ACTIVITY 1: MAPPING STEREOTYPES

learning objectives

Students will be able to:
- Understand and analyze visual/graphical primary sources (ex. maps)
- Identify different elements of maps and interpret them, including biases involved in the creation of maps
- Deconstruct the racist biases and stereotyping of officials who mapped San Francisco's Chinatown in 1885

pre-class activity

Recommend assigning to students before class as homework

1. Introduce the topic of maps and mapping. Paper maps might seem less relevant to today's world, but things that we use every day, like a car's GPS, Google Maps, and even social media apps like Snapchat's Snap Maps, are still maps that we rely on in our daily routines. Maps can serve different purposes, such as finding out where you are, what businesses are located around you, or where your friends are in relation to you. This activity will ask students to create a map of their own neighborhood.

> *Don't forget to download the all the slides & handouts at*
> *tinyurl.com/smallpoxlesson*

2. Ask students to draw a map of their own neighborhoods that highlights the places they go in their typical day/week. What's important to them about their neighborhood? They should include places that they frequently visit, such as their home, the parks in the neighborhood, the locations of part-time jobs or other activities, favorite restaurants in the area, etc. They should not try to draw every building or street, or copy directly from Google Maps, but use their own memories. Encourage students to use art supplies such as markers, colored pencils, and more.
   - *For younger students, consider splitting into 2 steps: 1) Create a list of their favorite local places. 2) Build a map around this list.*

in-class activity

1. *(5-7 min)* Split students into pairs and compare their maps to each other. Encourage students to think about how the perspective of the map-maker (or cartographer) affects their view of the neighborhood and how they designed the map. Students should discuss the following guiding questions:

   1. What is different between their maps? What is similar?
   2. What do these maps tell you about the person who made the map? For example, what can you learn about the map-maker's hobbies, priorities, or daily routine?

2. *(5-7 min)* Facilitate a brief classroom discussion on what students noticed about the differences in their maps and what that means for the purposes of their maps. Guide students to consider how maps contain the biases of the creator, so they may not be objective. By critically analyzing the goal or purpose of a map, we can better understand how maps may be biased or fail to reveal the whole picture.
   - *If students are not already familiar with the concept of stereotype, introduce the term and define it.*

3. *(5 min)* Introduce the 1885 Chinatown map activity by giving students a section of the "Official Map of "Chinatown" in San Francisco" (1885). Students can access a high resolution image of this map at immigranthistory.org/smallpoxmap. This map was created when a special survey was commissioned by the San Francisco government after multiple smallpox epidemics had broken out in the city. Chinese immigrants were targeted and blamed for spreading the epidemic, with little evidence. As part of this survey, officials entered every room and floor of Chinatown, noting elements like the number of inhabitants and sanitary condition of the rooms, which they described in an accompanying report on Chinatown for the public.
   - *If necessary, walk students through the map legend. For example, "C." denotes "Chinese" areas, and "P." stands for prostitution.*

4. *(10 min)* Distribute the worksheet (tinyurl.com/smallpoxlesson), and instruct students to examine the map on their own. They should observe and write down their answers to the questions on the handout.

5. *(15 min)* Once students are finished with the worksheet, lead a class discussion using the following questions:

1. What did you notice about the map?
2. What is labelled on the map? What do these labels/categories suggest about how the Board of Supervisors saw and portrayed Chinatown and its Chinese residents?
3. What stereotypes do you see being represented in this map?
4. How might this map have affected the general public's views of Chinatown and its residents? Remember that this was labeled an "Official" map of Chinatown, and that it was created by a government agency.

VOCABULARY LIST

Joss House: Chinese temple or shrine

Opium: an addictive drug which can be smoked

Gambling: playing games of chance like card games (ex. poker) for money

Pawn broker: someone who takes a valuable object and loans money to the owner in exchange for it. Once money is repaid, object is returned.

Stereotype: a widely held idea about a group of people that takes away the individual characteristics of a person.

post-class assignment

Ask students to write a reflection (or journal entry, if your class uses journals) responding to the following prompt:

1. In today's COVID-19 pandemic, many politicians and people in the media have used generalizations to talk about the coronavirus. For example, many public figures have called COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" or the "Kung Flu" and blamed Chinese people for spreading it. What connections do you see between what is going on right now, and what might have been happening in 1885 when the SF government was making the "Official Chinatown Map"? Do you see any repeated stereotypes or biases? How might these stereotypes harm the communities they target?