



The Chinatown Files

A compelling consciousness-raiser of trenchant artistry, Amy Chen's 'The Chinatown Files' is a superb documentary, a triumph of organization, research and clarity that reveals the horrific impact of the McCarthy era upon the Chinese American community.

- Kevin Thomas, LA Times

Directed by Amy Chen

2001, 57 minutes, United States, in English and Chinese

Original Shooting Formats: Video, SD

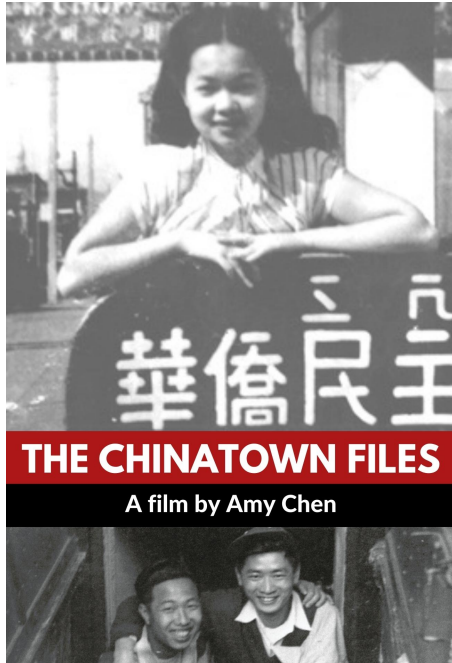
Screening Formats Available: HD

Third World Newsreel, 545 8th Avenue, Suite 550, New York, NY 10018

(212) 947-9277 x 10, tw@tw.org

Film's Website: <https://tw.org/catalog/pages/responsive/cpage.aspx?rec=721&card=price>

The Chinatown Files



SYNOPSIS

This documentary brings to the public, for the first time, a story that was classified as secret by the US government for over four decades. Exploring the roots and legacy of the Cold War on the Chinese American community during the 1950s and the 1960s, it presents first hand accounts of seven men and women's experiences of being hunted down, jailed and targeted for deportation in America. During McCarthy era witch-hunts, the loyalties of over ten thousand American citizens of Chinese descent were questioned based on their ethnicity and alleged risk to national security. While China remains an enigma to most Americans, the prejudice and jingoism that has negatively affected the lives of Chinese Americans has rarely been

examined. THE CHINATOWN FILES is a cautionary tale of paranoia and hysteria that serves as a dramatic and enduring reminder of the fragility of constitutional protections today.

REVIEWS

"The 1950s and 1960s were an ugly time for thousands of Chinese Americans, clustered in Chinatowns across the country, who became the target of anti- communist fervor ignited by Sen. Joseph McCarthy and aimed at the Soviet Union and China. New York documentary filmmaker Amy Chen brings this era to life in "The Chinatown Files."

Ryan Kim, San Francisco Chronicle

"The Chinatown Files... shows yellow-baiting is far from fresh. From animated cartoons to newspaper headlines, popular messages dubbed anyone who looked or sounded Chinese an oddity at best, at worst a threat. With testimony from the FBI, historians, and victims, the film recounts how thousands of Chinese Americans across the country—many of them U.S. citizens—were systematically spied on, interrogated, jailed, and often deported by government agencies, all in the name of national security and democracy."

Chisun Lee, The Village Voice

"In Amy Chen's revelatory documentary, "The Chinatown Files," some Chinese Americans tell of enduring endless harassment at the hands of government officials during the McCarthy-Cold War period. It's a part of both American and Chinese-American history that would have remained forgotten had Chen not felt spurred to tell this story, one that has been treated with 50 years of Silence."

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

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“Truth may be the first casualty of war, but justice and perspective were additional casualties of the cold war, as evidenced by The Chinatown Files (56 min.), Amy Chen’s riveting film about the hysteria surrounding Chinese-Americans during and just after the McCarthy era.”

Chicago Reader

“Highly Recommended... It provides an appropriate background to the McCarthy era attacks on Chinese Americans, and examines the context for racism against the Chinese at the time.”

Terry Plum, Educational Media Reviews Online

“Amy Chen’s documentary is the first to explore Chinese-American experience during the “climate of fear” that McCarthyism produced, reminding viewers of the tenuous nature of civil rights.”

VRT Notable Videos Committee, American Library Association

“Amy Chen’s documentary, The Chinatown Files, helped to illustrate the lingering bitterness, guilt, and sadness that resulted from the Confession Program.

Lisa See, Shanghai Girls

SCREENINGS, FESTIVALS & AWARDS

- San Francisco Asian American International Film Festival
- Asian American International Film Festival
- Hawaii International Film Festival
- Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Chicago Asian American Film Festival
- Rockridge Library, Oakland
- Notable Videos for Adults, American Library Association
- Henry Hampton Award, Council on Foundations

BIOGRAPHY

Amy Chen, producer/director of *The Chinatown Files* (2001), the then-untold story of how McCarthyism impacted the Chinese American community during the 1950s. Chen previously worked in film production, distribution, and exhibition and was formerly the executive director of *Women Make Movies*. She is currently CIO of the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research and educational complex. She received her BA in government at Oberlin College, an MBA from Cornell University and is a graduate of the Third World Newsreel Production Workshop.

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Connie Hwang
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Kathy and Roland Lowe
Eleanor Wong Telemaque

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Amy Chen
Ying Chan

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Lau Wai Ming

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Herman Lew

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Curtis Choy

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Rolland Lowe

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Chin

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Voice Over

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Cleaner

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Chinese Hand Laundry
Alliance
Connie Hwang
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National Archives and
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