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Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

A special type of neighbourhood

**00.19–00.41** Each Sunday, the sounds of the Mission Dolores Basilica are heard in San Francisco. These sounds bring memories of the Spanish who built this church in 1791. They didn’t know it at the time, but it was the start of a special type of neighbourhood – the Mission District.

**00.45–01.03** Some community members describe the neighbourhood as a central part of the city. Why? Because it’s where the city began long ago. They feel that understanding the many levels of history here is important. They also feel that’s it’s a big part of understanding what it means to be a real San Franciscan.

**01.10–02.12** Over the years, immigrants have come here from Ireland, Germany and Italy. But the most recent immigrants are mainly from Mexico, Central and South America. It’s easy to see the style that these recent additions give to the neighbourhood. You can see it on walls, taste it in the food, and hear it in the music! Juan Pedro Gaffney grew up in the Mission District. He’s the director of the Spanish Choir of San Francisco. In the past, the group has performed to raise money for people after natural disasters in Central America. Many people here have friends and relatives in Latin America. Juan Pedro says that the local community here feels a sense of common involvement. They really care when a neighbouring nation is in pain. In good times and bad, the music of The Mission deeply affects everyone. Juan Pedro explains that it’s always been a basic part of cultural identity here. It’s colourful, lively, and according to Juan Pedro, absolutely ‘jumping’!

**02.15–02.34** But it isn’t just the music – the art of The Mission is full of life as well. The local art community here stays close to the area’s culture and tradition. A local arts organisation leads people on walks through the district. They visit streets like Balmy Alley, which is famous for its murals.

**02.35–02.39 Ray Patlan** What happens is, the murals begin to reflect the community itself.

**02.40–03.11** In 1984, artist Ray Patlan helped paint a series of murals with the theme – ‘Peace in Central America’. But, while the district remains mainly Latino, it’s no longer 1984. Politics and the world have changed; the art of The Mission has changed as well. Patlan says that the art is a part of the streets, but also a reflection of the community. As the community changes, the murals change too. The mural messages are always changing, but they’re still very powerful.

**03.12–03.19 Balmy Alley resident** It’s great! It’s like coming home to a piece of art every day. You know, every time we drive up it’s just very – it’s sort of vibrant.

**03.20–03.46** The artists here have strong feelings about the work they do. One artist explains that the artists of The Mission are fighting for fairness in the community. They’re also fighting to help the environment. In the industrial area of The Mission District, this group of artists maintains its cultural identity in traditional San Francisco style. Many artists feel that The Mission is a successful neighbourhood where new immigrants are welcome.

**03.48–03.53 Mission District artist** People see that they’re not so different from each other. There’s a lot of things that bind them through culture and tradition.

**03.54–04.09** Saint Peter’s Church is another place that understands the closeness between culture and tradition. Mission Dolores was the foundation of The Mission, but Saint Peter’s is another strong base in the area. Father Dan McGuire is the leader of Saint Peter’s.

**04.10–04.19 Father Dan McGuire** And the beauty of this particular parish, is that the different cultures from Latin America, the different countries of Latin America come together here and they really form a common unity.

**04.21–04.27** The people who come here are from all over Latin America, places like Mexico, El Salvador, and Peru.

**04.28–04.42 Father Dan McGuire** And they bring with them the best of their own country. Particularly their interest in their families, their interests in their traditions. And what I see going on here in a very, very positive way is an integration of the best of Latin American culture now with American culture.

**04.44–04.59** In the Mission District, immigrants are often able to fit into a new society very easily. Why? Because the environment here is so comfortable. It may be this comfortable feeling that makes this multi-cultural community a very special type of neighbourhood.

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