May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage month, a time to celebrate the history and cultural contributions of individuals of AAPI descent in the United States. AAPI has been used broadly to encompass all folks from the Asian continent and the Pacific Islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Like most commemorative months, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month originated with Congress. In 1977, Representative Frank Horton of New York introduced a resolution to proclaim the first ten days in May as Pacific/Asian American Heritage Week. The same year, Senator Daniel Inouye introduced a similar resolution, but neither passed. Eventually with some changes, a joint resolution passed in October 1978, at which point President Jimmy Carter proclaimed a week to celebrate. The week was expanded to a full month in 1992.

The month of May was chosen to commemorate the first Japanese immigrants to come to the United States, who arrived on May 7, 1843. The month also marks the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants.

Excerpt from asianpacificheritage.gov. Biographical information from biography.com and pbs.org.

FOR MORE ON THE HERITAGE CALENDAR COLLABORATION WITH THE OFFICE FOR EDI AND UNIVERSITY STAFF ADVISORY COUNCIL, VISIT:

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