



Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month

In 1976, a Capitol Hill staffer named Jeanie Jew witnessed the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations, and was concerned about the lack of recognition for their contributions given to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

She worked with Representatives Frank Horton and Norman Y. Mineta, who introduced a U.S. House of Representative resolution to proclaim the first 10 days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. By 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed a bill passed by Congress to extend Asian American Heritage Week to a month. In 2009, the name was officially changed to Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month (AAPI).

The month of May was selected for two reasons: First, to commemorate the arrival of the first known Japanese immigrant to the U.S. on May 7, 1843; secondly, to honor the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869 — up to 20,000 Chinese workers participated in building that railroad.

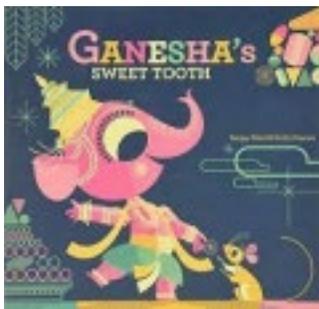
For Jeanie Jew, the lack of recognition was personal because her great-grandfather, M.Y. Lee came to the United States from China in the 1800s and helped build the transcontinental railroad. With his peers, they played a key role in American history but suffered for it because of laws that openly targeted Chinese immigrants. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years, and was renewed by the Geary Act, which required immigrants from China to carry permits at all times or face possible deportation. Congress repealed the exclusion in 1943, but even then the law allowed only 105 Chinese people to enter the country each year.

Because of her great grandfather and the story of other Asian Americans, Jeanie Jew believed that not only should Asian Americans understand their own heritage, but that all Americans must know the contributions and histories of the Asian-Pacific American experience in the United States.

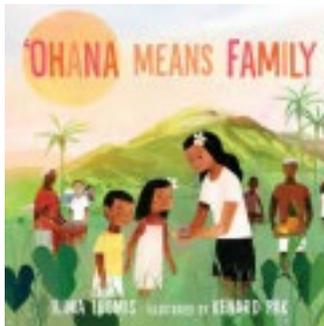


Read Aloud!

[Ganesha's Sweet Tooth by Sanjay Patel and Emily Haynes](#)

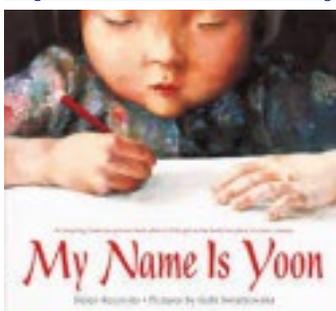


[Ohana Means Family by Ilima Loomis Illustrated by Kenard Pak](#)

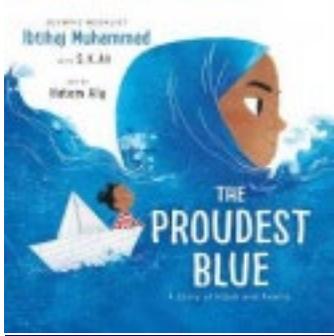


[Pak](#)

[My Name is Yoon By Helen Recorvits](#)



[The Proudest Blue A Story of Hijab and Family by Ibtihaj Muhammad with S.K. Ali, illustrated by Hatem Aly](#)



Notable Figures:



Dr. Chien-Shiung Wu, Chinese American Nuclear Physicist

Known as the “Queen of the Atom,” Dr. Wu was born in Jiangsu Province, China, in 1912, and moved to the U.S. in 1939 to pursue her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley. As an experimental physicist, Dr. Wu made significant contributions to the study of nuclear physics, and as a member of the research staff at Columbia University, she played a critical role in the Manhattan Project, the research and development consortium led by the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom that created the first nuclear weapons. Dr. Wu was the recipient of the inaugural Wolf Prize in Physics and was the first woman to serve as president of the American Physical Society.



Duke Kahanamoku, Native Hawaiian Olympic Gold Medalist, Surfer and Actor

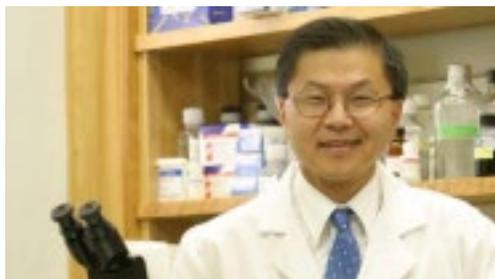
Nicknamed “The Big Kahuna,” Duke Kahanamoku was a towering figure in the worlds of sports and entertainment. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1890, Kahanamoku was a five-time Olympic medalist in swimming, having competed in the 1912 Olympics in

Stockholm, the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, and the 1924 Olympics in Paris. Kahanamoku also was an alternate for the U.S. water polo team at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. Following his trail-blazing athletic career, Kahanamoku worked as an actor, sheriff and surfer, helping to popularize the Hawaiian sport of surfing to a new generation of surfers all over the world.



Kalpana Chawla, Indian American Astronaut and Engineer

Kalpana Chawla was the first woman of Indian descent to go to space, having served as a mission specialist and primary robotic arm operator on the space shuttle Columbia. Sadly, Chawla was one of the seven crew members who died when the spacecraft disintegrated during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere in 2003 following the space shuttle Columbia's 28th mission. Chawla was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor, and several streets, universities and institutions have been named in her honor. She is regarded as a national hero in India, where she was born in East Punjab, in 1962.



Dr. David Ho, Taiwanese American Research Physician and Virologist

Born in Taichung, Taiwan, in 1952, Dr. David Ho moved to Los Angeles at age 12 with his mother and younger brother to reunite with his father, who emigrated to the U.S. in 1957. After earning his bachelor of science in biology from California Institute of Technology and his medical degree from Harvard University-Massachusetts Institute of Technology Division of Health Sciences and Technology, Dr. Ho performed his clinical training in internal medicine and infectious diseases. When he was a resident at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, he came into contact with some of the first reported cases of what was later identified as AIDS. Since then, Dr. Ho has been on the

frontlines of AIDS research, and more recently, coronavirus research.



Tammy Duckworth, Thai American Army Veteran and U.S. Senator

Born in 1968, in Bangkok, Thailand, to an American father and Thai mother, Tammy Duckworth is the first Thai American woman elected to U.S. Congress, the first person born in Thailand to be elected to U.S. Congress, the first woman with a disability elected to U.S. Congress, the first female double amputee in the Senate, and the first U.S. senator to give birth while in office. A former U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and veteran of the Iraq War, Duckworth lost both of her legs and some mobility in her right arm after her helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade fired by Iraqi insurgents, causing severe combat wounds. Despite her injuries, she sought and obtained a medical waiver that allowed her to continue serving in the Illinois Army National Guard until she retired as a lieutenant colonel in 2014.



Jawed Karim, Co-Founder of YouTube

Born on October 28, 1979, to a Bangladeshi father and a German mother, Jawed Karim is an American software engineer and Internet entrepreneur. He is the co-founder of YouTube and the first person to upload a video to the site. This inaugural video, titled *Me at the zoo* and uploaded on April 24, 2005, has been viewed 164 million times, as of May 2, 2021. During Karim's time working at PayPal, where he met the fellow YouTube co-founders Steven Chen and Chad Hurley, he had designed many of the core components including its real-time anti-Internet-fraud system.

Resources:

[Geographic Information on the continent of Asia-](#) Asia is the largest continent; encompasses 48 different countries and many different cultures and religions

[60 Children’s Books for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month \(AAPI\) From Imagination Station](#)

[9 Books to Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#) (PBS)

Did you know?

Today, Asia is home to the citizens of Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste (East Timor), Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Yemen.

“Talking to Young Children about Race and Racism”

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>

This site includes a PBS Kids special presentation called “PBS KIDS Talk About: Race & Racism.” Hosted by Amanda Gorman: “The show features kids and their parents talking about race and racial justice-related topics in an age-appropriate way, such as noticing differences in race, understanding what racism can look like, and embracing the role we all have to play in standing up for ourselves and each other — offering viewers ideas to build on as they continue these important conversations at home.” This page has additional resources and tips for having meaningful conversations with young children about race, racism, and being anti-racist.

Do you have ideas for an issue of Diversity Spotlight?

Email the committee: BPCdiversityequityinclusivity@gmail.com