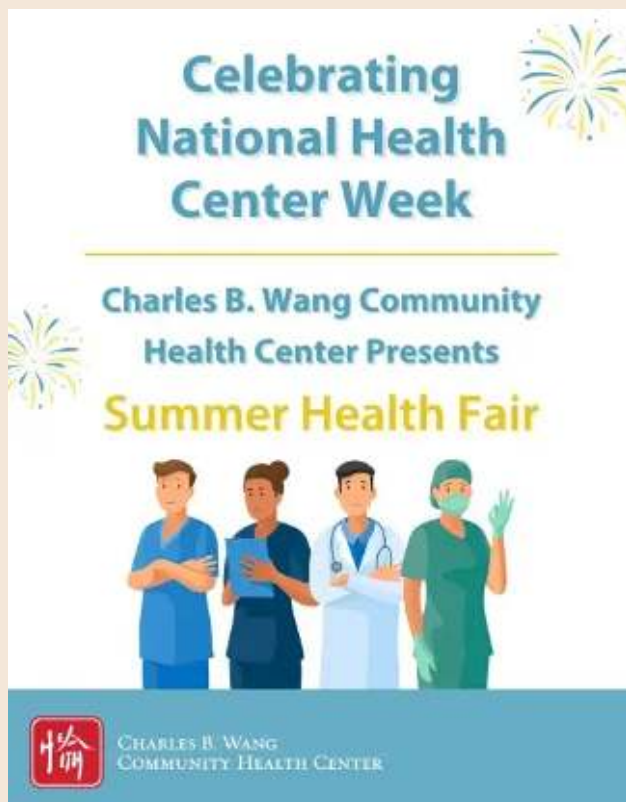
Today, health inequalities still persist in Asian American communities. The intersection between health care access and racism was further highlighted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which saw shortages in testing access and treatment in public hospitals.¹ This was also accompanied by a spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, particularly in visibly Asian neighborhoods like New York's Chinatown.

During the pandemic, those with insurance, access to private health care, and the ability to shelter at home without losing pay experienced significantly better health outcomes than those who were uninsured or worked outside the home.² Even today, those with access to private health care still tend to be wealthy white people. Medical care without insurance is incredibly expensive, and there are barriers outside of cost that keep many from accessing it: language barriers, cultural differences, unfriendly hours, and many more practical considerations. Many of the same issues that prompted I Wor Kuen and other groups to prioritize community-based health still exist today.

The Charles B. Wang Community Health Clinic, which still provides services to Chinatown's community, continues to expand in other Chinese ethnic enclaves, including Flushing.³ They still host a community health fair every year, demonstrating the same need for community health education, education on rights, and community-oriented public health services. Many city agencies, including the Office of Immigrant Affairs, continue to be involved, and table at the fair. They aim to educate citizens on their rights, connecting to the mission of the fair since 1971. The health fair still relies on bilingual staff and volunteers, embodying their mission of accessible health care that can meet community needs in all forms.

The community health fairs and health advocacy of the 1970s still embody an example of community organizing by the community, for the community. It speaks to the importance of involving community leadership to ensure that culturally reflective services reflect the needs of community members. Solidarity between different communities on the diverse Lower East Side demonstrates that minority communities are able to use collective organizing to strengthen advocacy, ensuring their needs are met and not ignored.

Read Abby's Full Historical Exhibit at
<https://localizedhistoryproject.org/exhibits/community-organizing-and-health-access-new-york-citys-chinatown-1970s>



1. Brian M. Rosenthal, Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Otterman and Sheri Fink, "Why Surviving the Virus Might Come Down to Which Hospital Admits You," The New York Times, July 1, 2020.

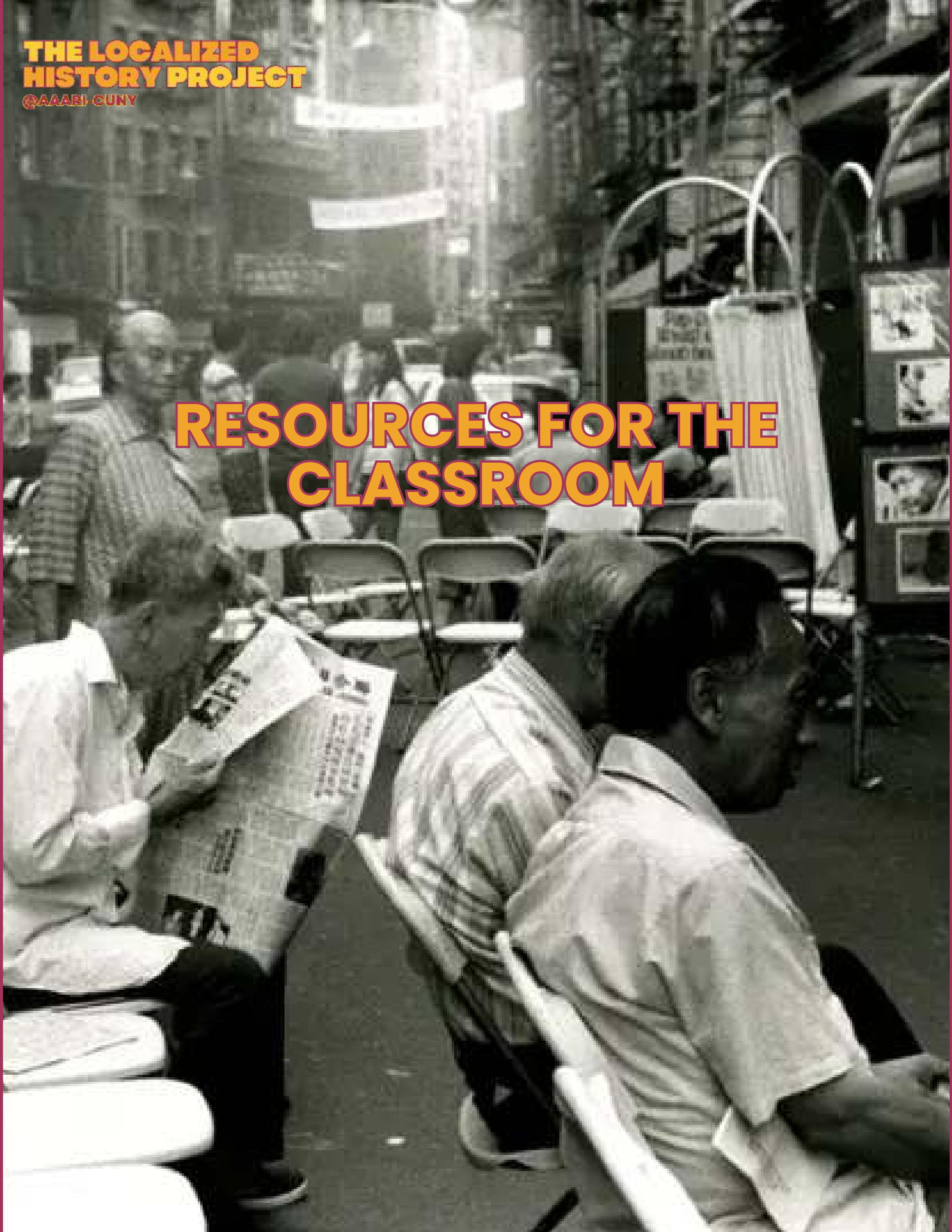
2. New York State Nurses Association, "The crisis within the crisis: COVID-19's deadly racial disparities," NY Nurse, June 2020.

3. Carlotta Mohamed, "Charles B. Wang Community Health Center celebrates new site in Flushing," QNS, June 12, 2023.

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RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM



primary sources:



Lanterns glow at night in San Francisco's Chinatown, often considered the United States' oldest Chinatown. c. 1903

Photograph by Willard Worden, held at the de Young Museum, San Francisco. Public domain.

primary sources:



Chinese men gather in front of businesses and residences on Pell Street at the turn of the century (1900).

Included in the Detroit Publishing Company photograph collection in the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Divisions. No known rights restrictions.

primary sources:




Manhattan's Chinatown community protests Japanese occupation during festivities at the Friends of China Parade (1937).

Held in the Federal Writer's Projects photographs in the NYC Department of Records and Information Services. Rights unknown.

primary sources:


October 1966
Black Panther Party
Platform and Program

What We Want What We Believe



**Huey P. Newton Minister of Defense
Black Panther Party**

- 1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.**
We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.
- 2. We want full employment for our people.**
We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.
- 3. We want an end to the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community.**
We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.
- 4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.**
We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.
- 5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.**
We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.
- 6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.**
We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.
- 7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.**
We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.
- 8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.**
We believe that all black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
- 9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.**
We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that black people will receive fair trials. The 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the black community from which the black defendant came. We have been, and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the "average reasoning man" of the black community.
- 10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the black colony in which only black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.**
When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.



The political and philosophical manifesto of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, first drafted in 1966.

Created by The Black Panther Party for Self Defense, housed in the Radical Democracy Project. Fair use.

primary sources:

HEALTH REVOLUTIONARY UNITY MOVEMENT

10 POINT HEALTH PROGRAM

1. WE WANT COMMUNITY WORKER CONTROL OF ALL HEALTH SERVICES IN OUR OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.
2. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO FORM ORGANIZATIONS OF PATIENTS AND WORKERS TO FIGHT FOR IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS, BETTER PATIENT CARE, AND TO MAKE HEALTH POLICIES.
3. WE WANT ALL NEW HOSPITALS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION TO BE BUILT IMMEDIATELY TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF OUR OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.
4. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT AND UPGRADING FOR OUR PEOPLE IN ALL HEALTH FACILITIES, AND OPEN ADMISSIONS TO ALL HEALTH SCIENCE SCHOOLS.
5. WE WANT FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL PEOPLE.
6. WE WANT COMMUNITY-RUN HEALTH CLINICS ON EVERY BLOCK TO DEAL WITH MINOR HEALTH PROBLEMS.
7. WE WANT DOOR-TO-DOOR PREVENTIVE CARE TO DEAL WITH SANITATION CONTROL, NUTRITION, DRUG ADDICTION, CHILD DAY CARE, AND SENIOR CITIZEN SERVICES.
8. WE WANT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT EXPOSE THE LEADING HEALTH PROBLEMS, SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT, POOR HOUSING, RACISM, MALNUTRITION, POLICE BRUTALITY AND ALL OTHER FORMS OF EXPLOITATION.
9. WE WANT COMMUNITY, STUDENTS, UNIONS, AND WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT AND FIGHT FOR THIS PROGRAMS IN THE INTERESTS OF OUR PEOPLE.
10. THE ROLE OF THE HEALTH REVOLUTIONARY UNITY MOVEMENT IS TO EDUCATE AND UNITE ALL OUR PEOPLE AND TO EXPOSE THE CORRUPT HEALTH SYSTEM THAT KEEPS OUR PEOPLE WEAK AND UNABLE TO FIGHT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION AND COMPLETE LIBERATION.

PROGRAMA DE SALUD DE 10 PUNTOS

1. QUEREMOS EL CONTROL DE TODOS LOS SERVICIOS DE SALUD EN NUESTRAS COMUNIDADES OPRIMIDAS EN MANOS DE JUNTAS DE TRABAJADORES Y LA COMUNIDAD.
2. QUEREMOS EL DERECHO DE FORMAR ORGANIZACIONES DE PACIENTES Y TRABAJADORES PARA LUCHAR POR MEJORES CONDICIONES DE TRABAJO, MEJOR ATENCION MEDICA, Y PARA DECIDIR NUESTRAS PROPIAS POLITICAS DE SALUD.
3. QUEREMOS QUE TODOS LOS HOSPITALES NUEVOS Y EN CONSTRUCCION SEAN EDIFICADOS INMEDIATAMENTE PARA SERVIR LAS NECESIDADES DE NUESTRAS COMUNIDADES OPRIMIDAS.
4. QUEREMOS EMPLEO TOTAL Y POSIBILIDADES DE ADELANTO PARA NUESTRA GENTE EN TODOS LOS SERVICIOS DE SALUD Y ADMISION ABIERTA PARA TODAS LAS ESCUELAS DE SALUD.
5. QUEREMOS ATENCION MEDICA GRATUITA PARA TODA GENTE.
6. QUEREMOS CLINICAS DE SALUD DIRIGIDAS POR LA COMUNIDAD PARA TRATAR LOS PROBLEMAS MENORES DE SALUD.
7. QUEREMOS ATENCION MEDICA PREVENTIVA A DOMICILIO PARA TRATAR CON EL CONTROL DE SANIDAD, NUTRICION, ADICCION A LAS DROGAS, Y QUEREMOS CENTROS DE CUIDADO PARA LOS NIÑOS Y SERVICIOS PARA LOS ANCIANOS.
8. QUEREMOS PROGRAMAS DE EDUCACION QUE EXPONGAN LOS PROBLEMAS DE SALUD MAS IMPORTANTES TALES COMO DESEMPLEO, LA VIVIENDA DE MALA CALIDAD, EL RACISMO, LA DISNUTRICION, LA BRUTALIDAD POLICIA Y CUALQUIER OTRA FORMA DE EXPLOTACION.
9. QUEREMOS QUE LA COMUNIDAD, LOS ESTUDIANTES, LAS ORGANIZACIONES Y UNIONES DE TRABAJADORES, NOS APOYEN ACTIVAMENTE Y LUCHEN POR ESTE PROGRAMA DE INTERES AL PUEBLO.
10. EL OBJETIVO DE H.R.U.M. ES UNIR Y EDUCAR A NUESTRA GENTE. QUEREMOS DESENMASCARAR LA CORRUPCION DE UN SISTEMA DE SALUD QUE MANTIENE A NUESTRA GENTE ENFERMA Y SIN CAPACIDAD DE LUCHAR POR NUESTRA AUTODETERMINACION Y LIBERACION COMPLETA.

The 10 Point Health Program of the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement, a program of the Young Lords' health ministry. This document was originally published in Palante, volume 2, number 3.

Included in "The Young Lords: A Reader," Chapter 9, "Health and Hospitals." Rights unknown.

primary sources:

I WOR KUEN

12 Point Platform and Program

Asian people in Amerika have been continuously oppressed by the greedy, traitorous gangsters of our own communities and by the wider racist exploitative Amerikan society. We have been bombarded by the media (newspapers, T.V., radio and schools) with false ideas about how we should accept our position in this society. They have tried to brainwash us and have even coerced us into going overseas and fighting against our own people in S.E. Asia.

But, Asian Amerikans have been fighting back against the oppression of this country ever since we first tasted the bitterness of Amerika's racism and exploitation. The long and heroic history of the Asian Amerikan struggle inspired and strengthened us in our purpose. No longer can we endure these oppressive conditions. We cannot let our ancestors' struggles go down in vain. We know who are our real enemies and friends and we have found new strength for we are joining our sisters and brothers within this country and around the world to fight for freedom and justice against the rulers of this country.


We have tried the peaceful means of petition, courts, voting and even demonstrations. But our situation remained the same. We are not free.

We want to improve the living conditions of our people and are preparing to defend our communities against repression and for revolutionary armed war against the gangsters, businessmen, politicians and police. When a government oppresses the people and no longer serves the needs of the people, we have the right to abolish it and create a new one.

We are working for a world of peace, where the needs of the people come first, which is without class distinctions and is based upon the love and unity of all peoples.

The following 12 points are what we are fighting for:

- 1. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ASIAN AMERICANS.**
The masses of Asian people in Amerika live in ghettos which are like small colonies. The Amerikan capitalists continually attempt to make profit off us by trying to alter our entire way of life for their own benefit. We want liberation from this enslavement so we can determine our own destinies.
- 2. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL ASIANS.**
Western imperialists have been invading and colonizing countries in Asia for the past 500 years. Amerikan imperialism, concentrating in Asia is now engaged in the most sadistic and genocidal war of aggression the world has ever seen. We want an immediate end to Amerikan imperialism.
- 3. WE WANT LIBERATION OF ALL THIRD WORLD PEOPLES AND OTHER OPPRESSED PEOPLES.**
People of color, Asian, Black, Brown, Red are all fighting for liberation from Amerika's racist oppression. Millions and millions of white people are also rising up to fight our common oppressor. We recognize that only when the oppression of all people is ended can we all really be free.
- 4. WE WANT AN END TO MALE CHAUVINISM AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.**
The thousands of years of oppression under feudalism and capitalism have created institutions and myths of male supremacy over women. Men must fight along with sisters in the struggle for economic and social equality and must recognize that sisters make up over half of the revolutionary army. Sisters and brothers are equals fighting for our people.
- 5. WE WANT COMMUNITY CONTROL OF OUR INSTITUTIONS AND LAND.**
Those institutions in our communities such as the police, schools, health, housing, transportation, sanitation, and pollution, and welfare must be controlled by and serve the needs of our people and not be geared to the making of money. We want an end to our community being used to make profit for outsiders, such as landlords and tourist agencies.
- 6. WE WANT AN EDUCATION WHICH EXPOSES THE TRUE HISTORY OF WESTERN IMPERIALISM IN ASIA AND AROUND THE WORLD, WHICH TEACHES US THE HARDSHIPS AND STRUGGLES OF OUR ANCESTORS IN THIS LAND AND WHICH REVEALS THE TRULY DECADENT, EXPLOITATIVE NATURE OF AMERIKAN SOCIETY.**
The Amerikan imperialists have tried to justify their world empire by covering up the inhuman deeds they perpetrated in Asia and to the rest of the Third World. They also try to brainwash us in school with racist history which does not tell of the degradation, oppression and humiliation Asians and other Third World People have been forced to suffer in Amerika. We want to learn of the heroic and inspiring struggles Asian people have conducted throughout the world as well as in Amerika.
- 7. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING AND HEALTH AND CHILD CARE.**
The institutions of housing, health and child care are set up only to make money for landlords, doctors, hospitals and drug companies. We want housing, health and child care that gives us life and not slow death.
- 8. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS AND ALL ASIANS.**
Our Asian brothers and sisters in Amerika's racist jails should be set free for they were not tried by their peers (other Asian brothers and sisters). Political prisoners are jailed because they fought for their freedom and basic rights as human beings. They all must be set free.
- 9. WE WANT AN END TO THE AMERIKAN MILITARY.**
The Amerikan military machine is butchering people throughout the world, especially in Asia. The end of the Amerikan military will be one of the greatest events in the history of the liberation of mankind. We want all Asian Amerikans exempt from military servitude.
- 10. WE WANT AN END TO RACISM.**
White racism has been oppressing Third World People for the past 500 years. Although we recognize and firmly support the progressive white people in the anti-imperialist struggle, we should continue to struggle against white racism on all levels. The racism among Third World People toward each other is being broken down and a new unity is being created in our struggle against our common enemy.
- 11. WE WANT AN END TO THE GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES OF AMERIKA.**
From its beginning, Amerika has been a robber country. It stole land by the use of armed force from native Americans, Chicanos and Latinos, and other peoples. Amerika can now only maintain its present boundaries both internally and externally by the threat and use of violence. We want free passage of all people to and from Amerika. The people of the world have built Amerika, and they must now determine its destiny. Amerika has also tried to blind those who live here as to the realities of socialism by restricting information from and travel to the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Albania, North Korea, and North Vietnam. We want open boundaries and an end to immigration and emigration harassment.
- 12. WE WANT A SOCIALIST SOCIETY.**
What exists in Amerika today is a society where one man in order to survive must exploit his fellow man. We want a society that works for the fulfillment of human needs. We want decent housing, health, child care, employment, sanitation and old age care. We want a society where no man or woman will die due to lack of food, medical care or housing, where each gives according to his ability and takes according to his need.



The IWK's 12 Point Platform, its adaptation of the BPP's 10 Point Platform.

Included in "Roots: An Asian American Reader" (UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971), Fair Use.

primary sources:



Flags of Puerto Rico and other radical posters hang in the windows above a drug store in Bushwick.

Photograph by Camilo J. Vergara. Housed in the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Rights held by Camilo J. Vergara.

primary sources:

I WOR KUEN

I WOR KUEN is an organization of Asian people located in the Chinese community of New York City. I Wor Kuen exists to serve and defend all our people. We invite suggestions and criticism.

"Getting Together" is the official publication of I WOR KUEN organization.

I WOR KUEN is at 24 Market St.

WE SERVE THE PEOPLE

T.B. TESTING

I WOR KUEN has increased its efforts to serve the community through TB testing. Door-to-door Tine testing is being done twice a week or more, and a survey of community health problems and facilities has been incorporated into the program.

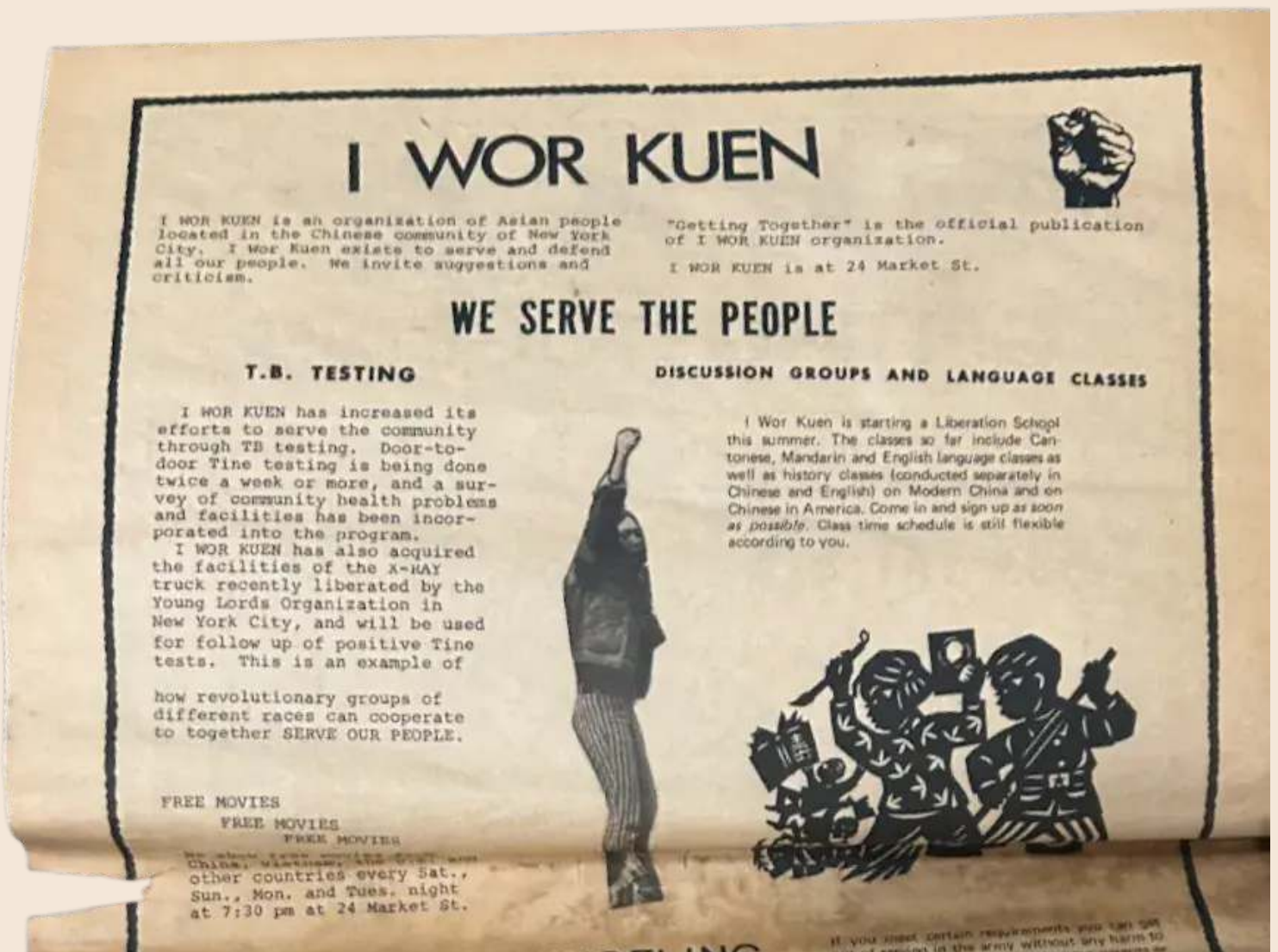
I WOR KUEN has also acquired the facilities of the X-RAY truck recently liberated by the Young Lords Organization in New York City, and will be used for follow up of positive Tine tests. This is an example of how revolutionary groups of different races can cooperate to together **SERVE OUR PEOPLE.**

DISCUSSION GROUPS AND LANGUAGE CLASSES

I Wor Kuen is starting a Liberation School this summer. The classes so far include Cantonese, Mandarin and English language classes as well as history classes (conducted separately in Chinese and English) on Modern China and on Chinese in America. Come in and sign up as soon as possible. Class time schedule is still flexible according to you.

FREE MOVIES
FREE MOVIES
FREE MOVIES

We show free movies from China, Malaysia, other countries every Sat., Sun., Mon. and Tues. night at 7:30 pm at 24 Market St.



An article in I Wor Kuen's newspaper, "Getting Together," advertising that the group would be going door-to-door in Chinatown to do tuberculosis testing.

Created by I Wor Kuen in an issue of "Getting Together." Housed in the Museum of Chinese in America, permissions granted via Museum of Chinese in America.

primary sources:



On August 19, 1969, members of the Young Lords' East Harlem chapter commandeered one of the city-sponsored mobile tuberculosis testing trucks and reclaimed it for the people. They also shared access to it with I Wor Kuen members and community members in Chinatown. August 19, 1969.

Photograph by Hiram Maristany. Included in "For the People's Health: Lessons from the Young Lords for Today's New York," written by Lauren Lefty. Housed in the Museum of the City of New York. Fair Use.

primary sources:



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Photograph by Hiram Maristany. Included in "For the People's Health: Lessons from the Young Lords for Today's New York," written by Lauren Lefty. Housed in the Museum of the City of New York. Fair Use.

primary sources:



A poster advertising the 1973 Chinatown Health Fair, an event that started in 1971 and has been held annually since then. The poster was designed by Robert (Bob) Lee, a member of Basement Workshop. c. 1973.

Created by the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. Held in the Smithsonian Museum of American History. Rights unknown.

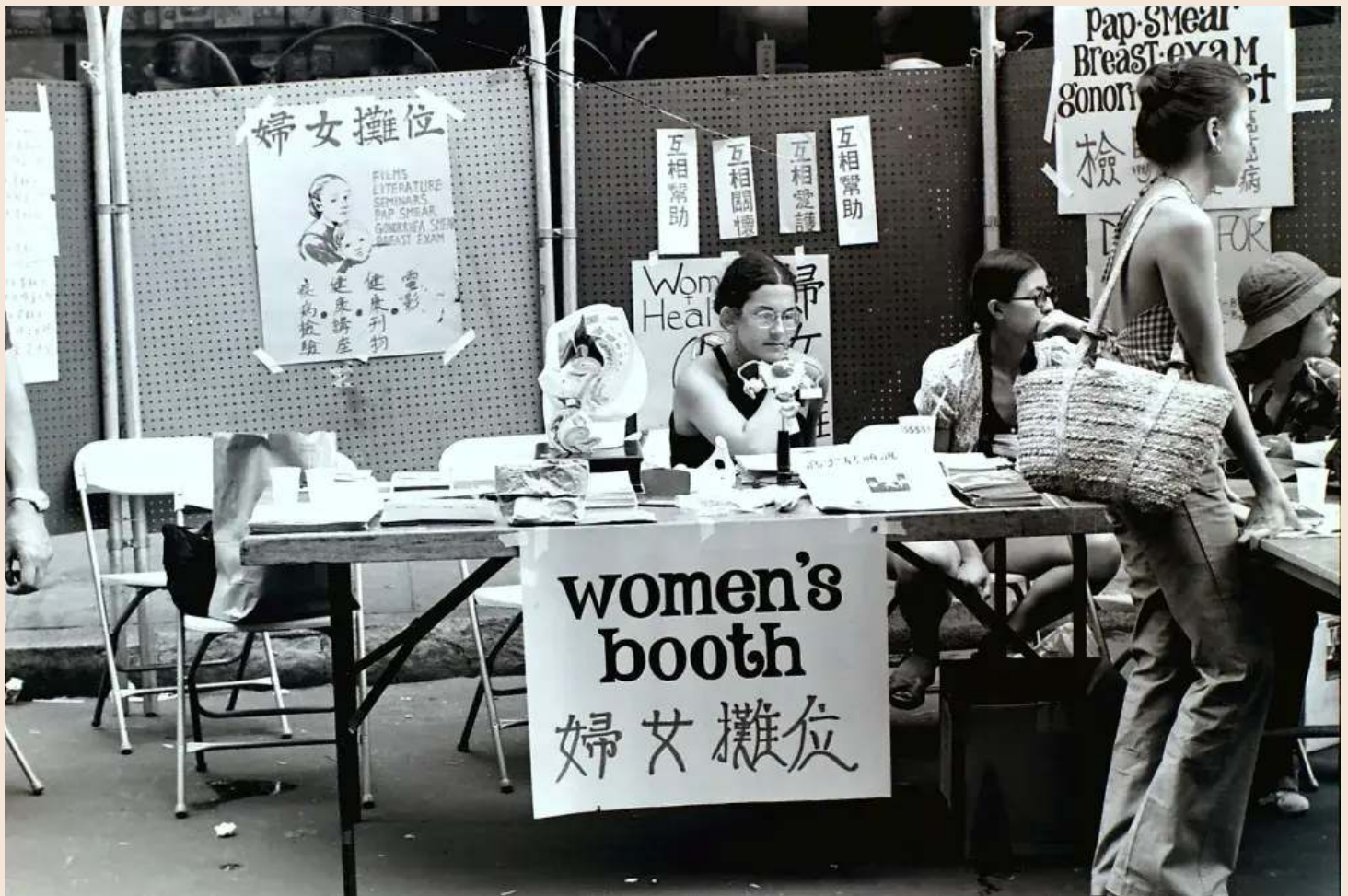
primary sources:



A volunteer at the Chinatown Health Clinic takes a resident's blood pressure at the Chinatown Health Fair (1971).

Photograph by Corky Lee. Housed in the National Library of Medicine, in the "Outside/Inside: Immigration, Migration, and Health Care in the United States" exhibit. Rights unknown.

primary sources:



The "women's booth" at the 1973 Chinatown Health Fair, advertising various health and screening services (1973).

Published by the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. Rights unknown.

primary sources:



Early founders of the Chinatown Health Clinic, now the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. c. 1970s.

Published by the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. Rights unknown.

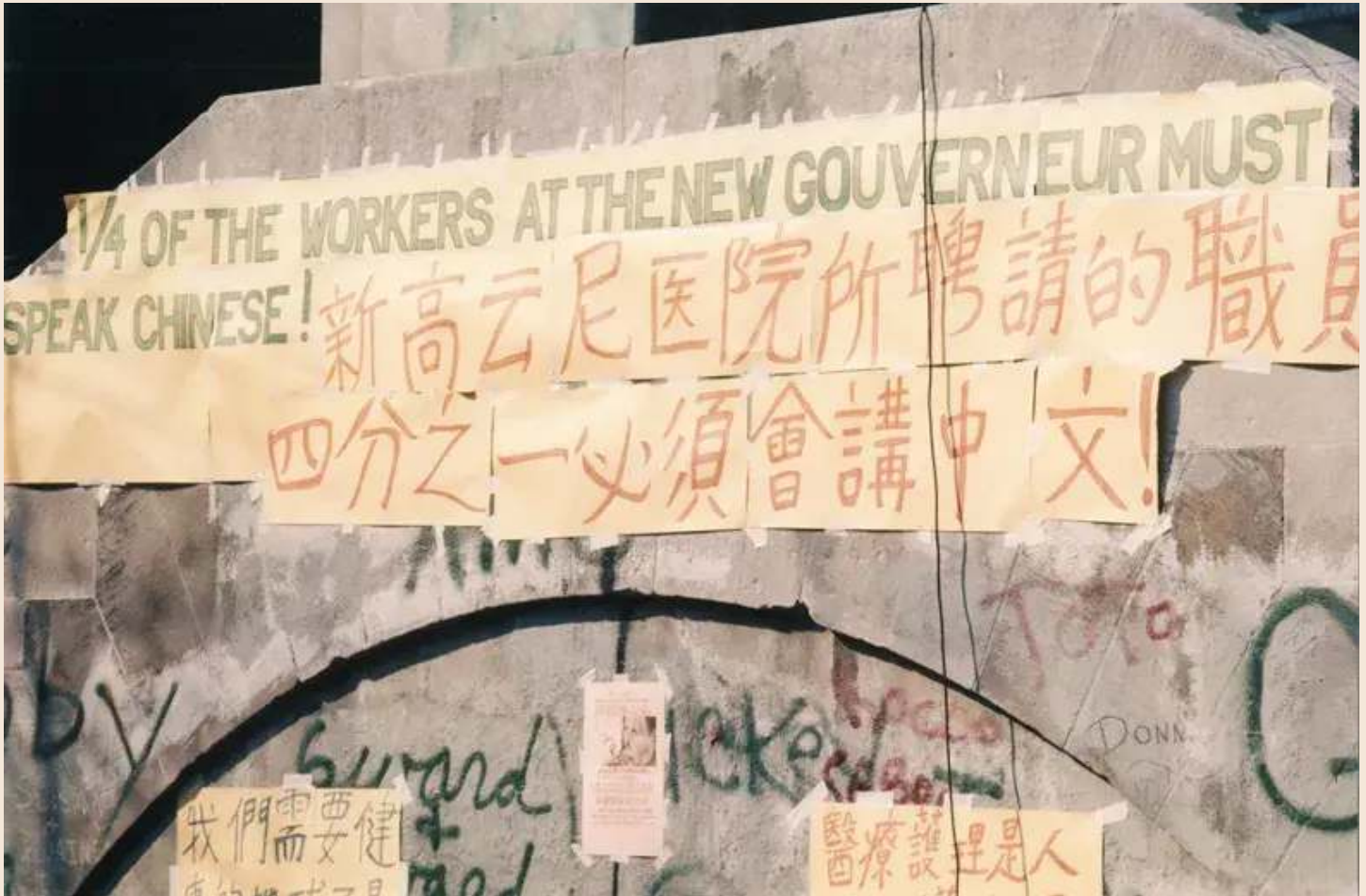
primary sources:



Chinatown residents march in the streets for healthcare rights, including the hiring of bilingual physicians, and to protest the potential closure of Gouverneur Hospital, which served the neighborhood (1973).

Photograph by Corky Lee. Housed in the National Library of Medicine, in the "Outside/Inside: Immigration, Migration, and Health Care in the United States" exhibit. Rights unknown.

primary sources:



A banner proclaiming that "1/4 of the workers at the new Gouverneur must speak Chinese!" The fight for bilingual physicians in the neighborhood hospital was a key issue for healthcare advocates in Chinatown (1973).

Photograph by Corky Lee. Housed in the National Library of Medicine, in the "Outside/Inside: Immigration, Migration, and Health Care in the United States" exhibit. Rights unknown.

primary sources:



A LENA (Lower East Side Neighborhood Association) demonstration in November 1971. The photo was taken by Corky Lee of Chinese seniors at a protest organized by the Health Council to demand the opening of a new Gouverneur Hospital (c. 1973)

Photograph by Corky Lee, published in Goveurneur Newsletter 2, no. 4. Housed in the Gotham Center for New York City History. Rights unknown.

primary sources:

along the lines of medical specialties, they would provide comprehensive general care, oriented towards the whole person, and the whole family.

One of the models which most influenced the neighborhood health center designers was New York City's Gouverneur health center, which had been providing comprehensive out-patient care to residents of Manhattan's Lower East Side since the early sixties.

If it worked at Gouverneur, why not try it in Watts, in Cleveland, and in Philadelphia?

BATTLEGROUND

Today, neighborhood health centers are far less popular in Washington, or even in local city halls. "All in all," said one New York government

350% More Rent?

A story of one apartment--rent increases and housing conditions in the Lower East Side.

(See story on pg. 13)



By Nestor Cortijo

No sooner were they off the drawing boards than neighborhood health centers became the battlegrounds for the first major confrontations between urban medical empires and urban ghetto communities.

They were, as some analysts are beginning to understand retrospectively, almost set up for this kind of conflict. Federal regulations called for formal community participation in health center operation, and at the same time stipulated that the centers be affiliated with a qualified back-up hospital. Somehow, in the setting of a new center, community representatives were supposed to be able to participate in a common venture with the men who ran the local medical center, with its hated wards and clinics. Somehow, the medical center representatives were supposed to suddenly show respect for the judgment of the people they had formerly seen only as teaching material. In Los Angeles, Denver, Boston, and a host of other cities, neighborhood health centers have been torn by the conflict between community needs and medical empire priorities.

MULTI-ETHNIC GHETTO

New York City's Gouverneur, the early model neighborhood health center, has been the scene of one of the nation's bitterest community-medical center conflicts. The Lower East Side, the community served by Gouverneur, is not a typical urban ghetto, but it is certainly the nation's archetypical ghetto. First the Lower East Side was an Irish and Italian slum, then a Jewish ghetto, and now increasingly a Puerto Rican and Black ghetto. Residues of all the past waves of immigration have remained to create the present mix of Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Russians, Jews, Polish Catholics, and even Chinese. Despite this diversity, the Lower East Side is probably the most highly organized ghetto in the country, with a maze of ethnic clubs, political organizations, and special

(Continued on Page 11)

of general interest to the LEB COMMUNITY. We hope you will give us your ideas.

Waiting Can Be Fun

Usually when children wait for their parents, it's just no fun. Both parents and children quickly become tired and irritable. We are happy to announce, therefore, the opening of our new PLAYROOM on the second floor, Room 2-104.

All patients are welcome to leave their children from ages three to ten in the playroom while they or other children are being treated. The only requirement is that the parent show his appointment slip to the staff person on duty.

Visitors are also welcome to leave their children during the afternoon visiting hours, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Children under 16 are not allowed on the wards to see in-patients.

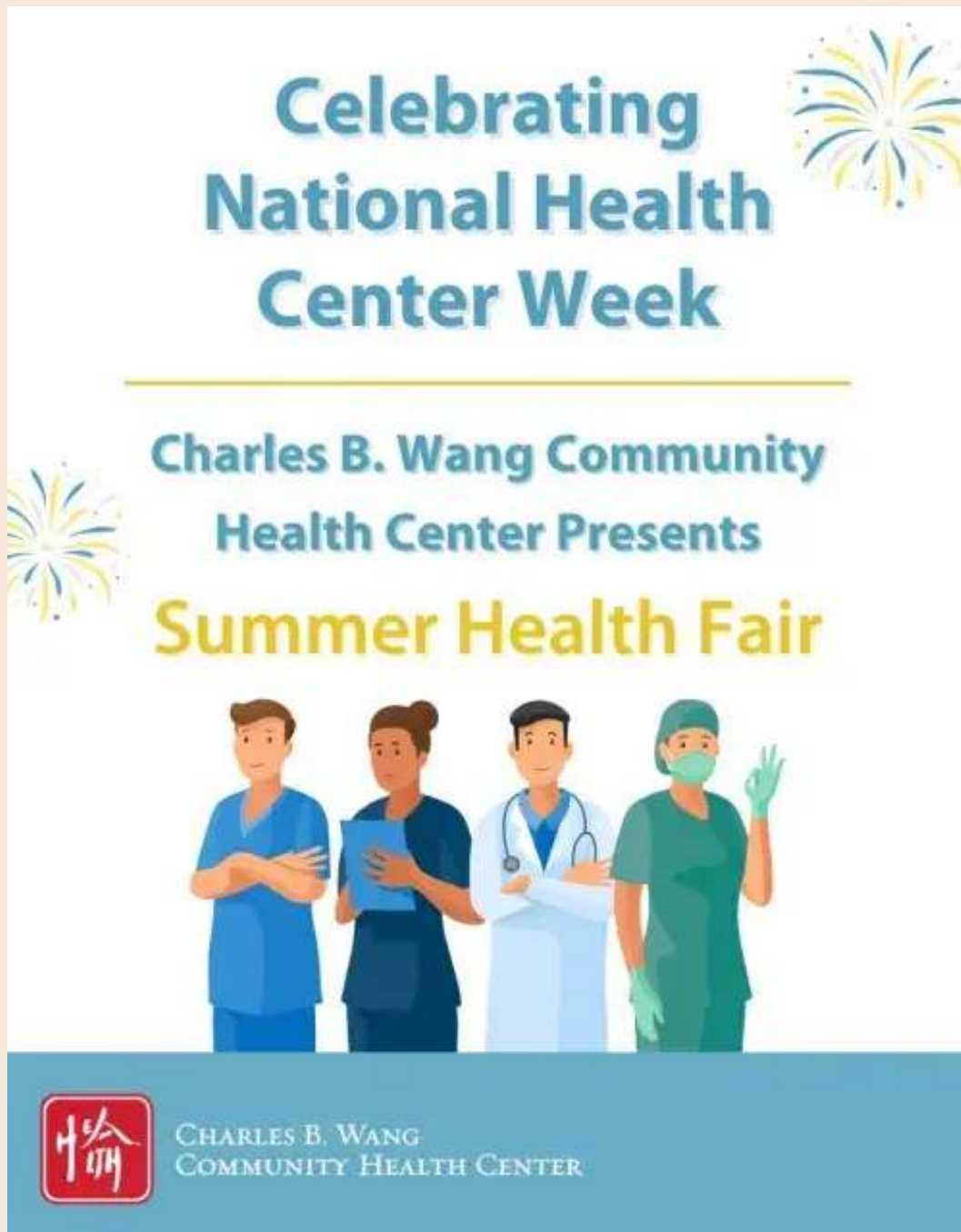
The Playroom is equipped with toys and drawing materials. It is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. ■



Articles from Gouverneur Hospital's community newsletter, including one detailing the "multi-ethnic ghetto" that surrounded the hospital (1972-1973)

Created by the Gouverneur Newsletter, published and housed at the Museum of Chinese in America. Rights unknown.

primary sources:



A contemporary flyer from the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, advertising their upcoming summer health fair.

Created by the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. Rights unknown.

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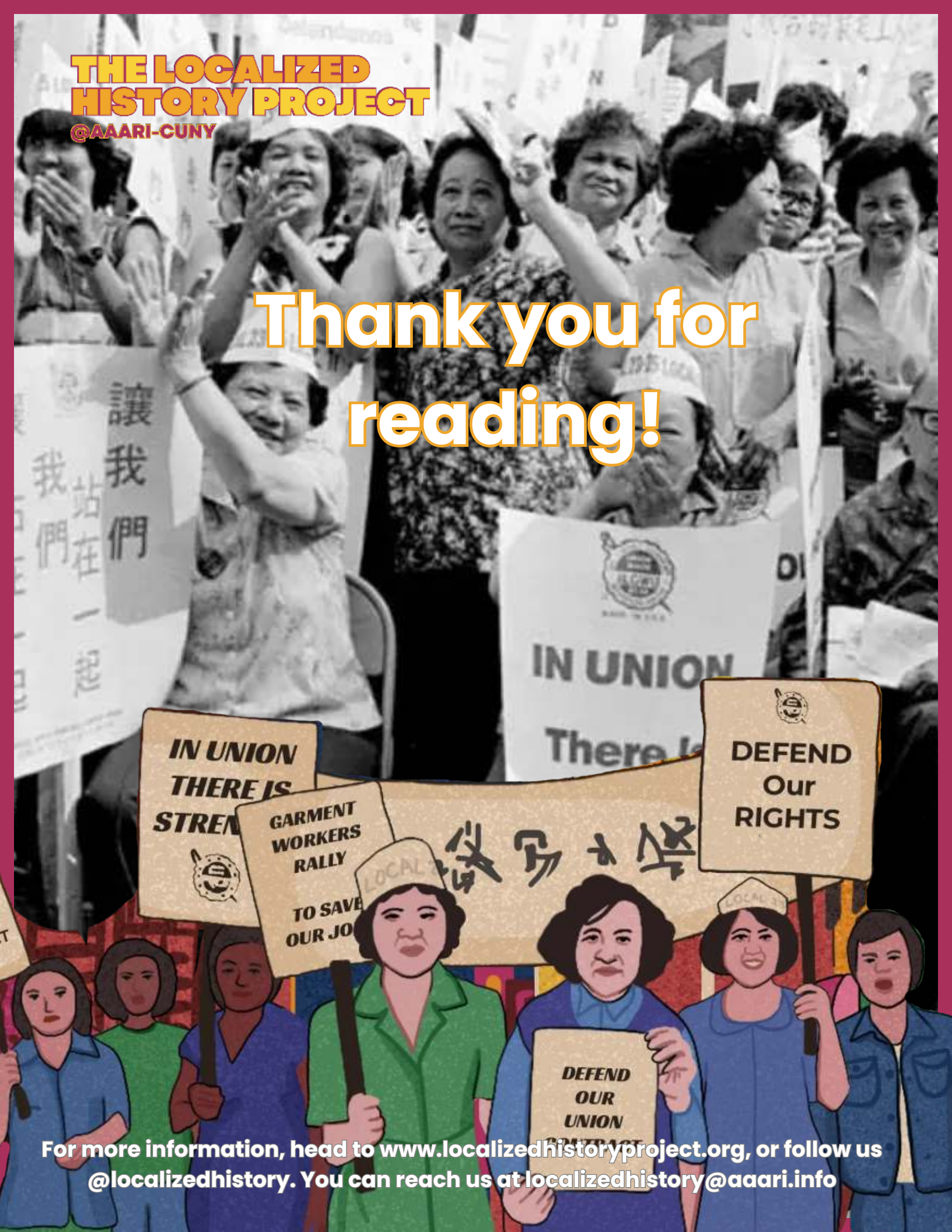
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