

May 2021 Diversity Calendar



May is Mental Health Awareness Month. The goal is to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public, and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families. It also aims to draw attention to suicide, which can be precipitated by some mental illnesses.



May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in the United States. The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks on the project were Chinese immigrants.



May is Older Americans Month, established in 1963 to honor the legacies and contributions of older Americans and to support them as they enter their next stage of life.



May is Jewish American Heritage Month, which recognizes the diverse contributions of the Jewish people to American culture.

May 1: Beltane, an ancient Celtic festival celebrated on May Day, signifying the beginning of summer.

May 2: Orthodox Easter (also called Pascha), a later Easter date than observed by many Western churches.

May 3: Saints Philip and James, a Roman Rite feast day for the anniversary of the dedication of the church to Saints Phillip and James in Rome.

May 5: Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican holiday commemorating the Mexican army's 1862 victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War (1861-1867). This day celebrates Mexican culture and heritage, including parades and mariachi music performances.

May 6: National Day of Prayer, a day of observance in the United States when people are asked to "turn to God in prayer and meditation."

May 9: Laylat al-Qadr, the holiest night of the year for Muslims, is traditionally celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan. It is known as the Night of Power and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

May 12-13 (sundown to sundown): Eid al-Fitr, the first day of the Islamic month of Shawwal, marking the end of Ramadan. Many Muslims attend communal prayers, listen to a khutuba (sermon), and give Zakat al-Fitr (charity in the form of food) during Eid al-Fitr.

May 13: Ascension of Jesus or Ascension Day, is celebrated as the ascension of Christ from Earth in the presence of God within most of the Christian faith.

May 16-18 (sundown to sundown): Shavuot, a Jewish holiday that has double significance. It marks the all-important wheat harvest in Israel and commemorates the anniversary of the day when God gave the Torah to the nation of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai.

May 17: International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, a global celebration of sexual-orientation and gender diversities.

May 21: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, a day set aside by the United Nations as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together in harmony.

May 22-23 (sundown to sundown): Declaration of the Báb, the day of declaration of the Báb, the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith.

May 23: Pentecost, the celebration of the giving of the Ten Commandments by God at Mount Sinai.

May 26: Buddha Day (Vesak or Visakha Puja), a Buddhist festival that marks Gautama Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. It falls on the day of the full moon in May and it is a gazetted holiday in India.

May 31: Memorial Day in the United States, a federal holiday established to honor military veterans who died in wars fought by American forces.

May 29: Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, commemorates the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith.

May 30: Trinity Sunday, observed in the Western Christian faith as a feast in honor of the Holy Trinity.

May 30: All Saints' Day, celebrated by many Eastern Christian churches on the first Sunday after Pentecost, in recognition of all known and unknown saints.

DID YOU KNOW?

Each month we will be including an interesting story relating to one of the themes of the month. Thank you to Susan Gill Orange for submitting this story about Corky Lee.

Corky Lee, Photographic Journalist

By Susan Gill Orange

In May of 1869, the final spike, a symbolic golden one, was hammered into the ground of what is now remembered as the Transcontinental Railroad. This was the culmination of years of hard labor in order to connect the two coasts of the United States by railroad and shorten a cross country journey of what had been six months into a week. For this iconic and historic moment, a photograph was taken to commemorate that day. It was said to include the workers and the bosses of this momentous feat and showed a crowd of men, two of whom are toasting each other with champagne bottles, at the point of completion in Promontory Summit, Utah. What the photograph fails to recognize, however, are the thousands of Chinese men who helped build the railroad and went totally unnoticed for more than a century. Often just a footnote in textbook chapters that highlight the building of the railroad and its significance, Chinese men held no place in the annals of American history.

Over 140 years later, this slight was not ignored by a Chinese American photographer named Corky Lee. Young Kwok "Corky" Lee was a New Yorker whose photojournalism of Asian Americans helped bring attention to the inherent injustices often felt by this ethnic group. Lee went all over America photographing the political unrest incited by frustrated Asian Americans who wanted fair play in the public arena. Asian Americans were almost universally stereotyped, and Lee found a way with photographs to bring attention to the situation of Asian Americans across the country. His activism eventually included all minority groups and shortly before his death from COVID, he continued to exhibit his gritty and personal work at outdoor venues. He was lauded by the Village Sun as "A gentle soul with a wry sense of humor, Lee went by the whimsical moniker the "undisputed unofficial Asian American photographer laureate." For nearly 50 years, starting in the 1970s, he documented Manhattan's Chinatown and the city's Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities."

I had never heard of Corky Lee or that in the days of Mayor David Dinkins, New York City had declared an official "Corky Lee Day". But it was once I delved into Lee's photographic work that the soul, often repressed, of the Asian in America became glaringly clear and worthy of introspection and documentation. In Jennifer Takaki's documentary about Lee, *Photographic Justice*, Lee remarks, "I'd like to think that every time I take my camera out of my bag," he once

told an interviewer, “it’s like drawing a sword to combat indifference, injustice and discrimination, trying to get rid of stereotypes.” Warriors like Lee should not only be mourned when they die but should be passionately emulated.



The original 1869 photograph of the Golden Spike at the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. No Chinese laborer on this project was included.



The re-creation of the 1869 Transcontinental Railroad completion, this time with the descendants of the forgotten Chinese workers who helped to build it.