

The Great Leap

By Lauren Yee

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About *The Great Leap*

Playwright – Lauren Yee* (She/Her)

Lauren Yee is a playwright who investigates the challenges of families. "I've been able to mine a lot of drama from those family relationships where you have the different generations struggling to understand each other, understand the choices that one generation made that the next generation is trying to reconcile themselves with. For me, that's the sweet spot, that's the part I relate to. So I keep finding myself returning to those stories again and again"

- Lauren Yee 2020, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation



Yee set *The Great Leap* in the city where she was born, San Francisco, and based the show off of her father's love of basketball, marking this as her second play based off of her father. The first was *King of the Yees* (published in 2018). Her other major works include *Cambodian Rock Band*, *Hookman*, and *Ching Chong Chinaman*. Yee is a member of the Ma-Yi Writer's Lab and has recently been awarded; the Doris Duke Artist Award, the Signature Theatre Residency 5 Award, the Whiting Award, and an American Academy of Arts and Letters Literature Award.

The Great Leap centers around Manford Lum, a 17 year old whose passion for basketball leads him to China. There he confronts his family history, his identity as a first generation Chinese immigrant, and the loss of his mother. Starting in San Francisco, Manford, finds himself in Beijing during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.

Time

1971 & 1989

Place

San Francisco, California
Beijing, China

*Contains hyperlink to video or podcast

Players



Manford: Connie 2. Design by Nicole Wee

Manford Lum #1 (He/Him)

Point Guard

Hometown: San Francisco, California

Age: 17

Intense, scrappy, runs into trouble, attacks the rim, has a ruthless crossover. Not tall. More Allen Iverson than Jeremy Lin.

Connie #2 (She/Her)

Shooting Guard

Hometown: San Francisco, California

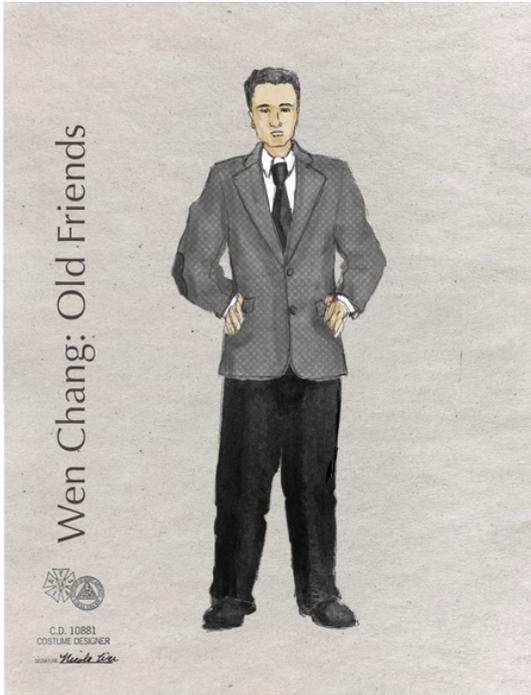
Age: 25

Manford's cousin and UC Berkeley grad student. Level-headed, big picture thinker. A Chris Paul/Klay Thompson type.



Connie 1. Design by Nicole Wee

Players



Wen Chang #3 (He/Him)

Small Forward

Hometown: Beijing, China

Age: 43

Coach of Beijing University's mens basketball team. Observant and efficient. Favors three-pointers over aggressive inside shots. Tim Duncan would appreciate his energy.

Wen Chang: *Old Friends*. Design by Nicole Wee

Saul #4 (He/Him)

Power Forward

Hometown: San Francisco, California

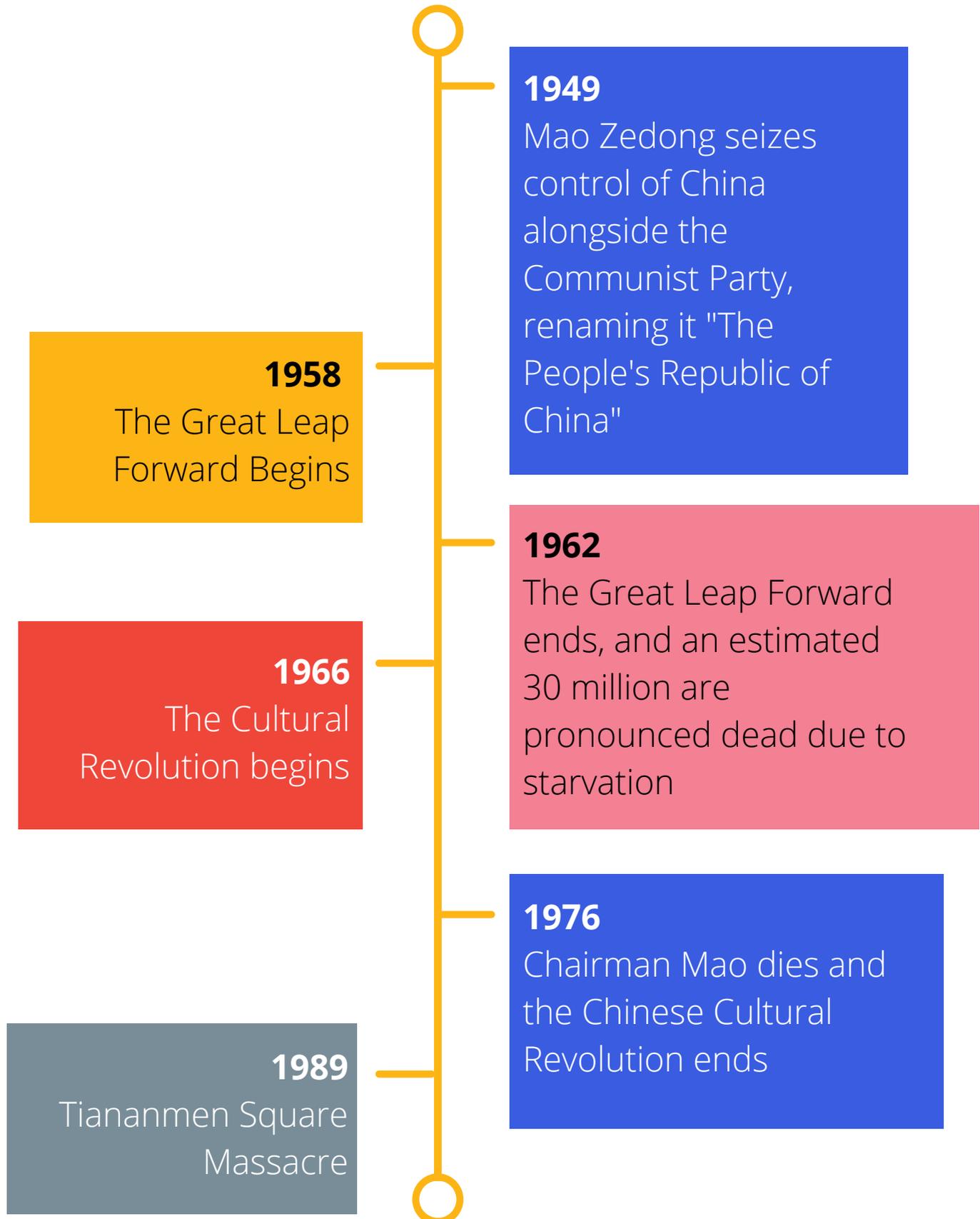
Age: 52

Coach of University of San Francisco's mens basketball team. A shit-talking, shot-blocking, washed-up Larry Bird.



Saul: *Tryouts*. Design by Nicole Wee

Major Events Timeline



The Great Leap Forward

1958-1962

The Great Leap Forward was Chairman Mao's five year plan to form China into a communist society with a competitive industrial economy.

In this campaign citizens were gathered into communes where they worked the land and attempted to produce steel.

What Happened?

- Citizens were not able to keep up with harvesting crops and producing steel
- A locust swarm devastated crops which led to a famine
- By 1962 an estimated 30 million people died of starvation

**25,000 communes
were established by
1958**

Each bearing 5,000
households

Tiananmen Square Protest & Massacre of 1989



Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China 1988. Photo by Derzsi Elekes Andorvia Wikipedia Commons

Where?

Tiananmen Square is a city square in Beijing, China. In 1989 it was the site of major student and civil protests and an eventual massacre.

When?

April 15th - June 4th 1989

Why?

The student protests were sparked by the death of former Chinese Communist Party General Secretary, Hu Yaobang, who appeared to be an ally of economic and political change.

Students and civilians began to gather in Tiananmen Square to mourn his death. This led to calls for democracy and for greater political freedoms such as freedom of press and freedom of speech.

What happened?

During the last two weeks of May the government instituted martial law in Beijing and army troops were brought into the city.

On June 3rd and 4th, the government ordered a crackdown to end the protest and retake control of the square. It is estimated that thousands of people were killed and at least 10,000 were arrested. The remaining protestors chose to leave the square after taking a voice vote.

Who?

There were tens of thousands of protestors at Tiananmen Square. Most were students of universities in Beijing.

However, one of the most iconic images is of a man who is still unknown. He has commonly been referred to as "Tank Man."

Additional Resources

Videos

**Still ashamed of my part in Mao's Cultural Revolution* - BBC News

**This photo triggered China's Cultural Revolution*
- VOX

Podcast

**Student Leaders Reflect, 20 Years After Tiananmen*
- NPR

*Contains hyperlink to video or podcast