Urban Chinatowns are experiencing changes that challenge its identity as simply a historic Chinese ethnic enclave. The oldest Chinatowns in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, for example, are recognized as historical Chinese American spaces and a home for more recent low-income ethnic Chinese immigrants and refugees who are diverse in language and national origin, but still in need of social services. Because of their proximity to the downtown core and other older neighborhoods experiencing rapid development and increasing housing costs, Chinatowns are also part of gentrification debates in these cities. The neighborhood demographic and cultural changes, along with these broader urban pressures, are not only reshaping the physical and social landscape of Chinatowns, but also the political landscape as individuals are engaging in various forms of political participation and organizing to advocate and bring resources for the community in response to the changes. This presentation will examine these issues through a case study of Los Angeles Chinatown, specifically highlighting how the neighborhood has been embedded within urban development and revitalization trends since the 1965 Immigration Act.

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