



# ASIAN ARTS INITIATIVE

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## NEW BOOK *CHINATOWN LIVE(S)* ILLUSTRATES HISTORY AND DIVERSITY OF PHILADELPHIA'S CHINATOWN

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Asian Arts Initiative presents *Chinatown Live(s)*, a landmark book that explores Philadelphia's Chinatown through the oral histories of twenty-two diverse workers and residents of Pennsylvania's oldest established Asian neighborhood. Their interviews are enlivened with photo portraits by documentary photographer Rodney Aienza. The book is one of the first published histories of Philadelphia's Chinatown.

Spanning multiple generations and many nations of origin, the stories shared in *Chinatown Live(s)* challenge the perceptions of Chinatown as a monolithic ethnic enclave or a superficial tourist destination, and allude to the complexity of relationships and perspectives that comprise this growing, living neighborhood.

In *Chinatown Live(s)* a long-time activist recounts the organizing efforts to "Save Chinatown" from being paved over by a highway and the ongoing struggle for affordable housing. A Chinese American police officer describes her parents' reaction to her career choice; a Catholic school principal talks about growing up bi-racial; a teenaged son confesses his desire for American fast food instead of his mother's home cooking; a Vietnamese funeral home owner shares his philosophy of life; and seventeen others illustrate a multi-layered community informed by a wide diversity of experiences.

*Chinatown Live(s)* is introduced with essays by book editor Lena Sze; John Chin, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation; and John Kuo Wei Tchen of New York University who personal reflections and historical context about Philadelphia's Chinatown and its relationship to other Chinatowns in the U.S.

*Chinatown Live(s)* was produced through the Asian Arts Initiative's Chinatown Oral History Project, a three-year endeavor that engaged local students and volunteers as interviewers, transcribers, and translators. The interviews were conducted in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and/or Indonesian. Additional excerpts are available on-line at: [www.asianartsinitiative.org/oralhistory](http://www.asianartsinitiative.org/oralhistory).

The **Asian Arts Initiative** is a community-based arts center dedicated to building the political and cultural voice of the Asian American community in Philadelphia. Throughout the year, the Asian Arts Initiative sponsors performances, exhibits, workshops, and other projects for artists and everyday people to explore and express their diverse experiences as Asian Americans.

*Chinatown Live(s)* is being distributed by **New City Community Press**, which is grounded in the belief that writing is an implicit organizing tool that can produce social change. New City works with communities struggling to gain cultural and political representation, aiding them in recording and distributing their stories to the larger public.

*Chinatown Live(s): Oral Histories from Philadelphia's Chinatown*

Trade Paper, Perfect Bound, with Photographs

ISBN: 0-9712996-7-6 Price: \$30.00

To order: contact New City Community Press at 215-204-7347 or [newcity@temple.edu](mailto:newcity@temple.edu).

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