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IHUM 40B: Final Project
TF: Dr. Joshua Wright
Section 7

SAN JOSE CHINATOWN

Inspired by the TV Show: The Amazing Race



OVERVIEW

- Reality-style game show based on *The Amazing Race*
- Players participate in activities that both simulate the Chinese immigrant experience and debunk misconceptions about early Chinese immigrants to America
- Participants face a series of challenges across modern San Jose and the surrounding area (e.g. a nearby farm), interacting with the local population as well as field experts and actors

OBJECTIVES

Our project aims to inform audiences of the “lost” history of San Jose Chinatown and address the central heritage issue of portraying the lifestyle in Chinatowns based on stereotypes as well as misconceptions that Chinese-American culture was entirely traditional and resistant to modernity.





Challenge 1: Fruit Hustle

The Challenge:

- Under the supervision of a white landowner, contestants must harvest five bushels of bananas, and present them to the landowner for approval.
- Contestants may forgo this toil if they take the initiative to exchange farming knowledge with their employer at the site.

Significance:

- Contestants learn about the exchange of agricultural ideas between Chinese immigrant and American farmers.
 - The Chinese farmers introduced the Americans to new farming techniques, while the white agriculturalists taught the Chinese about Californian soil and indigenous plant species.

Challenge 2: Remedy Race

The Challenge:

- After harvesting bananas, the contestants now have planter warts and rashes all over their hands.
- Contestants proceed to Chinatown pharmacies to inquire about the best cures for their ailments.
- They are required to purchase both Eastern and Western medicine in order to advance from this challenge.

Significance:

- Contestants learn that San Jose Chinatown residents used both Eastern and Western medicine to treat their illness.
 - Popular misconception depicts their medical practice as entirely traditional Chinese, but American medicine was commonly used complementarily.

Challenge 3: Rah-Rah Rally

The Challenge:

- After their "injuries" are treated, contestants are informed of a rally organized by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) protesting low wages of Chinese immigrant farm laborers.
- Contestants must contribute to the rally effort by circulating a petition among the public. They must collect 25 signatures to receive their next task assignment.

Significance:

- Contestants learn that the Chinese immigrant workers in the agricultural and other industries (e.g. mining, railroads) did organize strikes and fought for higher wages and better working conditions.
 - Through the CCBA and similar organizations, the immigrants were not submissive to employers, resisting for the sake of their worker's rights.





Challenge 4: Frantic Furnishing

Significance:

- At the San Jose Repertory Theater, contestants must create the set for a one room Chinese home scene using provided props (both Chinese and American).
- Upon completion, contestants must receive approval from a celebrity guest, archaeologist Barbara Voss. Dr. Voss will silently approve (nods head) or disapprove (shakes head) and contestants must figure out what they are doing wrong until the set is free of their false preconceptions of Chinese life in San Jose Chinatown.

Significance:

- Contestants learn that life in Chinatown was heavily integrated into Western culture, even the home.
 - Contrary to common perception, the immigrant home was furnished with Western elements in addition to Chinese decorations—Voss found that 25-60% of artifacts recovered at the Market Street Chinatown were manufactured in Europe or America.

Challenge 5: Mystery Man

The Challenge:

- In an envelope the contestants will receive a letter with a name, and by asking locals, they need to find this person—who actually lives outside downtown San Jose. The person, actually in the mining town of New Almaden (about 12 miles south of San Jose), will have that clue.

Significance:

- Most Chinese immigrants didn't live in Chinatown—in fact, only one-fourth to one-third did.
 - The majority of the immigrants lived close to their work, often in mining towns or with their bosses, especially if they were farm hands. They perceived Chinatown as a physical and cultural haven.



Challenge 6: Kid Count

The Challenge:

- Arrive at an elementary school classroom and count the number of [white] American children and Chinese children in total as they run around. The next clue will be given once the exact count is given to the schoolteacher.

Significance:

- Schools were often racially integrated so that Chinese children learned side by side with children of other ethnicities in the San Jose area.
 - Through this simple exercise, contestants learn about this integration in schools, perhaps challenging their initial assumption of segregation.



Challenge 7: The Butcher Method

The Challenge:

- Contestants must find a certain Chinese butcher shop and learn how the butcher prepares meat for customers. They will be given a demonstration on the “Euroamerican” style of the butcher and must repeat this style.

Significance:

- Contestants will learn that Chinese butchers adapted their style in accordance with Western practice to some extent, thus creating a fusion of methods.
 - This activity implies to contestants the diversity in diet at San Jose Chinatown, with immigrants adopting American foods and preparation styles.

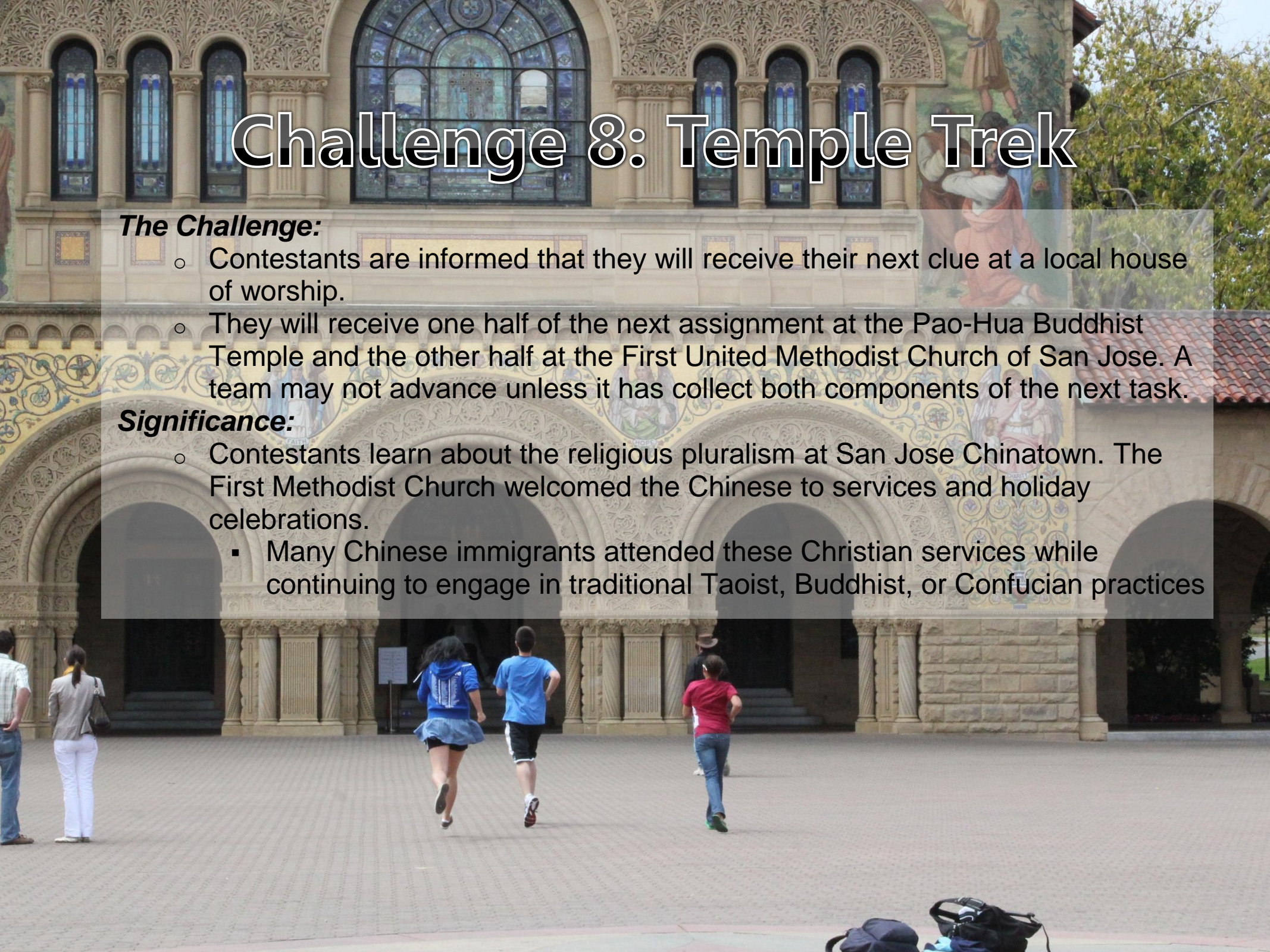
Challenge 8: Temple Trek

The Challenge:

- Contestants are informed that they will receive their next clue at a local house of worship.
- They will receive one half of the next assignment at the Pao-Hua Buddhist Temple and the other half at the First United Methodist Church of San Jose. A team may not advance unless it has collect both components of the next task.

Significance:

- Contestants learn about the religious pluralism at San Jose Chinatown. The First Methodist Church welcomed the Chinese to services and holiday celebrations.
 - Many Chinese immigrants attended these Christian services while continuing to engage in traditional Taoist, Buddhist, or Confucian practices



Challenge 9: Avert Attack

The Challenge:

- In this challenge, contestants are told to walk down a crowded walkway. Staged characters throw taunt and throw objects at the contestants while yelling such complaints as, “Chinese laborers are ruining our job prospects! We’re sick of being replaced with your cheap labor!”
- Contestants must resist these racially driven attacks to advance, either physically or through negotiation (e.g. working out an informal labor agreement).

Significance:

- Contestants learn that the Chinese immigrants did not passively accept persecution.
 - The people of San Jose Chinatown did take measures to protect the community physically and socially. Men organized to defend Chinatown from attacks, and as the rally demonstrated, workers would strike for better wages and conditions.

Secret Challenge

Secret challenge: documentation checks!

- If contestants do not have documentation on them at all times, then they must go back to the beginning and start the game all over again.

Significance:

- Contestants experience the anti-Chinese discrimination faced by the immigrants, and are constantly in fear of unexpected interrogation.
 - The immigrants were required to carry their proof of residence on their persons at all times, or else face the threat of being deported back to China.



Mission Accomplished!

Thank you!

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