



## TITLE

# THROUGH CHINATOWN EYES, APRIL 1968



GRADE LEVEL: MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

**SUBJECT:** Social Studies, History

**THEME:** Activism, Bias and Stereotype, Civil Rights, Identity and Culture, Immigration, International Affairs, Labor, and Mental Health

## OBJECTIVES:

### Students will be able to:

- Discuss the background history of DC's Chinatown and how Chinese came to be established in a distinct area of Washington.
- Describe the political and social climate in Washington, DC and the rest of the nation in April 1968 in terms of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.
- Explain the challenges facing the Civil Rights Movement between M.L. King's advocacy of non-violence and the increasing anger and frustration among Blacks that had often led to riots and violence in major American cities in the mid '60s.
- Describe the demographics of Washington, DC in the 1960s and how Chinese Americans found ways to navigate a path between White and Black.
- Explain how the experiences of African Americans and Chinese Americans were similar and different in this era.
- Discuss the impact the riots had on the relationship between the African American and Chinese American communities following M.L. King's assassination. What were the consequences, short and long-term, of the riots on their communities?
- Discuss what can be learned from Washington's experiences in 1968 and how it is relevant to us today.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How did the community of Chinatown come into being in Washington, DC?
- How did Chinese Americans fit into the overall population of Washington? What kinds of businesses did they own? How did they adapt and adjust to a new culture while trying to hold onto to their own?
- How does the experience of Chinese Americans in DC illuminate and add to our understanding about issues of national identity, race relations, civil rights, and empowerment?



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## OVERVIEW:

The civil disturbances and street violence after the assassination of Civil Rights Leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had a profound impact on all of DC. It had no less an impact on DC's Chinatown, which found itself caught between the black and white struggle. This film provides a view into how the Chinatown community saw that iconic moment of history. Film available on request from the 1882 Foundation.

## ACTIVITIES:

1. To prepare students to understand the climate of April 1968 both nationally and in Washington, D.C., create small groups to research several topics: the Black Power movement, the state of the Vietnam War in early 1968, Dr. M.L. King's role in the Civil Rights Movement in 1968, the political climate in this 1968 Presidential election year. Have each of the groups prepare brief presentations for the whole class.

2. If time is short for Activity 1, use the accompanying slideshow to provide context for the events of 1968.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1lByZOWmifyLsfSVjkNfcqwDTBQ9-cSuz/edit#slide=id.p1>

3. Using a map of downtown Washington, D.C., have students outline the area of Chinatown: 5th to 9th Sts.; and G St. to Massachusetts Ave. Also have them identify the Shaw neighborhood, the U. St. Corridor, and Columbia Heights in preparation for viewing the film.

4. Have students draw parallel timelines for Chinese American and Civil Rights history using the following events for a start:

### **Chinese American History:**

Workers coming to the mines (1850)

Building the Transcontinental RR (late 1860s)

Growing anti-Chinese resentment, persecution/discrimination (1870s) - (1882) and subsequent acts - First Chinese to settle in Washington, D.C.

Wong Kim Ark vs. U.S. (1898)

Gong Lum vs Rice (1927)

The repeal of the Exclusion Act (1943)

### **Civil Rights History:**

Chinese Exclusion Act

The Civil War (1861-1865)

Reconstruction (1865-1876)

Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896)

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### ACTIVITIES (CONT.):

Brown vs. Board of Education (1954)  
Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56)  
Central H.S., Little Rock Arkansas (1957)  
Freedom Riders (1961)  
Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, & the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

5. Have students watch the film *Through Chinatown Eyes: April 1968*, available from the 1882 Foundation, and take notes as they watch: Pause the film (at two points indicated on the “Discussion Questions” below) to allow students to answer and reflect on what they see.

#### 6. Assessment Options:

The individual activities can stand alone as formative assessments and, depending on how the teacher intends to use the film, can serve as a lead-in to a broader cumulative assessment on civil rights.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*(Pause at approx. 5 min. mark)*

1. When did Chinese first come to Washington, D.C., and how did they come to establish themselves in a distinct area of the city? Do you think that immigrants arriving today settle in the U.S. in similar ways?

*(Pause at approx. 14 min. mark)*

2. In what ways were the experiences of Chinese Americans similar to that of African Americans? How were the experiences different?

*(Following the film)*

3. What impact did the riots have on the relationship between African American and Chinese American communities?

4. Identity is a key theme of the film as expressed in a question posed by the filmmakers:

“Caught in the crossfire...neither Black nor White, how did they negotiate a conflict deep-seated in their adopted homeland’s painful past...”

5. What do you take away from hearing of the experiences of the Chinese Americans interviewed for this film? Do their experiences have relevance today and in your own life?



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## APPENDIX I. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL/POLITICAL CONTEXT:

Slide information providing context to events in 1968 prior to and immediately after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Credits: Links to various sites are provided where still active. Others may require subscriptions to the sources.

### 1. Protester Putting Flower in Gun

Photo by Bernie Boston for the Washington Star, October 21, 1967 The Washington Post/Getty images

### 2. War is Not Healthy Protest Button

<http://sixcentpress.com/blog/2012/02/20/war-is-not-healthy-protestbutton/> Related articles:  
<http://www.aiga.org/war-is-not-healthy-the-true-story/> <http://anothermother.org>

### 3. Life Cover- American Prisoner of War 1967

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/yg671CONaU/TpqlFcRyNEI/AAAAAAAAABOE/Ox\\_v2KyUlyw/s1600/VIETNAM-Hue-Tet-Offensive-1968.png](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/yg671CONaU/TpqlFcRyNEI/AAAAAAAAABOE/Ox_v2KyUlyw/s1600/VIETNAM-Hue-Tet-Offensive-1968.png)

### 4. Stokely Carmichael and Eldredge Cleaver: Black Power & Soul On Ice

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stokely\\_Carmichael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stokely_Carmichael) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul\\_On\\_Ice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_On_Ice)

### 5. Eugene McCarthy Campaign – March 1968

<http://www.jofreeman.com/photos/McCathy3.html>

### 6. Marine at Khe Sanh

<http://namvietnews.wordpress.com/a-look-back-at-the-vietnam-war-on-the-35th-anniversary-of-the-fall-of-saigon/35thk-anniversary-of-the-fall-ofsaigon-7/>

### 7. Johnson Says He Won't Run – New York Times Headline

<https://www.nytimes.com/1968/04/01/archives/johnson-says-he-wont-run-surprise-decision-president-steps-aside-in.html>

Image available through Time Machine with NY Times subscription

### 8. Robert F. Kennedy Campaigning:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination\\_of\\_Roberty\\_F.\\_Kennedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Roberty_F._Kennedy)

### 9. Democratic National Convention – Chicago – 1968

<http://www.trbimg.com/img/50241a79/turbine/ch150bringtroops20080829125451/500>



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## APPENDIX II, BACKGROUND AND PLANS FOR THROUGH CHINATOWN EYES AND APRIL 1968 THROUGH CHINATOWN EYES – THE FILM SERIES

*As one of its core missions, the 1882 Foundation collects and preserves oral histories about the Chinese American experience, particularly about Washington DC's Chinatown. By linking them to key events, topics and themes, we create awareness of historical context and social perspective, which allows us to organize stories into "episodes" of a larger DC and national historical narrative.*

*Each episode, no longer than 25-30 minutes each, will be complete within itself. When strung together, they form a documentary of DC Chinatown from its beginning in the 1850's to today*

*Sixth on our list of overlapping chronological topics, our first episode April 1968 is a proper beginning. In important ways, the 1968 civil disorder from April 4 to April 8 created a watershed that separates traditional patterns and Chinese attitudes from modern issues and American identities. Topics on one side of the 1968 watershed are best seen historically. Topics on the other side are more sociological. The topics will be familiar to other Chinatown and immigrant communities. To that extent, the Through Chinatown Eyes series will add to the body of material preserving stories of the Chinese American experience, our voices and thoughts.*

*Finally, the 1882 Foundation is about education. Each episode will be accompanied by a lesson guide. We welcome comments and suggestions from educators on how the video can be incorporated into core curriculum and community discussions. The production of April 1968 was made possible by film producers/writers Penny Lee and Lisa Mao. They provided extensive pro bono time and considerable talent, as did many others who donated their time to help conceive, support, organize and advise on the video's content and distribution. The willingness of the film participants to be interviewed and their candor and insights were essential and much appreciated. Financial support for the inescapable other costs (rights to use news footage, music, graphics, software, lighting, and professional assistance, etc.) came primarily from 1882 Foundation, Chinese American Citizens Alliance, Sino-American Cultural Society, OCA and the DC Humanities Council.*



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