



RESOURCE GUIDE

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

OVERVIEW & HISTORY

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is an annual observance and celebration recognizing the historical and cultural contributions of Asian and Pacific Americans. On June 30, 1977, New York Representative Frank Horton introduced House Joint Bill 540 to proclaim the first 10 days of May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Week. Subsequently, Hawaii Senator Daniel Inouye introduced a similar resolution during the senate session; however, both resolutions did not pass.

The following year, Rep. Horton introduced House Joint Resolution 1007, requesting the President to proclaim a week during the first week of May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Week starting in 1979. After the Resolution passed in both the House of Representatives and Senate, President Jimmy Carter signed it into law on October 5, 1978. Each President continued to pass annual proclamations from 1980 to 1990. Then, Congress expanded the observance from one week to one month in 1992. In 2009, Asian Pacific American Week was renamed Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

Asian and Pacific Americans have contributed to and continue to contribute to American culture and society as business owners, scientists, and doctors, in literature and art, sports, government, and politics. Michelle Yeoh made history as the first Asian American Actress to win the Oscar for Best Actress in 2023. Ellison Onizuka was the first Asian American to go to space, and Kalpana Chawla, Indian-born, was a member of the Challenger Crew becoming the first woman of Asian origin in space. Kamala Harris is not only the first woman to serve as the Vice President of the United States but she is also the first vice president of Asian descent. There are numerous other Asian and Pacific American civil activists, authors, figure skaters, and film makers making history and contributing in America.

Asian and Pacific Americans have made a significant impact in the world of sports. Michelle Kwan, Apolo Ohno, Kristi Yamaguchi, Jeremy Lin, Troy Polamalu, and Naomi Osaka are just a few examples of Asian American and Pacific Islander athletes who have had a significant impact on sports. Michelle Kwan, who is of Chinese descent, is one of the most



accomplished figure skaters of all time, with two Olympic medals and five World Championships. Apolo Ohno, who is of Japanese descent, is the most decorated American Winter Olympian, with eight medals in short track speed skating. Kristi Yamaguchi, who is of Japanese descent, won Olympic gold in figure skating and two World Championships. Jeremy Lin, who is of Taiwanese descent, made history in the NBA as the first American of Chinese or Taiwanese descent to play in the league and became a cultural phenomenon during his “Linsanity” run with the New York Knicks. Troy Polamalu, who is of Samoan descent, was a dominant force in the NFL as a safety for the Pittsburgh Steelers, winning two Super Bowls and earning eight Pro Bowl selections. Naomi Osaka, who is of Japanese and Haitian descent, has become one of the best tennis players in the world, with four Grand Slam titles to her name. These athletes have not only achieved great success in their respective sports, but they have also broken down barriers and inspired future generations of Asian American and Pacific Islander athletes.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- » Engage with friends, family, and colleagues in discussions about the contributions, culture and art of Asian and Pacific Americans. For example:
 - » Do you know who the first Asian American congress person was?
 - » Read and discuss a book or film created by an Asian American author or director.
 - » Try a new Asian or Pacific American inspired food dish.
 - » Engage in critical dialogue around biases and stereotypes affecting Asian American citizens. For example:
 - » How has the recent increase of attacks targeting Asian people changed your perspective of their American experience?
 - » Have you heard of the ‘Bamboo Ceiling’?
 - » How do you honor the different Asian and Pacific American cultures?
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ACTION STEPS

- Discuss the things you read, listen to, or watch regarding Asian and Pacific American culture with others and do not be afraid to ask difficult questions.
 - Educate yourself and your loved ones by looking up resources that enhance interactions and discussions with friends and colleagues of Asian and Pacific American decent.
 - Be critical of yourself, your own communities, organizations, departments, and teams.
 - Ask if the culture, practices, and policies are reflective of an inclusive organization that has addressed barriers for people who identify as Asian and Pacific American.
 - Speak up when you see someone being subject to discrimination because of their Asian and Pacific American identity.
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WEBSITES

- » [National Archives: Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)
- » [National Council of Asian Pacific Americans](#)
- » [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#)
- » [Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium’s “A Resource Guide to Support AAPI Students”](#)
- » [AAPI Action: 100 ways Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and allies have found solutions to racism and violence](#)

VIDEOS / FILMS

- » [The History of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#)
- » [Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month | All About the Holidays](#)
- » [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month: Bridging generations](#)
- » [Celebrating our Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities](#)

READINGS

- » The Making of Asian America by Erika Lee
- » The Minority Experience by Adrien Pei
- » [Yellow Power: The Origins of Asian America](#)