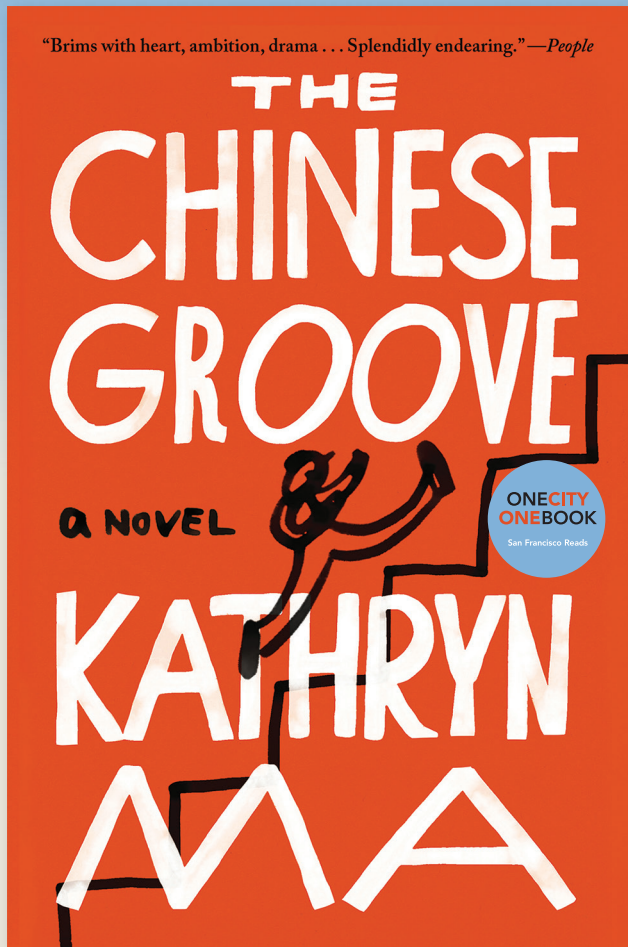


SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

ONECITY ONEBOOK

San Francisco Reads



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Asian Pacific
American
Heritage Month



San Francisco Public Library

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SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

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We honor and acknowledge the many Ohlone tribal groups and families, including the Ramaytush and Chochenyo, as well as the Coast and Bay Miwok, Southern Pomo, Wappo and Patwin peoples as the rightful stewards of the lands on which we reside.

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Welcome



Michael Lambert

Welcome to the 2024 One City One Book program, featuring this year's selection, the novel *The Chinese Groove* by local author Kathryn Ma. This buoyant tale of a young immigrant's high hopes as he moves to San Francisco puts our very own Sunset District in the spotlight and captures a humorous yet poignant tale of finding family and a place to call home.

I'm excited to read alongside you as part of the One City One Book community and encourage you to take part in the conversations happening around San Francisco as part of this all-city reading initiative. And keep coming back to us. The Library has much in store for you this spring as part of our Weaving Stories: AANHPI Heritage Celebration.

In community,

Michael Lambert, City Librarian

Together, we read.

Praise for *The Chinese Groove*

Finalist for the
California Book
Awards

Longlisted for the
Joyce Carol Oates
Prize

Longlisted for the
Dublin Literary Prize

A *Washington Post*
Best Book of the Year

A *New York Times*
Book Review Editors'
Choice

A *People* Best Book
of the Year

"*The Chinese Groove* by Kathryn Ma is a funny and insightful novel, a satisfying immigration story told by an 18-year-old narrator, Zheng Xue Li, from Yunnan province, China. We can't help but love the determined and steadfast young man even as we laugh and wince and worry about him. . . Shelley's relentlessly optimistic voice and his impressions of the United States bump up against what we readers 'know' and create a wonderful tension that keeps us turning the pages. Especially when he first arrives in the U.S., his observations are so fresh and funny, they set a humorously poignant tone and suggest that our hero will survive even the most harrowing aspects of his experience. . . Ma plays brilliantly with stereotypes without stereotyping. She deftly handles a multitude of plot threads and conflicts among Shelley's web of connections in the U.S. and China as he carries on, almost in spite of himself. She is a master of voice. . . *The Chinese Groove* is certainly a contender for the funniest book about survival that you'll ever read."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

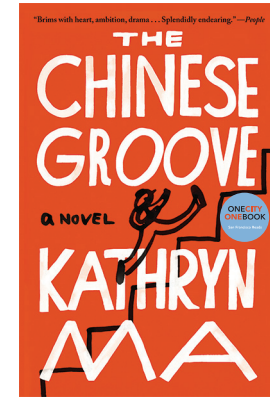
"This modern coming-of-age tale brims with heart, ambition, drama, and a protagonist whose naïveté makes him splendidly endearing. Ma thoughtfully navigates family dynamics and first love. It's guaranteed to have you and the aunties laughing and crying along."—*People*

"Ma's iteration of the young migrant story is imbued with inherent optimism. Shelley's buoyancy is frustratingly naïve, and often completely foolish if you have any understanding of how brutal living in America actually is, but you root for Shelley in part because Shelley is rooting for Shelley. Ma finds wry humor in Shelley getting to know the mores of his new country (Ted biking to work seemed to be particularly surprising to him), but his belief in his own success is unwavering. . . By the end, he does indeed come out on top, even if it's in ways neither he nor the reader could have predicted."—*New York Times Book Review*

"At once a harrowing immigrant tale and a humorous romp through cultural misunderstandings, *The Chinese Groove* explores the everyday negotiations of romance and family ties, as well as the power of belief that helps us make our way through the world without breaking."—*Los Angeles Review of Books*

"By turns picaresque and poignant, Kathryn Ma's *The Chinese Groove* is an utterly original exploration of the Chinese diaspora, pondering the ancestral ties that span between China and San Francisco. Shelley is a poet and would-be striver with an indelible voice. A marvel."—*Vanessa Hua, author of Forbidden City*

About the Book



Kathryn Ma's *The Chinese Groove* follows the journey of 18-year-old Shelley, who leaves his home in China's Yunnan Province to seek a brighter future in the United States. Encountering familial fractures and unmet expectations upon his arrival, Shelley navigates the complexities of immigrant life in present-day San Francisco.

Initially sent to live with his supposed rich uncle, Shelley discovers that reality diverges sharply from his hopes. Instead, he finds himself in a crowded rooming house, juggling school, work and relationships while always reaching for his aspirations of becoming a poet and rekindling a romance with his American ex-girlfriend.

As Shelley traverses the challenges of his new surroundings, he leans on the concept of the "Chinese groove," an unspoken connection among fellow immigrants, to navigate his new reality. Through humorous yet poignant encounters and unexpected twists, Shelley confronts themes of family, housing, grief and the pursuit of success in a foreign land.

Amidst the episodic plot and diverse cast of characters, including his not-so-rich second cousin Ted and Ted's Jewish wife, Aviva, Shelley's journey unfolds with both resilience and introspection.

About the Author



Kathryn Ma Photo: Andria Lo

Kathryn Ma is the author of the widely praised novel *The Year She Left Us*, which was named a *New York Times* Editors' Choice and an NPR "Great Read" of the year. Her short story collection, *All That Work and Still No Boys*, won the Iowa Short Fiction Award and was named a *San Francisco Chronicle* Notable Book and a *Los Angeles Times* Discoveries Book. She is also a recipient of the David Nathan Meyerson Prize for Fiction and has twice been named a San Francisco Public Library Laureate.

The Chinese Groove Readers' Guide

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There are multiple clues that Shelley could be an unreliable narrator. How did you feel when Shelley addressed the reader directly? Did it change your feelings toward the novel in any way?
2. The 'Chinese groove' has a multitude of different meanings and uses. How would you best describe its meaning?
3. How do Shelley and his story change your perception of modern Chinese immigration in America? What about Yu and Deng's journeys?
4. Do you feel there's an equivalent of the 'Chinese groove' in your own culture? While reading, did you find yourself thinking of your own familial customs and norms? Or how you might've felt in Shelley's shoes?
5. What is the meaning behind Shelley's 'black tummy fish'?
6. How do you feel about storytelling as a theme in the novel? From Shelley's father's stories for him and his mother; Aviva's for the kids at the library; Ted's freelancing and ghostwriting; to Shelley's own bedtime stories for Leo and his daughter, how are each of these forms of storytelling connected? How are they different?
7. When Shelley is at his lowest, Cook gives him some powerful insight. Do you agree that genius comes from suffering? What are some other perspectives? Do you see this reflected in any other characters?
8. There are a couple of chapters in the novel that stray from the established format: Chapter 11 "Once Shunned, Chinese American Grocer Now Beloved" and Chapter 18 "The Story of the Peach Blossom Forest." How do you feel about them? Do you think they help enrich the story? If so, how?
9. The idea of East versus West plays a big role in the novel as Shelley navigates his new life in America while processing his past in China. His world view and the way he lived completely changed. What are some of the biggest changes you saw in Shelley during his time in America? What stayed the same?
10. How do you think the treatment of the elderly differs between the East and the West? How did it make you feel when Henry said, "Old people in America, they turn invisible to the rest"?
11. What do you think about the differences between believing in fate and a higher power versus manifesting your own destiny?
12. Shelley's Three Achievables are Family, Love and Fortune. Do you think he ultimately succeeded, and do you think his ideas of success changed throughout the novel?
13. After his two-week stay at Ted and Aviva's, Shelley struggles to find a place to live, finally ending up sleeping in the park. How are the themes of housing and home developed in the novel? Are Shelley's difficulties unique to his situation? At one point, Shelley says, "Once a body has a home (you know as well as I), the momentous things in life that one profoundly desires feel within fingertip reach." Do you agree? What might you say to Shelley on this subject?
14. How does Ted's relationship with Henry compare to that of Shelley's with his father? Do you think they serve as parallels or foils?
15. In the novel there are many characters dealing with grief. How does loss affect the characters and their relationships with one another?

Author Events & Discussion Groups

BOOK CLUBS: Together, We Read

Discuss *The Chinese Groove* by Kathryn Ma with your community.

- Saturday, April 13, 11 a.m.
Main Library, Chinese Center,
3rd Floor
- Saturday, April 20, 11 a.m.
Ortega Branch
- Tuesday, April 23, 7 p.m.
Virtual Library
- Wednesday, April 24, 6:30 p.m.
Mission Bay Branch
- Sunday, April 28, 2 p.m.
Portola Branch
- Sunday, April 28, 2 p.m.
Marina Branch
- Wednesday, May 15, 6 p.m.
West Portal Branch
- Saturday, June 8, 4 p.m.
Merced Branch



Kathryn Ma Photo: Andria Lo

MAIN EVENT

Author Kathryn Ma in Conversation with Natalie Baszile

Saturday, May 4, 2 p.m., Main Library, Koret Auditorium, Lower Level

Kathryn Ma discusses her book *The Chinese Groove*, the story of 18-year-old Shelley's journey from China's Yunnan Province to San Francisco, where he confronts familial discord, cultural adaptation and personal aspirations while leaning on the notion of the "Chinese groove" to navigate his new reality. Ma will be in conversation with Natalie Baszile, author of *Queen Sugar* and *We Are Each Other's Harvest: Celebrating African American Farmers, Land, and Legacy*.



Natalie Baszile

Natalie Baszile is the author of the novel *Queen Sugar*, which was a *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of 2014, longlisted for the Crooks Corner Southern Book Prize, nominated for an NAACP Image Award, and adapted for television by writer/director Ava DuVernay and co-produced by Oprah Winfrey for OWN. Baszile holds a M.A. in Afro-American Studies from UCLA and is a graduate of Warren Wilson College's MFA Program for Writers. She lives in San Francisco.

ADDITIONAL APPEARANCES WITH AUTHOR KATHRYN MA

- Saturday, June 1, 11 a.m.
Ortega Branch
- Saturday, June 8, 3 p.m.
Chinatown Branch

Other One City One Book Events



Nancy Jooyoun Kim
Photo: Andria Lo



Parini Shroff
Photo: Devin Spratt

Nancy Jooyoun Kim and Parini Shroff in Conversation Tuesday, May 7, 6 p.m., Main Library, Saroyan Gallery, 6th Floor

Nancy Jooyoun Kim, *New York Times*-bestselling author and Parini Shroff, author of debut novel of *The Bandit Queens*, come together to discuss their book, writing and the strong characters who drive the narrative of their books.

Nancy Jooyoun Kim is the author of *What We Kept to Ourselves* and *The Last Story of Mina Lee*, a Reese's Book Club pick. Born and raised in Los Angeles, she now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Parini Shroff received her MFA from the University of Texas at Austin, where she studied under Elizabeth McCracken, Alexander Chee and Cristina García. She is a practicing attorney and currently lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. *The Bandit Queens* is her debut novel.

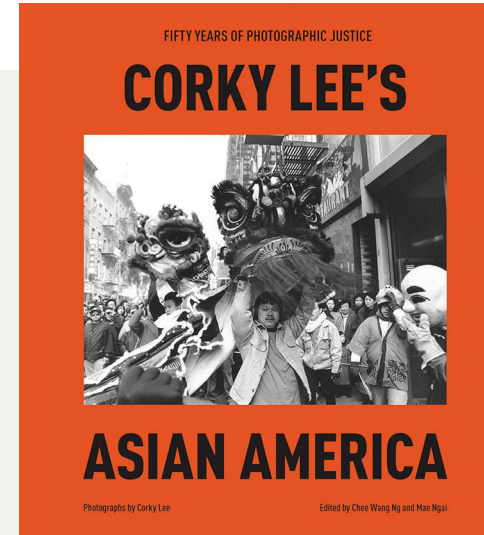


Corky Lee's Asian America: Fifty Years of Photographic Justice Thursday, May 23, 6 p.m. Main Library, Koret Auditorium

Experience *Corky Lee's Asian America* at our book launch celebration! Known throughout his lifetime as the "undisputed, unofficial Asian American

photographer laureate," the late photojournalist Corky Lee documented Asian American and Pacific Islander communities for 50 years, breaking the stereotype of Asian Americans as docile, passive, and, above all, foreign to this country. *Corky Lee's Asian America* is a stunning retrospective of his life's work—a selection of the best photographs from his vast collection, from his start in New York's Chinatown in the 1970s to his coverage of diverse Asian American communities across the country until his untimely passing in 2021. This new book features more than 200 breathtaking photos celebrating the history and cultural impact of the Asian American social justice movement. Join panelists Mae M. Ngai, Fae Myenne Ng and Curtis Chin as they honor Lee's legacy and discuss his impactful work reshaping narratives.

Mae M. Ngai is Lung Family Professor of Asian American Studies and Professor of History and Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. She is a U.S. legal and political historian interested in the histories of immigration, citizenship, nationalism and the Chinese diaspora. Ngai has written on immigration history and policy for the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Nation* and *Dissent*. Before becoming a historian, she was a labor-



The book traces Lee's decades-long quest for photographic justice, following Asian American social movements for recognition and rights alongside his artistic development as an activist social photographer.

union organizer and educator in New York City, working for District 65-UAW and the Consortium for Worker Education. She is now writing *Nation of Immigrants: A Short History of an Idea* (under contract with Princeton University Press).

Fae Myenne Ng is a first-generation Chinese American author and native San Franciscan. She attended the University of California, Berkeley and received her M.F.A. at Columbia University. Ng is the author of bestseller and PEN/Faulkner Fiction finalist *Bone* and American Book Award winner *Steer Toward Rock*. Her work has been published in *Harper's Magazine*, *The New Republic*, *Ploughshares* and anthologized in *Charlie Chan Is Dead: An Anthology of Contemporary*



L to R: Mae M. Ngai, Fae Myenne Ng and Curtis Chin

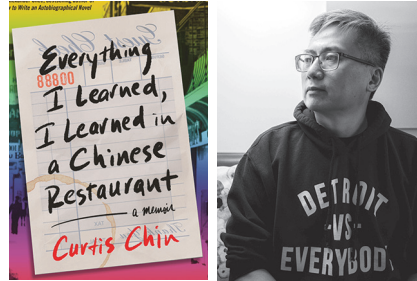
Asian American Fiction, Literature Across Cultures, The PEN Short Fiction Project and The Pushcart Prize. She has been the recipient of fellowships from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, the Guggenheim, the Lannan Foundation, the NEA, the Radcliffe Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation. She teaches creative writing and literature in UC Berkeley's Department of Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies. Her latest book, *Orphan Bachelors: A Memoir*, is available now.

Curtis Chin, co-founder of the Asian American Writers' Workshop in New York City, served as the nonprofit's first executive director. He went on to write for network and cable television before transitioning to social justice documentaries. Chin has screened his films at over 600 venues in twenty countries. He has written for CNN, *Bon Appetit*, the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Emancipator/Boston Globe*. A graduate of the University of Michigan, Chin has received awards from ABC/Disney Television, New York Foundation for the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts and more. His memoir, *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant* was published by Little, Brown in 2023. His essay in *Bon Appetit* was just selected for Best Food Writing in America 2023.

Other One City One Book Events

Author Curtis Chin, *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*
 Saturday, May 25, 6 p.m., Ross Alley (between Washington and Jackson Streets)

A partnership with the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco: In celebration of AANHPI Heritage Month and Pride Month, join us in vibrant Chinatown for a book talk and library pop-up featuring Curtis Chin, author of *Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant*. SFPL will give away complimentary copies of Chin's book, along with other free books curated especially for this event, while supplies last.



Curtis Chin

WORKSHOPS

Your Stories Matter with Niloufar Talebi
 Saturday, April 27, 3 p.m., Excelsior Branch

Discover the power of your own stories in this interactive workshop, designed for anyone eager to turn their experiences into impactful narratives. Learn to craft your tales into family scrapbooks, poetry, spoken word or memoirs, with guidance from author and artist Talebi.



Niloufar Talebi

Chinese American Genealogical Research
 Tuesdays, May 14 and 28, 6 p.m., Virtual Library



Learn how to conduct genealogical research for Chinese Americans in the U.S. and find ancestors using the Library's resources and tools, government census data, city directories and NARA genealogical records (e.g., case files, immigration and naturalization records). This class is ideal for students, amateur genealogists and researchers. Registration required. See Library calendar for details.



Katie Quan

Coloring Outside the Lines with Real Soul

Katie Quan dives into the world of comics and zines through the lens of an Asian American artist and educator. She introduces her biggest comic influences, her own experience in the medium and how artists are breaking barriers left and right with their amazing work. Quan covers how to start your own comics and create your very own zine.

Wednesday, May 1, 4 p.m.
 Glen Park Branch

Thursday, May 2, 4 p.m.
 Excelsior Branch

Sunday, May 5, 3 p.m.
 Visitacion Valley Branch

Saturday, May 11, 4:30 p.m.
 Richmond Branch

Wednesday, May 15, 6 p.m.
 Ocean View Branch

Saturday, June 22, time TBD
 Main Library

Wednesday, June 26, time TBD
 Eureka Valley Branch

Films

Lasa and Legacy: A Docuseries About Filipino American Activism and Food
 Sunday, May 5, 2 p.m. Main Library, Koret Auditorium

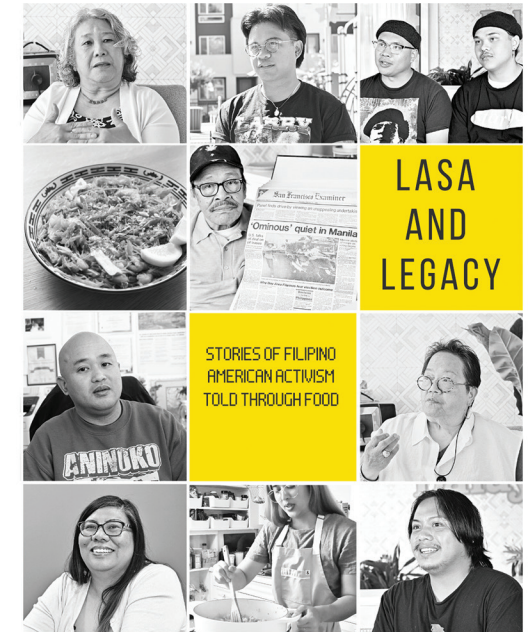
A not-to-miss screening of *Lasa and Legacy*, a captivating docuseries showcasing pivotal chapters in Filipino American history within the San Francisco Bay Area. Following the screening, engage in a panel discussion and Q&A session.

Part documentary, part cooking show, *Lasa and Legacy* highlights four stories, including the Filipino farm labor movement, the struggle for the International Hotel in the '60s and '70s, activism in Filipino punk culture and the SF-based anti-dictatorship movement during martial law in the Philippines. The show's special touch? Each episode features a mouthwatering cooking segment of a Filipino dish related to that history. The docuseries was primarily filmed in the SOMA Pilipinas Cultural District of San Francisco.

Panelists

Director and producer **Rachel Bundoc Lucero** is a Filipina American artist and community organizer based in San Francisco. Through "The Sago Show", she challenges viewers to explore topics in Filipino history and current events through the lens of food. Through her work, Lucero empowers Filipino viewers to connect with a history of activism and to take action for their community and homeland.

Jorge Octaviano is a writer and community member who has resided in San Francisco since 1973. Octaviano was born in 1941 in Intramuros, Philippines and grew up in Pasay City. Shortly after he moved to California, martial law was declared in the Philippines. Octaviano's short play *Bato bato sa Langit* was performed at San Francisco's



Bindlestiff Studio for Senior Arts Moment, the culminating event for Restorative Theater Arts for Seniors (RETAS). His motto is "Survival is not enough. We must have a sense of purpose."



Home Is a Hotel
 Sunday, May 26,
 3 p.m., Main Library,
 Koret Auditorium

A powerful community screening of *Home Is a Hotel* (2023), a feature-length documentary that examines inequality in

San Francisco through the lens of five SRO residents as they fight to stay housed, followed by a discussion with featured community members and filmmakers.

Books



Discover other great books with the One City One Book 2024 longlist.

Find the full list: on.sfpl.org/OCOB18Longlist

Tell Us When to Go
by Emil DeAndreis

What My Bones Know: A Memoir of Healing from Complex Trauma
by Stephanie Foo

The Many Daughters of Afong Moy
by Jamie Ford

Less Is Lost
by Andrew Sean Greer

Palo Alto: A History of California, Capitalism, and the World
by Malcolm Harris

Stay True: A Memoir
by Hua Hsu

Spirits of San Francisco: Voyages Through the Unknown City
by Gary Kamiya

Girls Who Green the World: Thirty-four Rebel Women Out to Save Our Planet
by Diana Kapp

Nightcrawling
by Leila Mottley

The Man Who Could Move Clouds: A Memoir
by Ingrid Rojas Contreras

San Francisco Pilgrimage: Memoir of a Lifelong Love Affair with My City
by Tania Romanov

The Last Nomad: Coming of Age in the Somali Desert
by Shugri Said Salh

Becoming Story: A Journey Among Seasons, Plants, Trees, and Ancestors
by Greg Sarris

Listen, World! How the Intrepid Elsie Robinson Became America's Most-read Woman
by Julia Scheeres and Allison Gilbert

Four Treasures of the Sky
by Jenny Tinghui Zhang

In the Shadow of the Mountain: A Memoir of Courage
by Silvia Vasquez-Lavado

Who Killed Jane Stanford? A Gilded Age Tale of Murder, Deceit, Spirits and the Birth of a University
by Richard White

On the Rooftop
by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton

Year of the Tiger: An Activist's Life
by Alice Wong

Solito
by Javier Zamora

How Much of These Hills Is Gold
by C Pam Zhang

Resources



Want help searching for your ancestors? Try My China Roots, a leading database offered by SFPL for Chinese genealogy. My China Roots counts over 200 million searchable Chinese ancestors. It contains one of the largest collections of digitized Chinese family tree books (zupus) and other records from China. And since there are more than 50

million people of Chinese descent residing outside of the People's Republic of China, My China Roots has collected immigration records, overseas Chinese burials and obituaries, overseas Chinese directories and association records and more from countries all around the world.

My China Roots is an excellent complement to the other genealogy databases provided by the Library: Ancestry Library Edition, Fold3 Library Edition, HeritageQuest Online and Newspaper ARCHIVE Library Edition. See sfpl.org/genealogy for more information on all the digital and physical resources the library has that can help with genealogy research.



Acknowledgments

THANKS TO OUR ONE CITY ONE BOOK PROGRAM PARTNERS



THANKS TO THE 2023/2024 ONE CITY ONE BOOK SELECTION COMMITTEE

Lawrence Gallegos, Adult Engagement Manager, SFPL

Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community Programs and Partnerships, SFPL

Mario Lemos, Major Gifts Officer at GLIDEsf

Anissa Malady, Adult Engagement Coordinator, SFPL

Susan Mall, Commissioner, San Francisco Public Library Commission

Denise Schmidt, Collections & Cataloging Manager, SFPL

Connie Wolf, President, San Francisco Public Library Commission

LIBRARY LOCATIONS

ANZA

(415) 355-5717
550 37th Ave. (near Anza)

BAYVIEW/LINDA BROOKS-BURTON

(415) 355-5757
5075 Third St. (at Revere)

BERNAL HEIGHTS

(415) 355-2810
500 Cortland Ave. (at Moultrie)

CHINATOWN/HIM MARK LAI

(415) 355-2888
1135 Powell St. (near Jackson)

EUREKA VALLEY/HARVEY MILK MEMORIAL

(415) 355-5616
1 José Sarria Court (16th St./Market)

EXCELSIOR

(415) 355-2868
4400 Mission St. (at Cotter)

GLEN PARK

(415) 355-2858
2825 Diamond St. (near Bosworth)

GOLDEN GATE VALLEY

(415) 355-5666
1801 Green St. (at Octavia)

INGLESIDE

(415) 355-2898
1298 Ocean Ave. (at Plymouth)

MAIN LIBRARY

(415) 557-4400
100 Larkin St. (at Grove)

MARINA

(415) 355-2823
1890 Chestnut St. (near Webster)

MERCED

(415) 355-2825
155 Winston Dr. (at 19th Ave.)

MISSION Temporary Branch

(415) 355-2800
1234 Valencia St.

MISSION BAY

(415) 355-2838
960 Fourth St. (at Berry)

NOE VALLEY/SALLY BRUNN

(415) 355-5707
451 Jersey St. (near Castro)

NORTH BEACH

(415) 355-5626
850 Columbus Ave. (at Lombard)

OCEAN VIEW

(415) 355-5615
345 Randolph St. (at Ramsell)

ORTEGA

(415) 355-5700
3223 Ortega St. (at 39th Ave.)

PARK

(415) 355-5656
1833 Page St. (at Cole)

PARKSIDE

(415) 355-5770
1200 Taraval St. (at 22nd Ave.)

PORTOLA

(415) 355-5660
380 Bacon St. (at Goettingen)

POTRERO

(415) 355-2822
1616 20th St. (near Connecticut)

PRESIDIO

(415) 355-2880
3150 Sacramento St. (near Baker)

RICHMOND/SEN. MILTON MARKS

(415) 355-5600
351 9th Ave. (near Clement)

SUNSET

(415) 355-2808
1305 18th Ave. (at Irving)

VISITACION VALLEY

(415) 355-2848
201 Leland Ave. (at Rutland)

WEST PORTAL

(415) 355-2886
190 Lenox Way (at Ulloa)

WESTERN ADDITION

(415) 355-5727
1550 Scott St. (at Geary)

BOOKMOBILE

(415) 554-9081



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For accommodations (such as ASL or language interpretation),
call (415) 557-4557 or contact accessibility@sfpl.org.

Requesting at least 3 business days in advance will help ensure availability.