

Document Citation

Title	'The fall of the I-Hotel': The struggle for housing in San Francisco's Manilatown
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Source	<i>Chonk Moonhunter Productions</i>
Date	1984 Feb 1
Type	press release
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The fall of the I-Hotel, Choy, Curtis, 1983

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February 1, 1984
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"THE FALL OF THE I-HOTEL": THE STRUGGLE FOR HOUSING IN SAN FRANCISCO'S MANILATOWN

SAN FRANCISCO, CA--In the ongoing struggle between San Francisco developers and neighborhood preservationists, one battle stands out. Curtis Choy's THE FALL OF THE I-HOTEL documents the story of San Francisco's most famous confrontation between community residents, in this case, the Filipinos of Manilatown, and real estate interests.

Through interviews and reminiscences with elderly Filipinos (the Manongs) and Asian community people, this film chronicles the once-thriving Filipino community that once centered around the historic International Hotel on Kearny Street. The hotel provided low-cost housing for international seamen, farm workers, cannery workers, houseboys, and single working men--the Filipinos who came to America to find work and a better life during the 1920's.

By the 1950's, the International Hotel was the center of community for over 10,000 Filipinos in San Francisco. But, within 15 years, the community declined due to the expansion of business and commercial property from the downtown area. By 1968, all that remained of Manilatown was the single block which housed the International Hotel.

That same year, the hotel's owner wanted to demolish the structure to make way for a parking garage. A coalition of community activists, workers, senior citizen groups, organized labor, churches, and ethnic organizations fought to preserve the International Hotel as low-cost housing for the elderly and as an Asian community center.

Despite the political machinations at City Hall and the widespread support garnered for the hotel residents, eviction procedures were initiated. On August 4, 1977, the 50 elderly Manongs who lived in the International Hotel along with others were forcibly removed in a controversial and emotional pre-dawn operation by over 300 law enforcement officials. Choy's cameras were rolling throughout that night capturing the eviction and the huge demonstrations which followed.

The film concludes with the ultimate demolition of the International Hotel building which effectively wrote the final chapter to San Francisco's Manilatown.

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THE FALL OF THE I-HOTEL add2-2-2-2-2-2

THE FALL OF THE I-HOTEL uses poetry, animation, and rare newsreel footage to reveal the plight of the elderly and displaced, unfolding their stories like a family album. Through interviews with residents, community workers, and politicians, this documentary places audiences in the center of this significant battle between housing activists and real estate interests.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE'S film critic Judy Stone wrote, "There is both dramatic and historic punch in Choy's outstanding film in which music, old photographs, newsreel footage, and interviews are successfully integrated to provide a powerful and moving account of the Filipino immigrants to San Francisco... Emiko Omori's cinematography is particularly outstanding as she captures the life on Kearny Street, the large demonstrations in support of the I-Hotel residents, and the neon-lit, pulsating rhythm of final events as 300 law officers moved in to close down the hotel..."

THE FALL OF THE I-HOTEL, written and produced by Curtis Choy with cinematography by Emiko Omori, has been screened at the 1983 Asian American International Film Festival and the Fourth Annual Bay Area Filmmakers' Showcase.

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Oakland-based Curtis Choy heads Chonk Moonhunter Productions which has produced several films on the Asian American experience including DUPONT GUY: THE SCHIZ OF GRANT AVENUE. Choy is also an experienced sound mixer with credits on such films as Wayne Wang's CHAN IS MISSING and the soon-to-be-released DIM SUM, Emiko Omori's THE DEPARTURE, and various PBS documentaries.

Cinematographer Emiko Omori is a veteran filmmaker and cinematographer whose credits include ROSIE, THE RIVETER, John Korty's A CHRISTMAS WITHOUT SNOW, and Wayne Wang's DIM SUM.

RUNNING LENGTH: 57 minutes