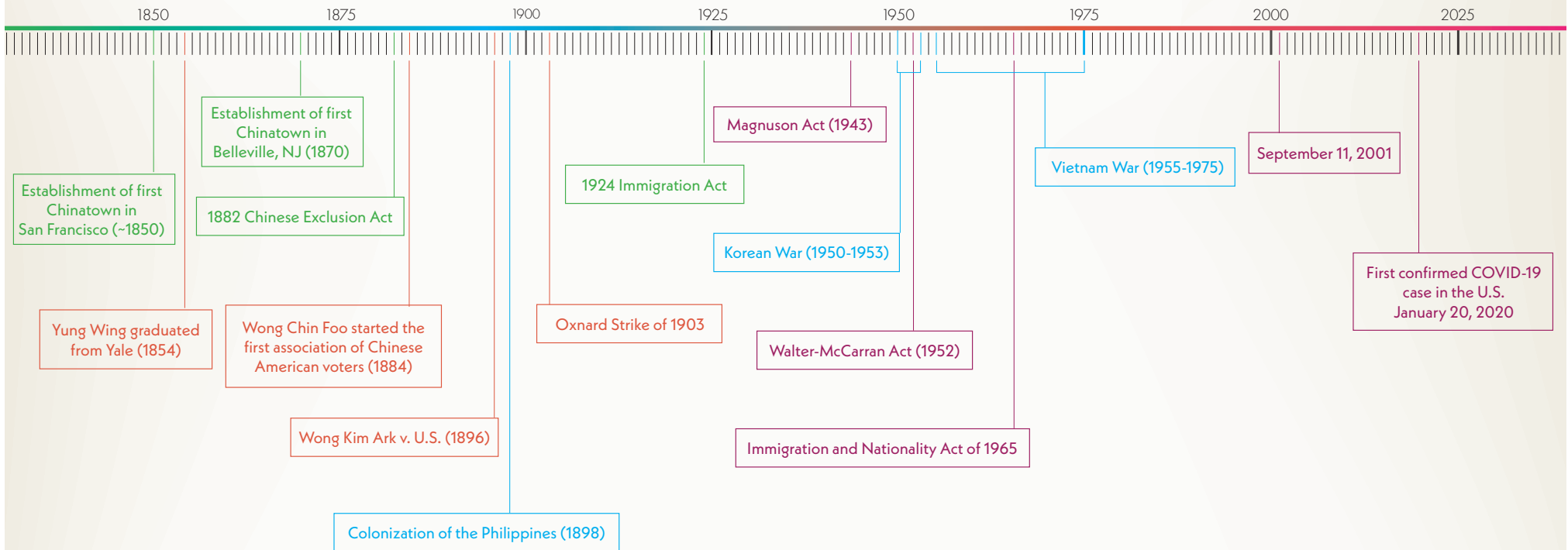


# Brilliant Boba in Context

## Asian American History 1850 to Present

The Brilliant Boba stories are from Asian and Asian Americans living in Connecticut and reflect the way Asian and Asian Americans are woven into the fabric of American society and history. This condensed history of Asian American history (compiled by Immigrant History Initiative) places the Brilliant Boba stories within the larger context of Asian American history.

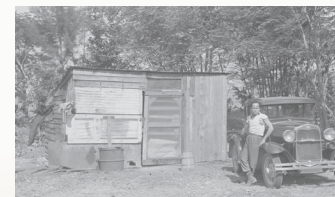
This history starting in 1850 and spanning through 2020 presents important historical moments that have shaped how Asian and Asian Americans exist, experience, and interact with life in America. It is broken into four major themes. Each theme has its own detailed page.



1 1800s Asian Migration & Exclusion



2 Early Asian American Activism



3 U.S. Military Action in Asia



4 Modern Immigration from Asia & Today's AA Communities

## 1800s Asian Migration & Exclusion

When did the first Asians come to the Americas? Probably earlier than you think. The first recorded Asian sailors came to the Americas in the 1500s, not long after Christopher Columbus! However, the first significant wave of migration occurred in the 1800s. This big wave was driven by America's labor needs, as companies like railroad builders needed more workers to complete big projects like the Transcontinental Railroad. In this time period, mostly men came to work in the United States--partly because of the back-breaking nature of the work, but also because of U.S. policies against the immigration of Asian women. These policies created "bachelor societies" of mostly men, who faced serious discrimination and were often unable to form families and lay down permanent roots in the United States.

### Essential Question:

Who were the first Asians in America, and how were they treated?

### Establishment of first Chinatown in San Francisco (~1850) and in Belleville, New Jersey (1870)

Because many of the first Chinese migrants to the U.S. were hired to work on railroads on the West Coast, Chinese American communities grew significantly during the mid-1800s in states like California. However, the growth of Chinese (and later other Asian) communities led to backlash from the white majority, who passed laws that limited where Chinese residents could live and what they could do for work, limiting job opportunities to those that other men would not do, like laundry and restaurant work. Due to these restrictions, Chinese communities became confined in small neighborhoods that became known as "Chinatown."

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Your Identity Is In Your Palette by Gloria Han

A Natural Customer Service Representative in the Making  
by Yingying Zheng

Okra by Frances Yuko

Happy Birthday to You by Yingying Zheng & Keith Leonhardt

### 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act

The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act is the first major federal law on immigration in the history of the United States. It was the first building block of the large system of immigration restrictions that America has today. This law barred all immigration of Chinese laborers, targeting Chinese immigrants even though they made up a small percentage of all immigrants coming to America. Why were the Chinese targeted? During this time period, anti-Chinese movements spread across the country, with advertisements and cartoons portraying Asians as dirty, untrustworthy, and less than human.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Enough by Frances Yuko

### 1924 Immigration Act

After the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act, anti-Asian sentiment only spread. Other communities of Asian immigrants also faced violence and discriminatory treatment. South Asian immigrants faced particular hostility. Responding to these societal trends, the U.S. passed a series of progressively more extreme anti-Asian immigration laws. In 1910, the U.S. government set up Angel Island Immigration Station. Angel Island was designed to enforce these anti-Asian immigration laws and used extensive interrogation and other tactics to keep out any Asian immigrants they thought might be evading these laws. The 1924 Immigration Act finally prohibited all immigration from Asia. The goal of the law was to keep U.S. racial demographics the same. In other words, it tried to keep non-white immigrants from becoming a larger part of the U.S. population.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Perpetual Foreigners by Anonymous



## Early Asian American Activism

At the same time that Asian immigrants faced overwhelming discrimination and outright violence, these communities also banded together to resist racism. Asian Americans reacted to mistreatment by fighting for their rights, and many of these fights led to the establishment of important principles and legal protections. From voting and citizenship, to education and labor, Asian American leaders made their mark on U.S. history even during the darkest of times. Today, we still benefit from the struggles of these early activists because of the rights and protections they won for us so many years ago.

### Essential Question:

How did Asian Americans react to discrimination and mistreatment?

### Yung Wing graduated from Yale (1854)

Although the majority of immigrants from Asia in the 1800s were laborers, there were a small number of scholars and officials who came. One of the first was Yung Wing. In 1954, he became the first Chinese student to graduate from a university in North America (Yale). Yung wanted to provide more Chinese students with educational opportunities and established the Chinese Educational Mission. Even though Yung was a wealthy, educated Chinese person, he still experienced discrimination as an Asian man. Although the Exclusion Act permitted a small number of Chinese merchants and government officials to come to the U.S., they did not have the same rights as white Americans.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

A Musical Prodigy and Matriarch by Clara Shen (story) and Kaitlin Tan Fung (art)  
Limitless Opportunities and Attainable Dreams by Pauline Ho Bynum

### Wong Chin Foo started the first association of Chinese American voters (1884)

Who coined the term “Chinese American?” Wong Chin Foo was a vocal advocate and trailblazer for the rights of Chinese immigrants in the United States. He established the very first organization of Chinese American voters to fight against the Chinese Exclusion Act and later discriminatory immigration laws. Wong Chin Foo was far from the last Chinese American activist striving for voting rights. A few decades later in 1912, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee helped lead a women’s suffrage parade in New York City at the age of 16. Despite knowing that women’s suffrage in the era of Chinese Exclusion would not benefit herself as she could not become a citizen, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee worked alongside other suffragists, both white and women of color, to advocate for the women’s right to vote.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Limitless Opportunities and Attainable Dreams by Pauline Ho Bynum  
Lunar New Year in New Haven by Shirley Chock

### Wong Kim Ark v. U.S. (1896)

Wong Kim Ark may be the most influential name you have never seen in your textbooks. Because of him, America follows the principle of birthright citizenship, which states that any person born in the United States is considered a U.S. citizen, no matter their race or skin color. Wong Kim Ark was born in America before the passage of the 1882 Exclusion Act. After he traveled to China, the U.S. government refused to let him back in. Although only a teenager at the time, Wong Kim Ark sued the U.S. government under the 14th Amendment, saying all people born in the United States must be considered a U.S. citizen, regardless of their race. Today, America is a much more diverse and colorful country because of the birthright citizenship that Wong Kim Ark won for all of us. Are YOU a citizen because of Wong Kim Ark?

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Where are you from? by Quan Tran  
Culture Shock by Anonymous

### Oxnard Strike of 1903 (1903)

Immigrants can face unfair labor practices, with employers often viewing them as a cheaper source of manpower. For example, Asian and Latinx workers were paid less than white workers and forced to work under worse conditions. During the Oxnard Strike of 1903, Japanese and Mexican workers united to fight back against these injustices. They accused California beet employers of working together to keep wages abnormally low, charge them unfair fees, and more. Despite being from different communities and speaking different languages, Japanese and Mexican workers collaborated to conduct a successful strike, and most of their demands were met! The 1903 strike is only one in a long line of cross-racial labor organizing.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Advocacy by Christina Cho  
Burden by Christina Cho

Workers Unloading Sugar Beets at an Oxnard, California Factory, ca. 1910  
Credit: National Photo Company Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.



## U.S. Military Action in Asia

Towards the end of the 19th century, America began extending its reach globally. In this process, it created military bases in Asian countries and began intervening in these countries' policies. Why did America intervene in places as far away as Asia? As one of the world's emerging superpowers, the U.S. fought to maintain its status against other global superpowers, including the Soviet Union. The U.S. feared that the Soviet Union would grow more powerful by influencing Asian countries to follow its model of socialism or communism. To combat this, the U.S. began sending advisors, intelligence agents, and even military troops to Asia, fueling several military conflicts in the region. These conflicts led to immense destruction of land and property, as well as a steep toll of human lives. As a consequence, mass migration of refugees fleeing these war-ravaged countries transformed the demographics of Asian American communities in the U.S.

### Essential Question:

What were the effects of U.S. military intervention in Asia on migration trends?

### Colonization of the Philippines (1898)

In 1898, the U.S. won the Spanish-American War. Along with Puerto Rico and Guam, the Philippines became one of the first American colonies. The occupation of the Philippines began a century of U.S. military involvement in Asia and the emergence of the U.S. as a global military power. The U.S. justified the occupation of the Philippines by portraying the Filipinos as a backward race that needed American control to be "civilized." Even though the Philippines was part of the U.S., Filipinos were not given the same rights as American citizens. During the early 1900s, many Filipinos migrated to Hawaii and then mainland U.S. However, the presence of Filipino Americans was met with backlash, including violent riots against Filipino communities. Despite these challenges, Filipino communities formed, and workers organized to fight for better working conditions and wages.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

You Are So Special by Diane Phelan

### Korean War (1950-1953)

The Korean War took place from 1950-1953, after Korea was divided into two governments following World War II: South Korea (supported by the U.S.) and North Korea (supported by the Soviet Union). The War represented opposing political positions of democracy and communism. Often called the "forgotten war," the Korean War had one of the highest numbers of casualties in a 20th century conflict. During the war, almost 15,000 Koreans immigrated to the U.S. After the War, many more came to the United States, including Korean wives of American soldiers ("war brides"); orphans, many of who were "Amerasian" (someone whose father is an American soldier and whose mother is Asian); and students, businessmen, and scholars. During the mid-1900s, American immigration law did not allow Asian migration, but several laws were passed during the 1940s to 1950s to allow for the migration of Asian individuals affected by American military conflict in Asia.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Munjado (art) by Jisun Kim

#MyAsianAmerican Story by Donna Yoo

You Are So Special by Diane Phelan

A Family That Lives Apart by Lily Engbith

### Vietnam War (1955-1975)

Known as the "Resistance War against the Americans" among the Vietnamese, this conflict is one of the most devastating wars in human history, resulting in millions of civilian deaths and destroyed cities and critical infrastructure. Vietnam was split into two factions: the U.S. backed South Vietnam against a Communist North Vietnam. Desperate to keep Communism from spreading in Asia, the U.S. conducted numerous bombing campaigns of villages and cities and used chemical warfare to poison the area's water and land. The fighting also spread to surrounding countries. When U.S. troops finally withdrew in 1975, North Vietnam declared victory, and millions of refugees began flooding out of Southeast Asia. Although the U.S. admitted many Southeast Asian refugees, they often faced discrimination and mistreatment in the cities where they settled. Some U.S. politicians tried to prevent refugees from moving into their states, and a large part of the U.S. population opposed accepting Vietnamese refugees. But by the mid-1980s, refugees made up more than one out of every five Asian Americans in the U.S.

#### Brilliant Boba Connections:

Where are you from by Quan Tran

The Things We Carried by Quan Tran

## Modern Immigration from Asia & Today's AA Communities

In the 20th century, wars and new immigration laws dramatically changed the landscape of Asian American communities in the U.S. Asian immigrants came to the U.S. in greater numbers as a result of events like the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and conflicts like World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Why did the U.S. change its immigration policies toward Asians? What were the results of these changes in immigration policy? Because of these changes, there has been rapid growth of Asian American communities since the 1950s and 60s, and the majority of Asian Americans today are foreign born. Asian Americans have incredible diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture, and language, but also income, education, and immigration status. How do the different pathways to arriving in the U.S. shape the diversity of the Asian American community? Are you surprised by what you have learned?

### Essential Question:

How have changing immigration patterns and global events shaped and/or changed Asian Americans as a community?

### Magnuson Act (1943) and Walter-McCarran Act (1952)

In the early 20th century, military conflict in Asia and changing diplomatic relationships with countries like China and Korea shaped immigrant policies toward Asians. In 1943, at the height of World War II, Congress passed the Magnuson Act repealing the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and ending a 60-year ban on Chinese immigration. During this time, U.S. war-time propaganda depicted the Chinese as allies and the Japanese as enemies, which led to the incarceration of more than 100,000 Japanese Americans during WWII. Following the end to WWII, criticism of the focus on race-based restrictions of immigration, especially its effect on international relations, led to the passage of the Walter-McCarran Act, which reintroduced immigration quotas for people from Africa and Asia (who had been completely banned before this law), and allowed non-white immigrants to naturalize and become U.S. citizens (which had been prohibited for Asian immigrants before this law).

### Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement transformed how communities of color were treated in many different arenas, like the immigration system. Civil rights activists, including African American, Latinx American, and Indigenous activists worked together to call for immigration reform, pointing out the racist roots of immigration laws. Their advocacy led to the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. This Act ended previous eras of exclusion based on racial categories and instituted a new system that is based on employment, family reunification, and humanitarian claims. Because of the 1965 Act, U.S. racial demographics shifted radically, and new immigrant communities flourished.

#### Brilliant Boba connections:

From Shanghai to Chicago by Kaitlin Fung  
Advocacy by Christina Cho  
Lunar New Year in New Haven by Shirley Chock

### September 11, 2001

On September 11, 2001, four attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon coordinated by 19 militants associated with the extremist group Al-Qaeda led to the death of almost 3,000 people. The events of 9/11 spurred the "War on Terror," a global military campaign focused on military intervention in Afghanistan. In addition, surveillance programs were set up at the state and national levels to monitor Muslim communities. Following the events of 9/11, Muslim and Brown communities (including South Asian American, Sikh Americans, and others who are not Muslim) in the United States (and elsewhere) experienced a significant increase in violence, hate crimes, and discriminatory treatment. Muslim Americans experienced a 500% spike in hate crimes, and there have been over 300 documented cases of violence and discrimination against Sikh Americans since 9/11.

#### Brilliant Boba connections:

"Perpetual Foreigners," by Anonymous

### First confirmed case of COVID-19 in the U.S. January 20, 2020

At the tail end of 2019, the most severe pandemic in a century began sweeping the globe. The COVID-19 virus originated in Wuhan, China and became nicknamed the "Chinese virus." Due to the focus on the virus's Chinese origin, many Americans scapegoated the Asian American community. Stereotypes deeply rooted in history came rushing back to the forefront. More than 6,000 hate incidents against AAPIs were recorded in the 18 months since the start of the pandemic. In response, AAPI communities rallied together to #StopAAPIHate, organizing protests, lobbying for laws, and spreading awareness of Asian American history.

