May is Asian Heritage Month

May is Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month. "Emerging Together" is this year's national theme, a time to honor the contributions, heritage, and traditions of Asians and Pacific Islanders.

The celebration has been designed to foster cross-cultural communication and broaden the possibilities for cultural awareness. It is usually celebrated with community festivals, government gatherings, and educational activities.

APA Heritage Month originated in a congressional bill. President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution declaring the first Asian Pacific American Heritage Week as May 4-10, 1979. In 1990, the holiday was expanded further when President George H.W. Bush designated May to be APA Heritage Month. May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States in 1843.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Asians and Pacific Islanders have been growing from about 1 million to over 10 million, numbering nearly 4 percent of the total population and making up the fastest growing segment in the United States. By the year 2050, one out of 10 Americans will trace their heritage to Asian or Pacific Island roots. The diverse APA population includes members of more than 30 ethnic groups who speak more than 300 languages and dialects.

From 1850 to World War II, Asians immigrated to the United States to support the growing agricultural and railway industries. After 1965, the new wave of immigrants were skilled and also admitted based on their potential economic contributions to this nation. These men and women achieved prominence in the fields of science, architecture, art, and many other areas in the United States.

Things you can do to celebrate APA Heritage Month

- Watch some wonderful APA films.
- Join the activities sponsored by Roosevelt and the local communities.
- Make a list of APA books and read those that interest you.
- Learn more about the history of APA and their different cultures.