



WE CELEBRATE DIVERSITY.  
WE PROMOTE EQUITY.  
WE ARE INCLUSION.

## People Inc. DEI Calendar: May 2022

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### Month-long Observances

#### Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

- Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month celebrates those of Asian and/or Pacific Islander heritage in the United States. The designation of Asian/Pacific Islander American (API) is far from a monolith. The term broadly encompasses the entirety of the Asian continent as well as the many Pacific islands of Oceania. The sheer volume of diverse cultures representing Asian-Pacific Heritage is reflected throughout America as well.
- Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month originated in 1977, when Asian-American representatives in Congress introduced resolutions designating the first week of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. This week was officially expanded into Asian-Pacific Heritage Month by law in 1992. The month of May was selected in commemoration of the first recorded immigration of Japanese people to the United States on May 7, 1843. May was also chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the 1869 completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, an endeavor for which mostly Chinese American immigrants laid the tracks. Japanese and Chinese Americans are only a few of the many diverse communities present among the 22 million Asian Americans and 1.6 million Native Hawaiians living in the United States. These communities together speak more than 300 languages.
- This year, the theme of Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month is “Advancing Leaders Through Collaboration. This theme will be addressed as a part of an ongoing theme series called “Advancing Leaders” led by the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC). Relevant organizations, universities, and other institutions will also hold programs addressing recurring topics such as intersecting API identities and raising awareness of challenges faced by API communities today. These educational and celebratory activities are meant to challenge and condemn a rise in racist sentiment against API communities resulting from the pandemic.

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#### Better Hearing and Speech Month

- Recognized every May, Better Hearing and Speech Month (BHSM) raises awareness regarding various communication disorders related to hearing or speech. Founded in 1927 as National Hearing Week and expanded to its current name in 1972, BHSM exists as a campaign led by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). One of the major initiatives of BHSM is to spread the word encouraging annual hearing testing. Noise has become a major environmental health issue, and many people do not realize they are experiencing hearing or speech issues until their disorder has progressed significantly. Testing can help identify potential communication issues early on and allows for better response to many treatments available from audiologists and speech-language pathologists.
- The theme for BHSM in 2022 is “Connecting People.” Even if the COVID-19 pandemic has in many ways limited communication over time, accessibility aids such as captioning services remain essential communication aids for those who experience hearing loss. Additionally, building connections across the hearing loss community is a significant factor in continuing to spread the word regarding treatments and testing,

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## Mental Health Awareness Month

- Mental Health Awareness Month is observed annually every May to help bring visibility to the millions of Americans currently living with mental health struggles in their daily lives. The activism surrounding this month aims to challenge the historical massive stigma around mental illness that still persists today, while providing support for those affected by mental health conditions. Advocating for mental health also means actively fighting for policies that make mental health support and treatment more accessible to everyone and encourage these individuals to seek help when needed.
- Mental Health Awareness Month was first established in 1949, three years after the passing of the 1946 National Mental Health Act that enabled new processes for diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions. The observance was started by Mental Health America, the leading community-based nonprofit in the United States for supporting those living with mental illness. The formation of policies regarding mental health throughout the twentieth century and beyond has helped vastly improve the methods and access to treatment for mental health patients, which greatly contrasts the practices of institutionalization in the past. However, in many ways the dehumanizing legacy of mental health institutions lingers today, and there is still much progress to be made in providing support and effective treatment for all affected.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an unprecedented wave of mental health struggles worldwide due to isolation, uncertainties, and grief. Widespread mental health support is more urgent than ever to help our communities cope with the collective trauma caused by the pandemic. Mental Health America's theme for Mental Health Awareness Month is once again "Back to Basics," which aims to "provide foundational knowledge about mental health & mental health conditions and information about what people can do if their mental health is a cause for concern." The organization is providing a "Mental Health Toolkit" containing practical tools and techniques for addressing mental health needs. Download the toolkit at <https://www.mhanational.org/>
- Join the Conversation for resources and a pledge to stop stigma at <https://letstalkstigma.org/>

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## Haitian Heritage Month

- First known to be celebrated in Boston, Massachusetts in 1988, Haitian Heritage Month is a national observance dedicated to celebrating Haitian communities and their culture in the United States. The month of May coincides with Haitian Flag Day on May 18, a major patriotic holiday for those living in the Caribbean Republic of Haiti as well as the Haitian American Diaspora. Additionally, Toussaint L'Ouverture, a revolutionary figure in Haitian history who led the rebellion against France to abolish slavery and establish Haiti's independence, has a birthday on May 20.
- Haitian Heritage Month celebrates Haitian achievements and contributions, both historical and current. It is hoped that this will also empower and support Haitian and Haitian American youth to become future leaders. The observance also highlights aspects of Haiti's rich culture such as its food, art, music, and other distinct traditions. These cultural aspects and their histories are presented in events such as parades, programs, and exhibits organized by Haitian-led organizations across the country.

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## High Blood Pressure Education Month

- High Blood Pressure Education Month is observed every May as an awareness campaign drawing attention to the risks and treatment associated with high blood pressure, a condition also known as hypertension. According to the CDC, nearly half of all American adults have high blood pressure, but only about one in four have their condition under control. In fact, many people are not even aware of their condition due to a lack of noticeable symptoms. Hypertension remains a significant risk factor in heart disease and was found to be a primary cause of death for approximately 472,000 people in the United States in 2017.

- High blood pressure awareness is connected to other health awareness campaigns, notably that of heart disease. The Heart Truth® is a heart disease awareness campaign led by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) that encourages people, especially women, to know and manage their blood pressure numbers as a part of self-care. Hypertension can affect people of any age, and for women pregnancy may also factor in as a risk factor. The condition is also affected by genetics and race. Since discrimination remains a source of significant life stress, African Americans tend to be at higher risk for hypertension and are often affected by it earlier in life.
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## **Jewish-American Heritage Month**

- Observed in May, Jewish-American Heritage Month (JAHM) celebrates the history and culture of Jewish people living in the United States, highlighting their contributions to the nation's culture and society. First known to have arrived in New Amsterdam in 1694, Jewish Americans have continuously shaped America's history. Similar to other national monthly observances, Jewish-American Heritage started out as a week in April/May first proposed in 1980. This expanded into a monthly observance encompassing May starting in 2006.
  - For JAHM, a plethora of organizations across the country will participate in providing the public with programs and resources to highlight and celebrate the Jewish American experience. The National Museum of Jewish American History offers a selection of online resources detailing significant Jewish American figures, museum artifacts, and more in relevance to Jewish American history: <https://www.nmajh.org/jewish-american-heritage-month/>
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## **National Stroke Awareness Month**

- Led by the National Stroke Association until its dissolving in 2019, National Stroke Awareness Month aims to raise awareness regarding the incidence of strokes, their impact on people who suffer strokes, and the actions one should take in the event of a stroke. By encouraging individuals, communities, and health providers to spread the word and share resources regarding strokes, National Stroke Awareness Month advocates for reducing stroke risk factors and acting quickly as a response to a stroke.
  - In addition to knowing the signs and symptoms of a stroke, the campaign of National Stroke Awareness Month encourages people to remember the acronym FAST (F for Face Drooping, A for Arm Weakness, S for Speech Difficulty, and T for Time to call 9-1-1) and act accordingly and quickly when these symptoms appear. The month's campaign is represented by a purple ribbon.
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## **Daily Observations**

### **5/1 – Beltane**

- Traditionally celebrated throughout Ireland and Scotland, Beltane is a spring festival that takes place roughly between the spring equinox and summer solstice. Derived from the Gaelic word meaning “bright fire,” Beltane is associated with themes of fertility common to Pagan spring festivals. The name Beltane also is likely a reference to Belenus, the Celtic sun god.
- Ancient Gaelic rituals associated with Beltane were performed to protect and encourage the growth of cattle herds and crops. The celebration was also marked by the lighting of a special bonfire that would be used to relight the doused fires in households. Although Beltane celebrations had mostly ceased to exist by the twentieth century, it has been revived to an extent by modern Celtic Wiccans. The celebration has been reinterpreted and modernized, drawing more inspiration from German and Roman fertility rituals than Celtic ones.

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## 5/1-5/2 – Eid al-Fitr

- Eid al-Fitr, also referred to as the “Festival of Breaking the Fast,” is a Muslim holiday that is observed at the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and the beginning of the Islamic month of Shawwal. As the holiday dedicated to breaking the fast observed by Muslims during Ramadan, this day is the only day in Shawwal that does not permit fasting.
- Traditions associated with Eid al-Fitr include attending communal prayers held in large venues, as well as attending communal meals and festivities. Another activity is giving *zakat al-fitr*, a form of charity, to the poor. Zakat al-fitr generally consists of food such as dates, flour, and raisins, or money equal in value.

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## 5/4 – National Interpreter Appreciation Day

- Observed in the first Wednesday in May, National Interpreter Appreciation Day highlights the efforts of interpreters whose job bridges language barriers in every area of life, including but not limited to business, health, and entertainment. Started in 2013, this observance reminds us that in a world with thousands of languages requires many more interpreters to connect those with not only differing languages but also differing methods of communication.
- People Inc. as well as Deaf Access Services acknowledge the presence of interpreters as a critical component of accessibility. This notably applies to American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation to allow for effective communication between those who are deaf or hard of hearing and hearing individuals.

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## 5/5 – African World Heritage Day

- First declared in 2018 by UNESCO, African World Heritage Day is an observance dedicated to celebrating the unique and rich cultural heritage of Africa. The day was established to draw awareness to African cultural heritage and its potential for driving poverty reduction and regional development throughout the continent.
- According to UNESCO, despite being the second largest continent, Africa is underrepresented on the World Heritage List, accounting for only 12 per cent of the list with 21 registered sites. However, these sites make up 39 per cent of the World Heritage List in Danger, being disproportionately vulnerable. Issues such as climate change and uncontrolled development threaten the preservation of irreplaceable cultural heritage.

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## 5/5 – Cinco de Mayo

- Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican holiday that commemorates the Mexican army’s 1862 victory against France during the Franco-Mexican War. This battle came to be known as the Battle of Puebla. Although this was a significant battle in resisting the French, this day is not to be confused with Mexican Independence Day, which is celebrated on September 16.

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## 5/16 – Vesak

- Vesak is the most sacred holiday traditionally observed by Buddhists and some Hindus primarily in South and Southeast Asia. This day celebrates the birth, life, and death of Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha. According to the Buddhist faith, Gautama’s birth, enlightenment, and death are said to have occurred on the same day. The date Vesak is celebrated can vary by culture, but it is usually observed on the first full

moon in May. The compassionate teachings of Gautama continue to influence the lives of Buddhists and other people worldwide.

- The celebration of Vesak often begins before dawn, where Buddhists gather at temples to sing hymns. The temples are often adorned with flowers and Buddhist flags for the occasion. Observers are allowed to bring small offerings to the Buddha as well. A common ritual is pouring water over a small statue of the Buddha. This is called the “Bathing of the Buddha” and symbolizes the cleansing of bad karma. Acts of charity and community service are commonplace on Vesak, as these acts align heavily with Buddhist teachings.
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### **5/17 – International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia**

- International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is an internationally observed day that raises awareness regarding the continued prejudice and human rights violations LGBT people face worldwide. First declared in 2004, this day also represents a celebration of the diversity of culture and gender expression seen in LGBT communities around the world. The date was selected for this observance as a commemoration of the World Health Organization’s decision to declassify same-gender attraction as a mental illness on May 17, 1990.
  - International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is currently celebrated in over 130 countries, many in which LGBT identities and practices are still illegal. Although victories like the legalization of gay marriage in the United States are major milestones, it does not negate the continued systemic oppression and prejudice LGBT people struggle with daily. Laws that violate the rights and existence of transgender people continue to be upheld and proposed in states nationwide, and hate crimes are still prevalent. Amplifying the voices of the LGBT community, calling for increased access to community resources and celebrating their diverse culture are ways to contribute to the fight against homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia in this country and beyond.
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### **5/19 – Malcom X Day**

- Celebrated on his birthday or on the third Sunday in the month of May, Malcom X Day celebrates the life and legacy of civil rights activist and revolutionary Malcom X. An African American Muslim and minister, Malcom X spoke for black empowerment and indicting white America for its oppression of African Americans throughout history. He was assassinated in 1965, but his human rights activism and unapologetic stance against America’s racist history continues to resonate today.
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### **5/21 – World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development**

- Adopted by UNESCO in 2002 from the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, this observance recognizes cultures and their diversity as a monumental pillar of sustainable development. Cultural diversity is an indispensable aspect for economic, spiritual, artistic, and moral fulfillment of all societies and must be considered in building sustainable systems in governance and development frameworks. This UNESCO observance also recognizes how culture is a vehicle driving dialogue between civilizations via processes of cultural diffusion and exchange.
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### **5/25 – National Senior Health & Fitness Day**

- Observed on the last Wednesday in May, National Senior Health & Fitness Day is the nation’s leading movement prioritizing the health and activity of senior citizens. Celebrated for 29 years and counting, this day

raises awareness regarding the health benefits of regular exercise for older individuals and encourages senior citizens to participate in local health and fitness activities. An estimated 100,000 older adults are projected to participate in this year's events. Actively seeking to integrate physical activity into one's routine has become even more important as the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced the opportunities to exercise.

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## Regional Events in May

- **Ongoing**, Heather Hart: Afroecture (Re)Collection at the Center for the Arts SUNY Buffalo: <https://www.ubcfa.org/events-exhibitions/exhibitions/heather-hart.html>
- **Ongoing**, Edrys Wajed: The Bridge at Burchfield Penney Art Center: <https://burchfieldpenney.org/exhibitions/exhibition:edreys-wajed-the-bridge/>
- **Fridays in May, 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.** – Ukrainian Kitchen of Buffalo – Pierogi, Cabbage Rolls and Borshch at the Dnipro Ukrainian Cultural Center: <https://www.facebook.com/DniproUkrainianCulturalCenter/events/>
- **5/1-5/19**, 37th Annual Buffalo International Jewish Film Festival: <https://www.jccbuffalo.org/bijff/>
- **5/1, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.** - Haudenosaunee Days at the Rochester Museum & Science Center: <https://rmsc.org/science-museum/programs-and-events/item/122-haudenosaunee-days>
- **5/1, 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., \$\$\$** - I Stand For Peace | Fundraiser for the International Institute of Buffalo: <https://iibuffalo.org/5283-2/>
- **5/3, 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m., \$\$\$** - Oaxaca Authentic Mexican Lager Release Event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1923957731133312>
- **5/4, 6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.** – Lecture on William Wells Brown by Dr. Eva Doyle: <https://www.justbuffalo.org/events/lecture-on-william-wells-brown-by-dr-eva-doyle/>
- **5/6, 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.** – Explore Your Truths Community Share: <https://www.albrightknox.org/events/explore-your-truths-share-your-truths-43022>
- **5/11, 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.** – WNYIL Mental Health Peer Connection: <https://wnyil.org/Mental-Health-PEER-Connection>
- **5/4, 6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.** – Lecture on William Wells Brown by Dr. Eva Doyle: <https://www.justbuffalo.org/events/lecture-on-william-wells-brown-by-dr-eva-doyle/>
- **5/4, 6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.** – Lecture on William Wells Brown by Dr. Eva Doyle: <https://www.justbuffalo.org/events/lecture-on-william-wells-brown-by-dr-eva-doyle/>
- **5/12, 5/26, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.** – Albright-Knox in Conversation with Front Seat Life LLC: <https://www.albrightknox.org/events/mental-health-arts-albright-knox-conversation-front-seat-life-llc-4122>
- **5/15, 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.** – Asian Pacific American Heritage Celebration Day at the Memorial Art Gallery: <https://mag.rochester.edu/events/celebration-series/>