

**THE LOCALIZED  
HISTORY PROJECT**  
@AAARI-CUNY

# **EDUCATOR GUIDE**

***Everyday Resistance, Cultural Preservation, and Neighborhood Identity: Doyers Street as a Site of Struggle Against Racial Capitalism in Chinatown's Urban Revitalization***

# A NOTE FROM THE YOUTH RESEARCHER:

## *WHY TEACH THIS HISTORY*

**Hi, I'm Ruiyu!**

As New Yorkers, we become quickly accustomed to the streets we walk on our daily commutes. But for me, Doyers Street was always a mystery. Though it's slightly off course on the route to my part-time job at Chatham Square Library, the twisting road and vibrant, mural-covered atmosphere deeply captivated me.

So, when I had the opportunity to research any topic for an 11th grade Curiosity Project at Hunter College High School, I knew I had to uncover what was behind the unique allure of Doyers Street. I'm so glad that what I found didn't disappoint, and I hope that through my documentary, you can see some of the beauty in the stories and places through my own eyes.

Through filmmaking, I chose to highlight the contributions of everyday residents in preserving cultural and neighborhood identity. As I noted, traditional literature tends to neglect the agency of residents and business-as-usual actions like operating family owned restaurants or speaking to neighbors. By centering these stories and legacies, I hope to position Chinatown's residents as active changemakers. I believe this framing is especially important, given how my documentary's exploration of urban revitalization projects reveal how city planners denied residents' protests, and created vile stereotypes around residents to support their efforts to "purify" the neighborhood. By making visible the contributions of those neglected in the narrative of history, this documentary sheds light on those who've built the diverse and unique communities that make New York City so vibrant today.

# A NOTE FROM THE YOUTH RESEARCHER: *WHY TEACH THIS HISTORY*

Through the oral histories highlighted in this exhibit, from lifelong residents, recent immigrants working in restaurants, sanitation workers, artists, and more, I hope students can expand their perspectives of what community advocacy can look like. My research spotlights how small actions like just talking about current events in mom and pop shops (“shop talk”) can be radical acts of resistance that contribute to a wider movement of resisting violent urban renewal and gentrification.

Since recording my documentary in Spring 2025, various stores on Doyers Street have unfortunately closed, revealing the vulnerable nature of histories impacted by revitalization and cultural erasure. My hope is that through filmmaking and oral history, my exhibit preserves stories at risk and acts as a visual archive for the beauty and life I saw in every corner of Doyers street and neighboring Chinatown.


So, just like the murals on Doyers Street invite pedestrians to explore stories and history, I hope this documentary motivates students and educators to explore the streets they traverse on the daily.

**Ruiyu Tang is a senior at Hunter College High School in New York City. His research interests include Asian American history and literature, community organizing in ethnic enclaves, and urban revitalization. In addition to archival and oral history research, Ruiyu enjoys documentary filmmaking and other creative outlets like drawing and photography.**

# PEDAGOGICAL REVOLUTIONS


## HOW TO TEACH THIS HISTORY

### **Neighborhood Walking Tour!**




Encourage students to explore a neighborhood meaningful to them. On this walk, students can be intentional in taking notes of what they notice. For example, seeing what types of public space the neighborhood offers, what distinctive features they have, and what places seem to be popular for residents. Is the neighborhood more residential or business oriented? What sights, smells, and sounds are prevalent? After their personal explorations, students can share with each other, stimulating both cross-cultural and cross-spatial connections!

### **Google Maps Street View Deep Dive!**



Go on a virtual walking tour, right on your computer! The street view on Google Maps extends to the early 2000s, so it's especially easy to track how streets, neighborhoods, and storefronts have transformed throughout history. Just drag the icon to any street in NYC, and you'll be transported through time and space!

### **Conduct an Oral History Interview!**



Conversations with community members can be so special in uncovering underrepresented or never-before-seen histories! What are their oldest memories of a certain neighborhood? How has it changed throughout time? What stores remain, and what businesses aren't around anymore? Oral history interviews are the perfect way to embrace nostalgia, learn from another perspective, and explore intimate histories and memories.

# PEDAGOGICAL REVOLUTIONS

## HOW TO TEACH THIS HISTORY

### **Creative Activism!**



Mural-based storytelling enhances both the vibrancy of Doyers Street, and serves as an avenue for creative activism and neighborhood preservation. In immigrant communities, activism methods that transcend language barriers are especially important. Encourage students to write a poem, create a song, or design their own mural!

### **Photography and Documentary Making!**



Encourage students to explore a neighborhood through the lens! No camera necessary! Easily accessible with a phone, students can photograph or videotape everyday street activities. What do they notice? Where can they see subtle acts of everyday resistance that maintain the local economies, culture, and quality of life of neighborhoods? What intrigues them? What do they want to explore more? These are just the stepping stones to beautiful photo essays, visual explorations of neighborhoods, and perhaps the first few scenes of a student's own documentary!

# primary sources:



**A photo-postcard showing a street view of Doyers Street in Chinatown.**

Date unknown; photographer unknown. Part of the Eric Y. Ng collection at the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA). Permissions for use granted by MOCA.

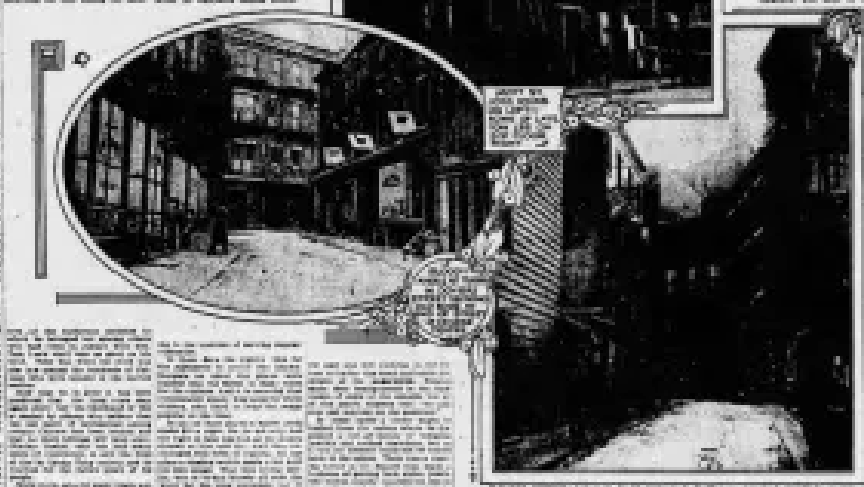
## CHINATOWN OF THE PRESENT A SAD SHADOW OF THE PAST

Tom Lee's Death Brings to Mind Old Slumming Days,  
but Chance of Tragic Tong Rises Seems Remote  
and the Glamour Has Passed

For many years the slumming days of old New York were remembered with a certain fondness by those who had lived through them. The days when the slum was a place of mystery and excitement, when the slum was a place where the underworld was a part of the life of the city. The days when the slum was a place where the underworld was a part of the life of the city.



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DOORS (RIGHT) OPENING INTO NARROW TYPICAL ALLEY, BLOODY ANGLE

The slumming days of old New York were remembered with a certain fondness by those who had lived through them. The days when the slum was a place of mystery and excitement, when the slum was a place where the underworld was a part of the life of the city.

**An article in the *New York Herald* titled "Chinatown of the Present, A Sad Shadow of the Past," discussing crime and gang violence in the "Bloody Angle."**

Originally published January 27, 1918, in the *New York Sun* and made digitally available in the *New York Herald* archives via newspapers.com: *Chronicling America*. Available in the public domain.



**A novelty postcard of the streets and buildings of Chinatown, c. 1910.**

Created by the Illustrated Postcard and Novelty Co. Accessed via the Tenement Museum and made available in the public domain at the New York Public Library.

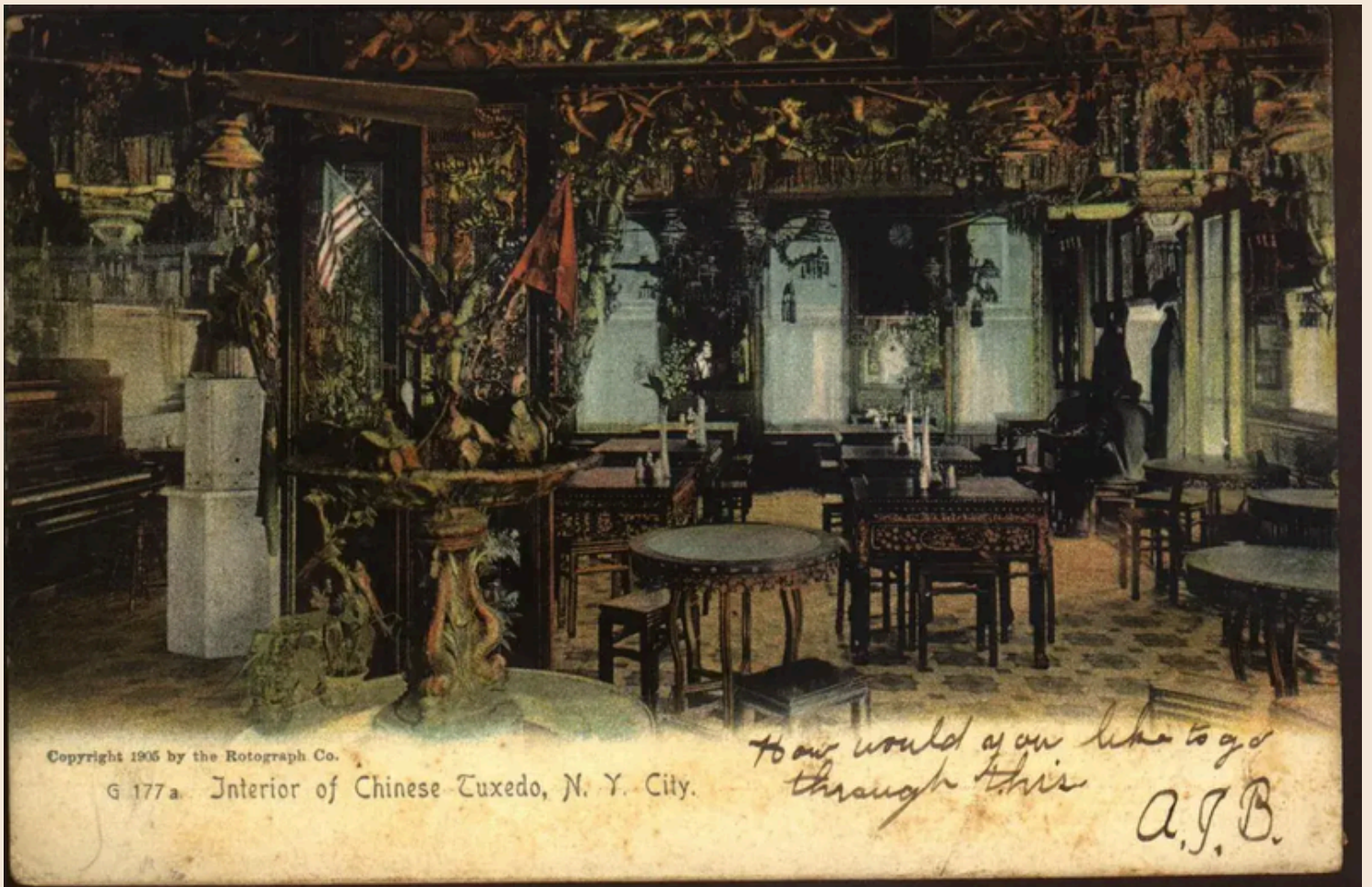


Copyright 1906 by the Rotograph Co.

A 140 Chinese Tuxedo in Doyer Street, N. Y. City.

**A promotional postcard depicting the storefront of the Chinese Tuxedo restaurant on Doyer Street, c. 1904.**

Originally created by the Rotograph Co. Made available via the Joe Covino collection at the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA).  
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**A promotional postcard depicting the luxurious interior of the first fine dining restaurant in Manhattan's Chinatown, Chinese Tuxedo, c. 1905.**

Created by the Rotograph Co. Made available for fair use via Columbia University Digital Library Collections.



**A photograph of "Stories in Flight," a 4,800-square-foot asphalt mural on Doyers Street in Manhattan's Chinatown, c. 2024.**

Mural conceptualized and created by Colleen Kong-Savage. Photograph of installation made available via the artist's web portfolio; used under the terms of Fair Use Doctrine, but artist reserves all rights.



**A mural dedicated to the life of iconic Asian-American photographer, Corky Lee, on Doyers Street in Chinatown, c. September 2021.**

Mural created by Marisa Molina and photographed by the ChinatownMural Project in September 2021. Used under the terms of Fair Use.



**A mural, "Chinatown Warriors," created by Gian Galang on Doyers Street in 2023.**

Mural by Gian Galang and made digitally available via the artist's digital portfolio. Used under the terms of Fair Use.

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An aerial, top-down view of a city courtyard. The courtyard is surrounded by multi-story brick buildings. In the center of the courtyard, there is a large, colorful mural on the ground. The mural features a blue background with stylized red and yellow fish-like shapes and blue scrollwork. The text "THANK YOU FOR READING!" is overlaid in the center of the image in a bold, yellow, italicized font with a black outline.

***THANK YOU FOR READING!***