

# AANHPI HERITAGE MONTH

The Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is excited to share the heritage month newsletter to highlight diverse communities. We hope to increase our shared understanding and appreciation of the rich histories, cultures, and people from different heritages. For more information on diverse holidays and celebrations, please visit the [NIH Diversity Calendar](#).

## History and Significance

May is Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, commemorating the history, resiliency, and achievements of the AANHPI community. It started as Asian Pacific Heritage Week in 1977 and was later expanded to Asian Pacific American Heritage Month by President George H. W. Bush in 1992. A presidential proclamation in 2021 expanded this month to include Native Hawaiians.

May was chosen to coincide with the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the U.S. in 1843. It also commemorates the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, for which most of the workers were Chinese immigrants.

The AANHPI community is a rich tapestry of countries, ethnicities, and identities. According to 2020 census data, they currently represent 6.2 percent of the U.S. population, or about 20.6 million people, each with their unique cultural heritages and contributions.

This year's theme, "Bridging Histories, Shaping Our Future," underscores the AANHPI groups, from Indigenous Native Hawaiians who have profoundly influenced our country's history to immigrants and refugees who sought better opportunities in the U.S. We pay tribute to the pioneers, leaders, and innovators who have and are continuing to make significant contributions to our economy, technological advancements, and social progress, all while overcoming systemic barriers.

## Ways to Celebrate in NYC

Here are a few ways to celebrate locally:

- [New York Public Library's Programs and Events](#)
- [AAPI Heritage Month in NYC 2024: Free Events in New York City](#)
- [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month at Asia Society](#)
- [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Events 2024](#)

## A Call for Disaggregating AANHPI Data

This month offers an opportunity to celebrate the rich diversity of cultures, histories, and contributions within the AANHPI community. There's a growing recognition that disaggregating data concerning different AANHPI subgroups in the U.S. will more accurately reflect this diversity. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the unique cultures, needs, and challenges faced by various AANHPI groups. Acknowledging the distinct experiences and barriers encountered by different AANHPI groups can enhance our understanding and support for community members. Embracing the complexity of diversity within the AANHPI community promotes a culture of inclusivity and belonging, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

## Community Spotlight



Dr. Dani Keahi attributes finding her passion for science to her identity and experience of being a Hawaiian, particularly the reverence and curiosity for nature that are embedded in Hawaiian culture.

Born and raised in Hawai'i, Dani's family reflects a mixture of Japanese, Chinese, and Native Hawaiian cultural influences. Her family history can be traced back to a wave of migration from Japan in the 1890s. Her paternal ancestors came to work in the sugarcane fields, and her maternal ancestors came to open one of the first fishing supply stores on O'ahu that is still around today.

Dani considers herself lucky to discover science at a young age as she was surrounded by the biological richness of the tropics in Hawai'i. It provided her first experiments hatching monarch butterflies, exploring tidepools, and collecting algae species. In high school, she participated in the Kamehameha Summer Science Institute, a unique program that taught Native Hawaiian students basic molecular biology research skills with an emphasis on conserving Hawaiian cultural practices. This experience kicked off Dani's science journey as it provided the foundation for many subsequent research experiences and opportunities.

After finishing undergrad at Harvard College, Dani took her chance to fulfill her dream of living in NYC. She came to Rockefeller to study under Drs. Agata Smogorzewska and Mary Beth Hatten on the role of BRCA2 on the development of medulloblastoma, the most common childhood brain cancer. After successfully defending her Ph.D. in June 2023, she has been a postdoc in the Smogorzewska lab. She wishes to continue to follow her passion as a research scientist with a focus on cancer therapeutics.

*If you know anyone who may be interested in being featured in the Community Spotlight in our future newsletters, fill out a nomination form on [bit.ly/RockefellerSpotlight](https://bit.ly/RockefellerSpotlight)*