

# DIVERSITY LIVE WIRE

## Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

A joint congressional resolution established Asian Pacific American Heritage week in 1978 to coincide with two important events in American history - the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States, May 7, 1843, and the contributions of Chinese immigrants to the building of the transcontinental railroad which was completed May 10, 1869. The observance was expanded in 1992 to include the entire month of May.

Asian-Pacific Americans have been in the United States for over 170 years. To better understand the variety of backgrounds, traditions and paradigms of these vital members of our society is to better understand what makes America itself great as a nation of immigrants. Asian is identified as any person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent. Pacific Islander is identified as any person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands. "Asian-Pacific American" affixes a common label to a vast array of ethnic groups. The common American perception tends to lump all Asians together into one racial group, without recognizing their distinct ethnic and cultural differences. Actually, the term identifies individuals from at least 29 different countries, each with a unique historical and cultural heritage, language, food and religions of its own.

For more resources visit: [www.pbs.org/specials/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month](http://www.pbs.org/specials/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month) PBS  
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