



Asian American
and
Pacific Islander Heritage
Month 2014

“I AM BEYOND”

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month 2014



“...we remember Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have made our country bigger and brighter again and again, from Native Hawaiians to the generations of striving immigrants who shaped our history—reaching and sweating and scraping to give their children something more. Their story is the American story, and this month, we honor them all.”

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month 2014

Since 1977, the month of May has been a time to recognize the achievements and contributions of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians to the American story.

Asian Americans are those having origins in Asia or the Indian subcontinent.

Pacific Islanders are those having origins in Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

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The legislation honoring Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) contributions to American history was introduced by Congressman Norman Mineta, Senator Spark Matsunaga, and Senator Daniel Inouye.



Norman Mineta



Spark Matsunaga



Daniel Inouye

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Photo courtesy of the
White House

On October 5, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution establishing the annual celebration of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Week.

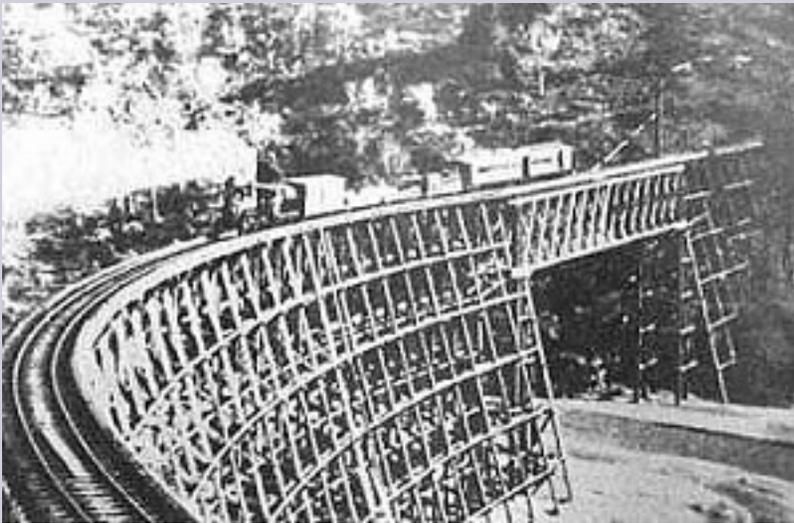
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Twelve years later, President George H.W. Bush penned the executive order extending the weeklong event into a monthlong celebration.



Photo courtesy of the
White House

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The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese people to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869.

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Most of the workers who laid the tracks of the transcontinental railroad were Chinese immigrants.

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The theme selected by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center for the 2014 AAPI Heritage Month is

“I Am Beyond.”



The phrase reflects the aspirations of those who transcended beyond barriers to equal opportunity in America.

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Dalip Singh Saund

“I Am Beyond” recognizes Dalip Singh Saund’s election as the first Asian-American Congressman. He was elected in 1957, after campaigning for all Asian immigrants to become naturalized U.S. citizens.

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"I Am Beyond" recognizes the civil rights work of Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz in championing the rights of American workers of various races and ethnicities.



Philip Vera Cruz and Larry Itliong

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“I Am Beyond” recognizes the achievements of Patsy Mink, the first woman of color and first Asian-American woman elected to Congress, whose legacy includes promoting equal opportunity in education.



Patsy Mink

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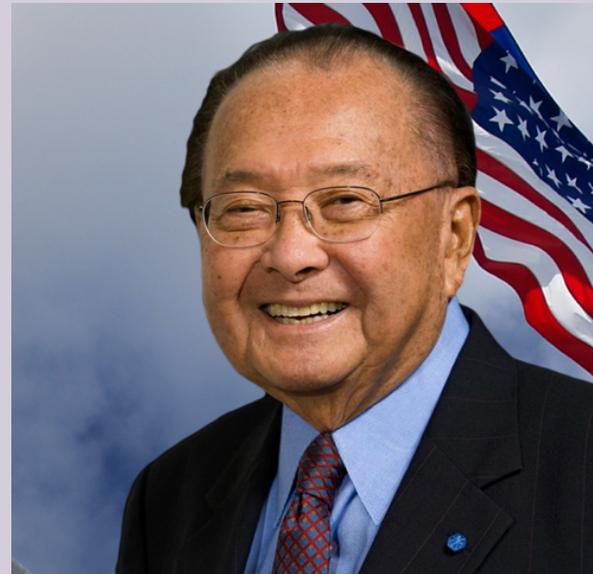
“I Am Beyond” recognizes the legacy of Chinese American Grace Lee Boggs, a major figure in the civil rights movement who continues—at the age of 100—to work on empowering minorities in Detroit.



Grace Lee Boggs

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“I Am Beyond” recognizes the passionate service of Daniel K. Inouye, a well-decorated World War II veteran and longtime Senator. President Barack Obama has called him *“a true American hero”* and *“my earliest political inspiration.”*



Daniel K. Inouye

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“I Am Beyond” is also the theme of the new Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center exhibition *Beyond Bollywood: Indian Americans Shape the Nation*, a look at the history, art, and culture of Indian immigrants and Indian Americans in the United States.



The diary of Balbir Singh Sodhi



Shankar and Sanjukta Ghosh,
Indian musicians

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AAPIs represent nearly 50 countries and ethnic groups, each with distinct cultures, traditions, and histories. There are more than 100 Asian and Pacific Islander languages and dialects.



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Today, there are approximately 16.6 million AAPIs living in the United States, comprising about 5.4 percent of the U.S. population.

The Census Bureau estimates that, by the year 2050, AAPIs will number 42.6 million, or about 9.7 percent of the U.S. population.



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While these AAPI communities have roots that span the globe, their success stories are uniquely American.

As we celebrate AAPIs who went beyond, we recognize the fortitude of Fred Korematsu, who put the dream of equal rights within reach for all.



Fred Korematsu
Activist

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Fred Korematsu was born on January 30, 1919, in Oakland, California, to Japanese parents who had immigrated to the United States. As a child, he attended public schools and assisted his parents in their plant nursery business.

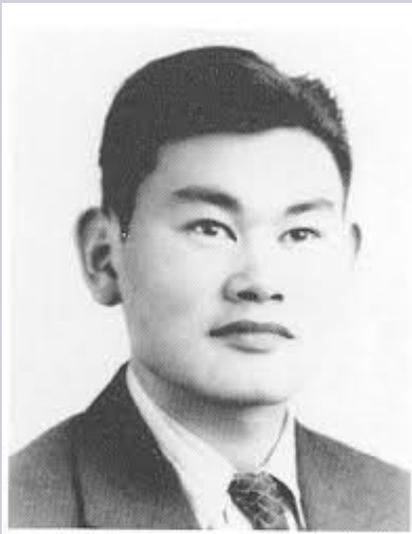
Throughout his youth, he experienced firsthand the discrimination directed at individuals of Japanese ancestry.

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He attempted to enlist in the armed forces but was rejected due to his race. He found work as a shipyard welder, but he was fired shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

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President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 directed all Japanese Americans to report for transfer to wartime internment camps.



Korematsu refused to comply with the order. He changed his name and underwent plastic surgery on his eyelids in an attempt to disguise his racial background.

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Korematsu was arrested in May 1942, and was eventually tried for failing to comply with the relocation order.

He was approached by the American Civil Liberties Union, who sought permission to use his case to challenge the legality of the internment process.

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Nonetheless, Korematsu was found guilty. He was placed on probation for five years and sent to the Central Utah War Relocation Center.



Topaz War Relocation Center (1943)

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Korematsu refused to let his case rest. He brought his case to the U.S. Court of Appeals. In January 1944, the Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's verdict. Korematsu again appealed, this time to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court issued its decision on December 18, 1944, determining by a vote of 6-3 that internment was justified, due to national security interests during wartime.

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After finally being released at the end of the war, he lived for a brief time in Salt Lake City, then moved to Detroit.

Those aware of his legal battles held him in no particular esteem, seeing him more as a negative than a positive force in the Japanese-American community.

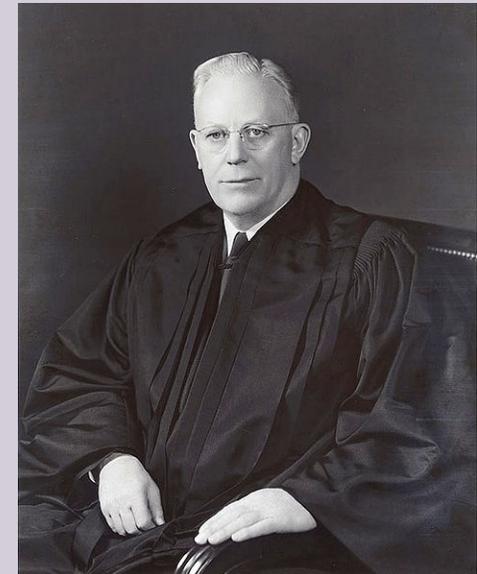
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With a disloyalty conviction on his record, employers were reluctant to hire him. Korematsu kept silent about his past, worried that his children's Japanese-American heritage might harm them, too.

His daughter didn't find out about her father's Supreme Court case until a friend mentioned it in a high school book report.

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By the 1970s, however, key individuals involved in the case had begun to see things differently. This included former Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, who had been attorney general and governor of California during the war, and played a significant role in the internment process.



Supreme Court Chief
Justice Earl Warren

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In 1980, Warren and others brought up the historical injustice with President Jimmy Carter. He appointed the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to investigate violations of Japanese Americans' rights.

In 1983, Korematsu's original conviction was overturned. Many in the crowd—including a large number who had been relocated to internment camps—burst into tears.

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On August 10, 1988, the Civil Liberties Act became law. The act's provisions included a tax-free award of \$20,000 to each internment camp survivor.

Signing the bill into law, President Ronald Reagan stated, *“No payment can make up for those lost years. What is most important in this bill has less to do with prosperity than with honor. For here we admit wrong.”*

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In the period following the redress of wartime internment, Korematsu quickly attained iconic status, and became a strong supporter of the rights of other minorities as well.

In 1998, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton.

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In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Korematsu advocated protecting the rights of Middle Easterners in the U.S., and worked on behalf of Muslims detained in military prisons. He maintained, that “*we must guard against prejudice and keep uppermost our commitment to law and justice.*”

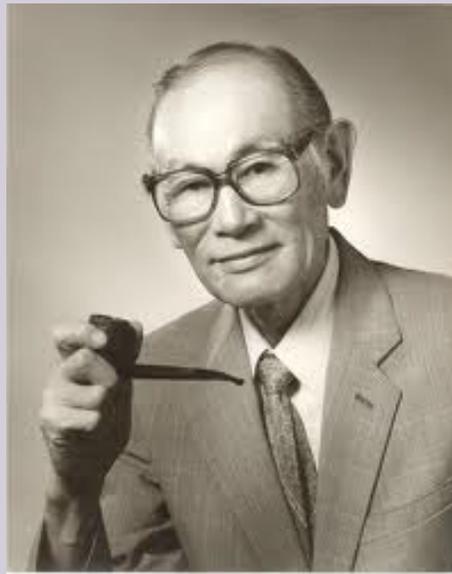
He died on March 30, 2005 in California, remaining a greatly respected and admired figure in civil rights history.

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In 2010, California honored Korematsu by passing the Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution Day.

In March of this year, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights announced that it had requested formal congressional recognition and establishment of January 30th as National Fred Korematsu Day.

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*“If you have the feeling that something is
wrong, don't be afraid to speak up.”*

—Fred Korematsu

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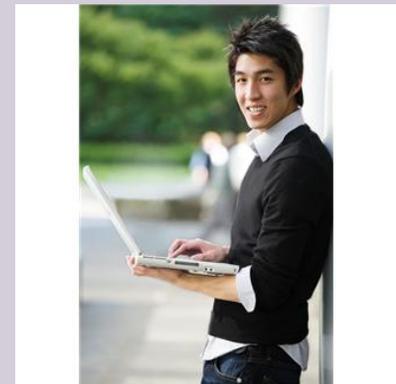
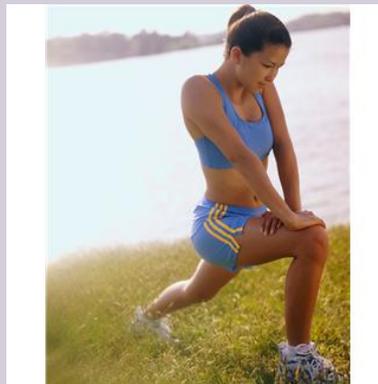
Despite these difficulties, these men and women struggled, sacrificed, and persevered to build a better life for themselves and their children.



Generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have helped develop and defend the United States, often in the face of tremendous racial and cultural prejudice.

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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have deeply impacted our society in all facets of American life, thriving as athletes, public servants, scientists, and artists.



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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders will prove instrumental in writing the next chapter of the American story.



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“People are aware that they cannot continue in the same old way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative. We need a vision that recognizes that we are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great sea change in our ecological, economic, political, and spiritual values.”

—Grace Lee Boggs

Resources

- <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>
- <http://www.ssa.gov/aapi/index.htm>
- <http://korematsuinstitute.org/institute/aboutfred/>
- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/03/04/2014-aapi-heritage-month-theme-i-am-beyond-evoking-american-spirit>
- <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/323/214>



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