

# MY ASIAN AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAPI) STORY BY JUSTIN QUON

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My grandparents are a part of Angel Island history. Angel Island is where most Asian immigrants were held and questioned for weeks, often months, to see if they could keep their immigration story straight. Discrepancies would mean deportation. My Mom's side of the family has a plaque there, honoring my grandparents who immigrated from China through Angel Island.

My Grandpa arrived in 1921 at age 13, penniless and speaking not a word of English. He found various job opportunities sweeping floors, washing dishes, cooking (working multiple jobs daily), eventually saving enough money to bring my grandmother over 17 years later in 1938.

Our family grew up in the Mississippi Delta and constantly faced racism and separation from white and black communities alike. Chinese in the Deep South sounds strange, but there is a lot of history behind Chinese in the Delta.

There were separate schools for the white community and the black community, but none for Asians. Grandpa knew his kids would receive a better education at the "white" school and convinced the mayor to allow his 8 children to be educated at the "white" school. No government subsidies were given to put all 8 kids through college.

Asians weren't allowed to own land until ~1954. Prior to, our family slept in the back of the grocery stores they had opened on rented land. Both my Mom and Dad's families owned grocery stores, which was a big deal! Back then, the black community was not allowed in white grocery stores. The Chinese-owned grocery stores helped to serve the black and white communities. In some cases, the Chinese operated separate grocery stores to cater to each community.

I'm proud of my family's history, strength, and perseverance. I'm also proud to be part of a team that strongly opposes all forms of hatred, racism, and discrimination!