



# Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

May 2022



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## Author

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### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office

Asian American and Pacific Islander

Heritage Month Subcommittee

[diversity@commonfund.org](mailto:diversity@commonfund.org)

# Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

## ABOUT



### Commonfund

Commonfund was founded in 1971 as an independent asset management firm with a grant from the Ford Foundation. Today, Commonfund provides investment solutions to sophisticated investors through two affiliates. Commonfund Asset Management provides outsourced CIO services designed for nonprofit institutions, using independent investment sub-advisers for discretionary and non-discretionary engagements. Commonfund Capital is a global private capital manager with over 30 years of experience offering a full suite of private investment strategies to sophisticated investors, both nonprofit and for-profit. All securities are distributed through Commonfund Securities, Inc., a member of FINRA. For additional information about Commonfund, please visit [www.commonfund.org](http://www.commonfund.org).

### The Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Office

To underscore our foundational beliefs and actualize the benefits of diversity, Commonfund created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office (DEI Office) in 2018 with a mission to “intentionally promote and foster inclusion and equity across Commonfund and our investment process, through leadership and professional and organizational development.”

### This Guide

Commonfund, in conjunction with our Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage subcommittee has created a resource guide to help all of us celebrate the contributions of Asians and Pacific Islanders in all aspects of American life. With that said, this resource guide is not an exhaustive list by any stretch of the imagination, the hope is that you will take advantage of at least a few of these resources to begin your exploration of this very important part of American history; your history, our history.

### Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month got its start as a congressional bill, inspired by Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, with the mission of bringing attention to the contributions Asian and Pacific Islander Americans have made to the history and culture of the United States. But did you know the whole thing was inspired by the work of two dedicated women? Jeanie Jew and Ruby Moy, who worked on Capital Hill, spearheaded a campaign to get congressional support for their cause. As a result of their lobbying, in June 1977 Reps. Frank Horton (NY) and Norman Y. Mineta (CA) introduced a resolution that called for the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. The following month, senators Daniel Inouye (HI) and Spark Matsunaga (HI) introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Both were passed. On October 5, 1978, President Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating an annual celebration. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed an extension turning it into a month-long celebration. The proposed resolutions sought that May be designated for two reasons. On May 7, 1843, the first Japanese immigrant arrived in the United States. More than two decades later, on May 10, 1869, the Golden spike was driven into the First Transcontinental Railroad, which was completed using Chinese labor. In 1992, the official designation of May as Asian/Pacific Heritage Month was signed into law.

Source: National WomensHistory Alliance

## A Note on Asian/Pacific American Ethnicities and Regional Groupings

Asians and Pacific Islanders are generally grouped by regions although some of these can be politically controversial. There is tremendous diversity, with Asia having more than 40 countries, there are more ethnicities than countries. Also, the Asian diaspora is extremely large and ethnic identity oversimplifications do not apply. For example, people of Japanese origin in Brazil culturally identify as Brazilians, those of Chinese origin in Guatemala identify as Guatemalans; whereas hyphenated identities are more common in the U.S. as evidenced by terms like Asian American, or Korean American. Notions of ethnic and national identity carry political, social and familial meanings too complex to analyze here.

The following is a list of commonly used Asian American and Pacific Islander-related terms. While these terms may commonly be used, it is important to note there is a possibility some cultural identities can overlap in this larger classification of AAPI individuals.

- **AAPI:** Asian American and Pacific Islander. This term generally includes all people of Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander descent.
- **Asian:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent.
- **East Asian:** A person of Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean and Mongolian descent.
- **South Asian:** A person of Indian, Bangladesh, Sri Lankan, Nepal and Pakistani backgrounds.
- **Southeast Asian:** A person of Filipino, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Indonesian, Thai or Singaporean descent.
- **Central Asian:** A person with origins in the original peoples of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- **Pacific Islander:** A person with origins in the original peoples of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia.
- **West Asian:** A person with origins in the original peoples of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Source: <https://www.apsva.us/aapi-heritage-month-history/>

## LISTEN AND BE ENGAGED



### Podcasts

#### Asian American History 101

Asian American History 101 is a podcast co-hosted by Gen and Ted Lai, a daughter and father team. The podcast will entertain and educate people as Gen and Ted dive into the vast history of Asian Americans from their contributions to their struggles to their triumphs.

#### The Sassy Asian Times

The unapologetic, sassy, proud Asian Americans you didn't know you needed. Follow along the journey of two Asian American artists as we talk, discuss, and bring up real topics about the current issues within the Asian American experience.

#### Modern Minorities

A collection of conversations about work and life through the lens of race and gender. It is a show where we talk about "the thing" that everyone is thinking about, but nobody is actually talking about.

#### Asian Enough

In this podcast from the L.A. Times, hosts Jen Yamato and Frank Shyong chat with celebrities about the joys and complexities of being Asian American and invite their guests to share personal stories and unpack identity on their own terms.

#### Self Evident

Asian America's Stories.

# UNDERSTAND AND CONNECT



## Cultural and historical resources

- [Explore Asian American & Pacific Islander Stories from the National Parks Service](#)
- [Asia Society](#)
- [Selected Exhibits and Collections](#)
- [About Asian/Pacific Heritage Month](#)
- [A Brief History of the Cultures of Asia](#)
- [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: May 2022](#)
- [Origins of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#)

## READ AND EXPLORE



### Articles and other educational websites

- [China's Education System: The Oldest in the World](#)
- [Indian Influences on Western Literature](#)
- [Some Truths About Being Asian In America: A Growing Voice](#)
- [Understanding Our Perceptions of Asian Americans](#)
- [Federal Asian Pacific American Council](#)

### Books and materials to read

#### ***Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, by Cathy Park Hong**

This memoir of essays blends memoir and cultural criticism and takes a deep dive into the racial consciousness in America today. If you have ever been frustrated about race in this country and with the recent rise in Asian American hate crimes around the U.S., this book is a timely must-read.

#### ***The Making of Asian America: A History*, By Erika Lee**

From the sailors who came on the first trans-Pacific ships in the 1500s to the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II, this in-depth book highlights how generations of Asian immigrants and their American-born descendants created and revised the Asian American life as well as the activism that shaped their histories.

#### ***The Joy Luck Club*, by Amy Tan**

Spanning over several years, the story starts in 1949 where four Chinese immigrant women meet over dim sum and play mahjong to recount their lives and the relationships with each of their daughters. Amy's endearing novel mother-daughter relationships has been a beloved classic since the 1980s' and is a must-read even now.

#### ***Mountain Movers Student Activism and the Emergence of Asian American Studies***

*Student Activism and the Emergence of Asian American Studies* shares the history of student movements at SF State, UC Berkeley, and UCLA during the 1960s and features oral histories of prior and current student activists.

### **The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini**

The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father's servant, *The Kite Runner* is a beautifully crafted novel set in a country that is in the process of being destroyed. It is about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.

## **WATCH AND ENJOY**



### **Documentaries, movies, and other films**

#### **American Pastime (2007)**

*American Pastime* tells a story set in the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah. This internment camp held Japanese Americans captive during World War II. The movie depicts life in this specific camp; it is based on true events. The movie was even shot not too far from the actual camp. This uplifting tale of dark times in America shows how imprisoned Japanese Americans dealt with their ordeal.

#### **One Hundred Foot Journey (2014)**

The Kadam family leaves India for France where they open a restaurant directly across the road from Madame Mallory's Michelin-starred eatery.

#### **Better Luck Tomorrow (2002)**

"Fast & Furious" franchise helmer Justin Lin made his solo directing debut with this Sundance hit, a high school crime drama about Asian American overachievers breaking bad that sent the model minority myth spinning. It remains a milestone for ferociously defiant Asian American storytelling.

#### **The Namesake (2006)**

This sensitive adaptation of Jhumpa Lahiri's bestseller exploring the immigrant experience broke into the mainstream and proved that in an alternate—and more inclusive—universe, Bollywood stars Khan and Tabu would be Hollywood stars too.

#### **PBS Indies**

A special PBS collection of stories that explores the history, traditions and culture of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States.

## **SHARE AND CULTIVATE**



### **Resources for children**

- Learn how composer and ukulele artist Jake Shimabukuro uses ratios and fractions as he creates and plays music in [this video](#) from Center for Asian American Media.
- [How the Story of "Moana" and Maui Holds Up Against Cultural Truths](#)
- [Simple Origami Projects for Beginners](#)

# SUPPORT AND EXPERIENCE



## Nonprofit and community resources

- **Asian Mental Health Collective:** With the rapid development of and focus on personal well-being in individualistic societies, people are now more aware of the detrimental effects of poor mental health and mental illnesses than ever before. However, as members of the Asian Diaspora, there are often strong cultural underpinnings related to our mental health experiences that go unaddressed. Mental health issues do not exist in individuals only, and this is especially true for those who come from cultures that value collectivism. Experiences shaped by cultural ideals that value face, achievement, and filial piety are interwoven in the fabric of our understanding of the world. Intertwined with generations of exposure to trauma, these ideals, while not inherently unhealthy, are often expressed in ways that create dissonance for the children of the diaspora who live in increasingly globalized societies. It is apparent that there is a generational and cultural rift in many Asian families, with mental health woven through both overt confrontations and unspoken grievances as a result. AMHC hopes to help bridge those divides.
- **Taikoza-taiko Drums and Bamboo Flutes:** A dynamic performance with Japanese ancestral 150 lb Taiko drums. The performance includes colorful costumes and movements. The Taiko is a large, barrel-like drum that can fill the air with sounds of rolling thunder.
- **Asian American Youth Leadership & Empowerment Development:** AALEAD's mission is to support low-income and underserved Asian Pacific American youth with educational empowerment, identity development, and leadership opportunities through after school, summer, and mentoring programs.
- **Happy Panda Mandarin School:** The school in Wilton, Connecticut offers different levels of Chinese classes and after-school tutoring. The Happy Panda Mandarin School also offers flexible group or private class schedules and homework sessions.
- **Gold House:** In contrast to every major successful diaspora, Asians lack a cohesive culture of mutual support. Our fifty ethnicities, hundreds of dialects, and distributed density across the globe have only extended this fracture. And yet, we've witnessed the positive cultural impact when communities rally to support their own: from the invention of new creative institutions like Hip Hop and R&B or leading an entire industry in commerce. To accelerate our community's societal impact and cultural legacy, we've built a collective of the most influential pan-Asian founders, creative voices, and leaders dedicated to erecting infrastructural opportunities that improve life for ourselves, future generations, and society, at large.

*In 2018, we created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office to intentionally promote and foster inclusion and equity across the firm and our investment process, thought leadership, and professional and organizational development. To learn more and download our inaugural DEI report, visit - <https://www.commonfund.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>*