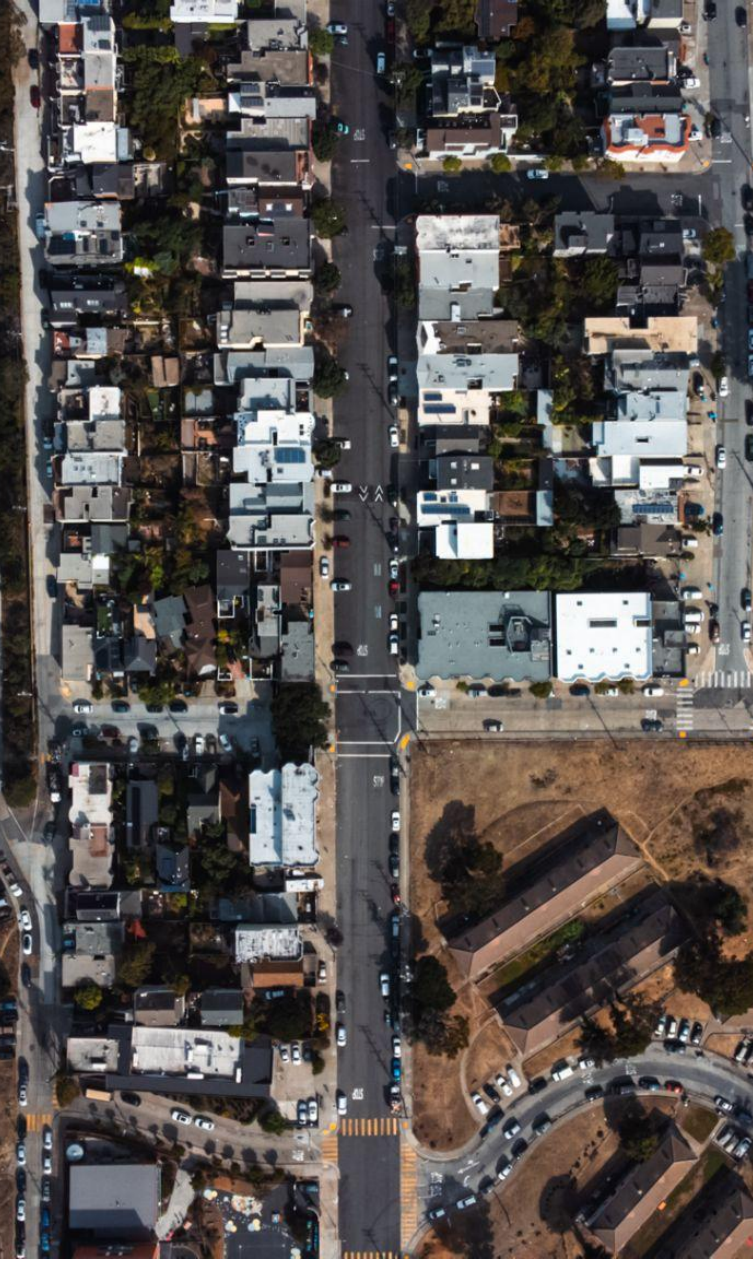


Tariq Stone

GOLDEN THREADS

WEAVING IMMIGRANT STORIES IN SAN FRANCISCO



PROJECT GOAL

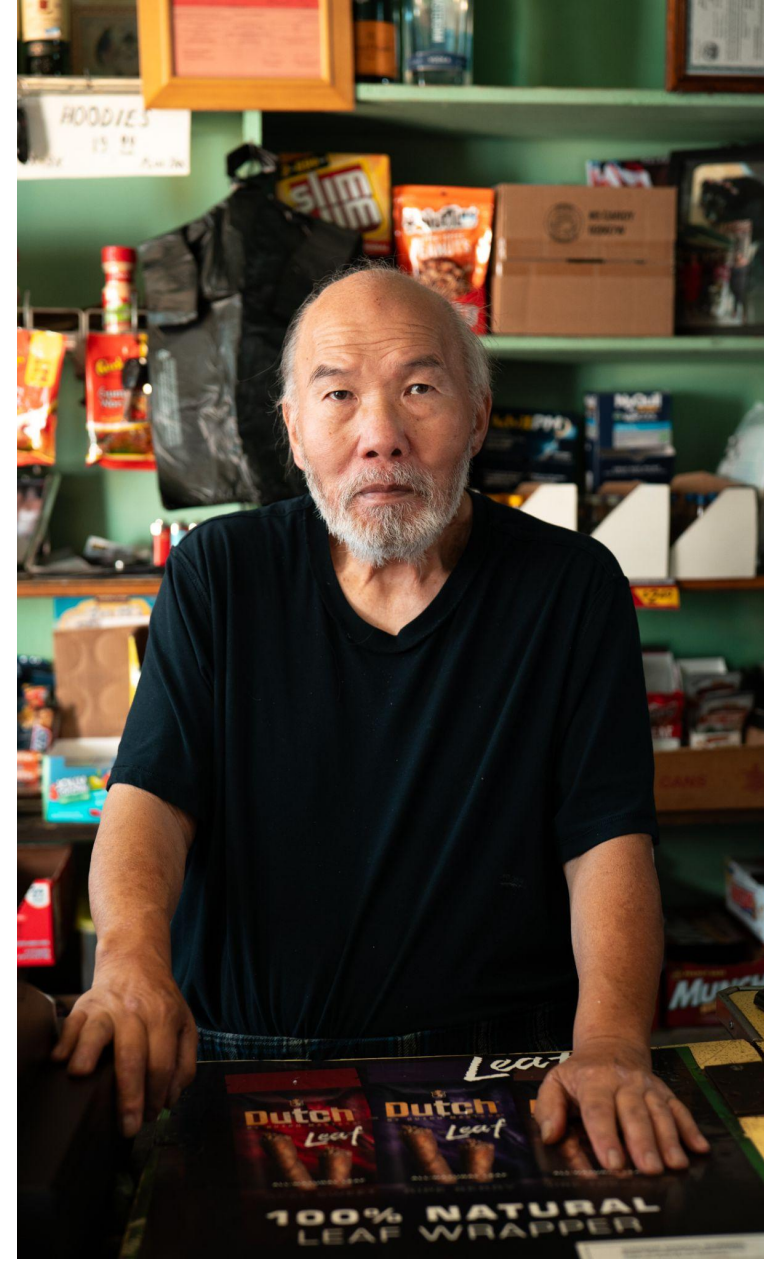
The goal of my project is to shed light on the diverse and often untold stories of immigrants in San Francisco. Through personal interviews and storytelling, I aim to create a photo series that highlights the rich cultural tapestry and challenges faced by immigrants while promoting empathy and understanding within our community.

STRUCTURE

Photographs, Video, and Interviews

I want to take photos (and possibly video) of people and their potential businesses. I want to interview people to ask them about their experiences of immigrating to America and their experience in San Francisco.

Photography and oral interviews are the main medium. But if people are open to it, I'd like to do video interviews as well.





Potrero Terrace Market

Potrero Terrace Market

This interview features Edmund Wu, a native of San Francisco, who is involved in running a family business.

Edmund Wu was born and raised in San Francisco to Chinese immigrant parents, Jack and Fong.

The family business was purchased by his parents in 1963, and it's celebrating its 63rd year of operation.

Edmund worked as an assistant manager at Walgreens for 26 years but has since retired. He now occasionally helps with the business, which is a three-person operation that opens from 8 AM to 2 PM.

Edmund is 75 years old, lives a peaceful life, he stays to himself for the most part. He's divorced and has a 35-year-old son.

Mary also shares her family's background, mentioning her mother working in a sweatshop, her father's gambling habits, and how her family decided to buy the store to improve their lives.



Mary Wu (left) and Edmund Wu (right)

Edmund

Edmund went to UCSF, transferred to SF State then dropped out to run the business, he was pushed by his father to drop out and run the family business.

He wanted more for his son but his son found solace in store business. He wanted his son to be free in a way he wasn't.

When asked about why he got into the business Edmund responded, "It's a parents type of thing... Your parents start the business [and] you're helping out... It wasn't like my choice or anything."

"First of all, you have to be positive. Secondly, you work hard and then good things happen."



Edmund Wu

Jack & Fong

The store has been honored for supporting the neighborhood and for the generous donations made by Edmund's father.

Jack and Fong had four kids to raise, so Fong worked in a sweatshop.

“My dad, all he wanted to do was gamble all day long.”
-Mary Wu

Jack found out about the store being sold and told Fong. She pushed him to buy the store because she wanted him to stop gambling and take care of their four kids. That is ultimately why they bought the store.



Jack Wu (fourth from the left) & Fong Wu (fifth from the left)

Edmund discusses Betty Ann.

Betty was a hero during the 9/11 attacks and is honored through a namesake recreation center in San Francisco on Mason and Washington.

After Betty's passing, Edmund invited Reverend Fong to comfort his family during their mourning. Years later, Reverend Fong wanted a namesake for Betty and that led to her recreation center.

Betty was originally supposed to be in Hawaii with family on 9/11 but she decided not to go.

"She she flew for 14 years and nothing happened... She didn't know she was going to die."

"She got murdered... you have to understand that distinction."



Edmund Wu pointing at a photo of Betty Ann.



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TAQUERIA MANA

TAQUERIA MANA

This interview features Jose Cornejo, he's originally from San Juan de los Lagos, a town in the central-west Mexican state of Jalisco. Now he runs a Mexican food joint in Downtown San Francisco.

He shared insights into his life, starting with his move from Mexico to America at the age of 15 in search of better opportunities. He discussed the challenges of adapting to a new culture and the responsibilities that came with raising a family.

Jose reflected on the difficulties of being a business owner, particularly in the initial years when the store struggled financially. He highlighted the importance of trusting in God and learning valuable lessons about customer service from his previous work experience.

The interview touched on personal aspects of Jose's life, including raising three kids while managing the business. He emphasized the significance of faith and trusting in a higher power for success.

When asked about supporting and understanding immigrants, Jose emphasized the need for collaboration between the community and immigrants, recognizing that both parties play a role in supporting each other.



Jose and his wife Maria.

Origins Of The Business

The conversation delved into his business journey. Jose, along with his sister and brother, became partners in purchasing the store back in 2003.

However, after facing financial challenges and realizing the complexities of running a business, the partnership dissolved, leading Jose to take sole responsibility for the venture after they all agreed the first person to buy the others out would keep the store.

Jose borrowed money from his brother in law and took money out of his house and poured it into the business,

Jose said it took 6 years for the business to really pick up and start making money. He said he felt as though the Latino mindset led him and his siblings to believe once he bought the business then he'd be successful, but it took a lot more work than that. After pouring more money into the business and remodeling the business began to take off.



Interior of Taqueria Mana

Jose & Maria

He also shared details about how he and his wife, Julia, met in Mexico through their families' businesses.

They met as children in Mexico then Jose moved to US when he was about 15 years old. Years later she came to the US as well and that's when they got to know each other.

They have 3 children together and they had children before they started the business. Jose said it was an added difficulty of getting the kids to school and also running the business, but their education was very important to him.

An Anecdote From A Customer

During one of my visits to talk to Jose I spoke to one of their regulars, Marsha. Marsha is an older lady who works as a secretary in a dental office around the corner. I was telling her about my project and she told me about her experience with Jose.

Marsha has been a regular for the past 20 years, and she always orders the same thing, a vegan burrito. After years of getting the same thing her order has been wrong one time, it had meat.

Jose chased her down the street to give her the right order, and she said "that's the type of man he is."



Maria (left) and Jose (right)



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LOVE TEA
Tea · Snack · Desserts

New LOVE TEA

Love Tea

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喜茶
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Love Tea

Nancy, the owner of a boba shop in Chinatown, shares her background and immigration journey. She came to the United States in 1983 with her family, facing challenges adapting to a new language and culture. Despite the difficulties, she eventually overcame the language barrier and made friends through shared interests like sports.

The discussion then shifts to her business, which she took over in 2021 during the pandemic. Despite initial doubts from friends, Nancy was encouraged by the landlord, who saw the location as crucial for Chinatown. She highlights the challenges of running a business in San Francisco, particularly high fixed expenses and increased food costs.

Nancy emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural identity, mentioning her efforts to ensure her children speak Chinese at home. She encourages immigrants to learn English, advising them not to limit themselves to Chinatown but to embrace broader integration.

Regarding community support, Nancy mentions the high cost of living in San Francisco and expresses a sense of community despite potential misunderstandings. She addresses misconceptions about Chinese immigrants and encourages cultural exchange between the U.S. and China.

The conversation ends with Nancy discussing her family's decision to immigrate for better opportunities and her belief in the American dream. Despite visiting China, she considers the U.S. her home and emphasizes the commonality of values between Americans and Chinese people.



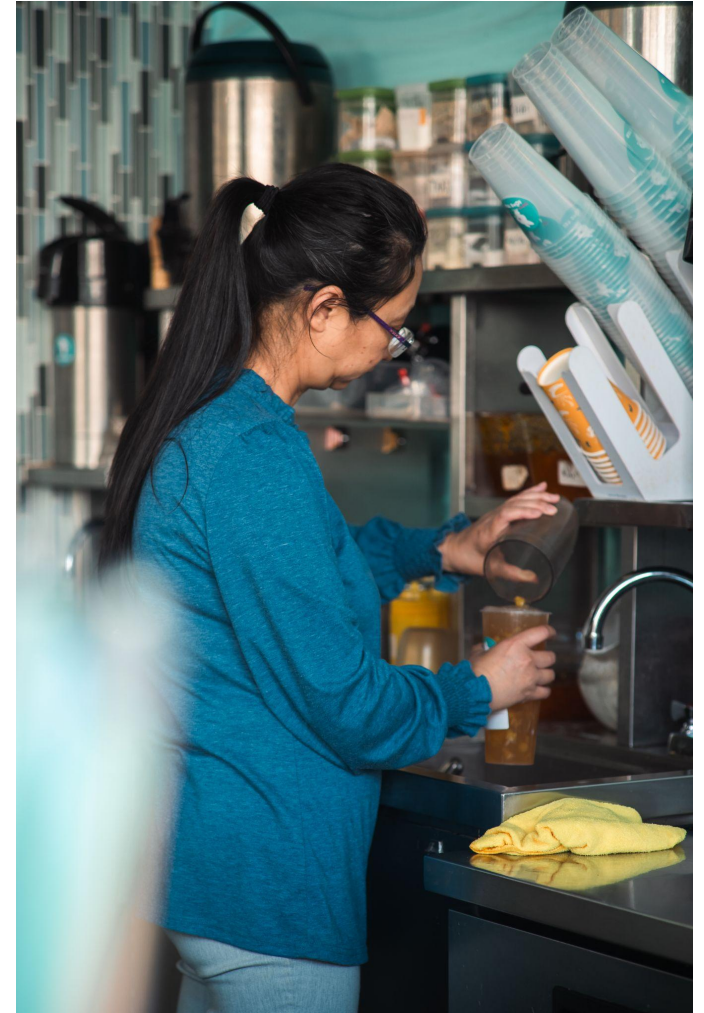
Nancy Yu Law

Nancy's Upbringing

Nancy discussed her upbringing and immigration to the United States in 1983. She shared that her family's decision to move was primarily driven by the pursuit of a better life and opportunities. Arriving in the U.S. at the age of ten, Nancy faced initial challenges due to language barriers, having to repeat the fifth grade and adapting to a new culture.

She described the difficulty of the first few months, struggling with English as she didn't speak Cantonese, the predominant Chinese language in her village. Despite these challenges, Nancy gradually adapted, making friends through shared interests in sports like jump rope, basketball, and volleyball.

Nancy highlighted the importance of learning English for immigrants, emphasizing that it opens up opportunities beyond the confines of Chinatown. Despite the initial language barriers, she eventually overcame them, fostering connections and friendships. Overall, her narrative reflects the resilience and adaptability required during the process of assimilation into a new culture.



Nancy Yu Law

The Dragon's Head of Chinatown

Nancy bought the boba shop in Chinatown in 2021, despite initial skepticism from friends, due to the location being considered "the dragon's head of Chinatown." The significance of this designation was explained by the landlord, who viewed the location as vital for the overall functioning and success of Chinatown.

The metaphor of the "Dragon's Head" suggests that the shop plays a central and leading role in the community, with its closure potentially negatively impacting the entire Chinatown area. The landlord's encouragement, along with a favorable rental deal, motivated Nancy to take over the business during the pandemic, and she has since successfully operated the shop.



Robbery

In early 2023, Love Tea faced two burglaries that occurred just minutes apart. The thieves not only stole cash but also other valuable items from the shop.

Nancy expressed her disappointment as she was expecting more foot traffic with the sunny weather after slow weeks. The surveillance video captured a woman casually walking into the shop through a broken glass door, emptying out the tip jar, and going straight to the cash register before fleeing.

Nancy had to crawl into her shop due to the burglary. About 10 minutes later, the surveillance footage shows another person walking into the office and stealing from the empty cash registers and tablet.

Nancy estimates that the break-in will cost her at least \$1600, and she paid for the damages out of pocket. She mentioned that she typically doesn't leave money out but was sick on that particular day. Despite the incident, the boba tea shop had a steady stream of customers and she said the community has supported her throughout it all.





Doctor Towels

DOCTOR TOWELS

Cherubin Vanjinath is a young entrepreneur from India studying interaction design in San Francisco.

He discusses his background and multicultural experiences, motivations for moving to San Francisco, and the challenges he faces as an immigrant. His business, *Doctor Towels*, focuses on emphasizing the importance of skin health through antibacterial towels.

Cherubin finds a sense of community in San Francisco and defines success as continuous personal growth and learning. He advises other immigrants to believe in themselves, explore their surroundings, and interact with people to adapt and thrive in a new culture.

Cherubin on living in America and trying to stay connected to his family in India, "I'm almost leading one and a half lives. I feel like I'm a part of the culture back in India, but I also feel like I'm part of this culture."



Cherubin Vanjinath.

QUESTIONS

Personal Background and Journey

1. Can you tell me your name and tell me about your background and where you were born?
2. What motivated you to move to the United States, specifically San Francisco?
3. Can you share some of your early experiences and challenges upon arrival in San Francisco?
4. How did you adapt to a new culture and environment? Were there any cultural shocks or surprises?

Business Owners

5. Could you describe your business and its origins?
6. What challenges did you face when starting or running your business in San Francisco?

Community and Support

7. Have you found a sense of community in San Francisco, and if so can you speak a bit about that?

Challenges and Achievements

8. What are some of the biggest challenges you have encountered as an immigrant in San Francisco, whether related to work, education, or daily life?
10. How do you define success in your new home?

Identity and Culture

11. How do you balance preserving your cultural identity and being in American society?
12. Are there cultural traditions or practices that you actively maintain in your daily life?
13. What did you leave behind?

Advice and Perspective

14. What advice would you give to other immigrants who are just starting their journey in San Francisco or the United States?
15. In your opinion, what can the broader community do to better support and understand immigrants and their contributions?

ALTERNATE QUESTIONS

Personal Background and Journey

1. Can you tell me your name and tell me about your background and where you were born?
2. Can you provide an overview of your family's immigration story, including where your parents are from and the circumstances that led them to come to the United States?
3. Can you share some of the challenges or opportunities your parents faced when they first arrived in the U.S.?
4. Have you experienced any cultural or generational differences between yourself and your parents, and if so, how have you navigated them?
5. What are your hobbies?
6. Can you share a personal story or experience that has had a significant impact on your life whether it be work, education, or general life-related?

Business Owners

7. Could you describe your business and its origins?
8. What were some of the challenges you or your family faced in establishing or running the business as immigrants or second-generation citizens?

Community and Support

9. Have you found a sense of community in San Francisco, and if so can you speak a bit about that?

Challenges and Achievements

10. How do you define success in San Francisco?

Have you or your parents experienced discrimination or bias as immigrants or second-generation citizens and if so can you tell me about that?

Advice and Perspective

11. In your opinion, what can the broader community do to better support and understand immigrants, their families, and their contributions?

THE KIND OF PHOTOS I WANT TO TAKE

- 01 Owners inside of their business
- 02 Owners outside of their business
- 03 Portraits of owner
- 04 Interior & Exterior of the business
- 05 Drone shots of the business