

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY THE JOINT DEI COMMITTEE

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Making Connections Through DEI Discourse

Eugenics Continued: UN Expert's Concerns About Medical Advances and Disability Rights.

On our August DEI newsletter, we introduced the concept and history of Eugenics. This month we're digging a little deeper and connecting the past to the present. In this story we also see how everything we do is connected to diversity equity and inclusion. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are crucial to our world and society. Like most oppressive systems, Eugenics is not something of the past, it continues today, and it is especially rampant in the medical field.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas, recently (Geneva 2020) raised concerns about the potential negative consequences of rapid advancements in genetic medical research and practice. While these developments hold promise for improving health and preventing diseases, Devandas warns that they could also inadvertently revive harmful ideas from the past, such as eugenics, if intentional protections are not put in place. In her report presented to the UN Human Rights Council, Devandas emphasizes the need for careful consideration and safeguards to ensure that these advances do not lead to discrimination and violence against people with disabilities.

The report highlights the exponential growth in gene therapy, genetic engineering, and prenatal screening, which offer new opportunities to enhance human health. However, Devandas cautions against the potential misuse of these technologies to eliminate specific human traits that are deemed undesirable. People with disabilities are worried that these scientific breakthroughs might lead to new forms of discrimination and hinder societal acceptance of diversity, particularly regarding disabilities. Devandas urges a balanced approach that ensures scientific progress while simultaneously protecting the rights and dignity of all people.

Devandas also addresses concerns regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide, particularly in the context of disabilities. The expert highlights that if assisted dying becomes an option for people with non-terminal health conditions or impairments, it might inadvertently send the wrong and harmful message that living with a disability is worse than death. While the report acknowledges the right to die with dignity, it emphasizes the need to address disability stereotypes, misinformation, societal stigma, isolation, and limited access to support services that might contribute to such choices.



AHRC Nassau
Brookville Center for Children Services &
Citizens Options Unlimited
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A significant issue highlighted in the report is the exclusion of people with disabilities from essential discussions and decisions related to medical research and practice. Devandas insists on the importance of lived experience, directly involving people with disabilities in these discussions to counter narratives that suggest disabilities should be prevented. Without their input, decisions may inadvertently perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and practices that bring eugenics a guaranteed spot in future medical endeavors.

Devandas attributes these challenges to "ableism," a prejudice against people with disabilities. She calls for a fundamental shift in societal attitudes to view disabilities as a natural and valuable aspect of human diversity. This transformation, she believes, requires a commitment to combating all forms of discrimination and promoting inclusivity at all levels of society.

Catalina Devandas' report shows the need for a balanced approach to medical advancements—one that harnesses the potential benefits while safeguarding against consequences that could perpetuate discrimination against people with disabilities. The report's call for inclusive discussions, a change in cultural attitudes, and a commitment to human rights sets a path toward a more equitable and accepting society for all people, regardless of disability.



Did You Know?

The Problem with Empathy

Empathy

noun em·pa·thy \ˈem-pə-thē\

: the feeling that you understand and share another person's experiences and emotions: the ability to share someone else's feelings

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Many people think that in order to fix the injustice caused by racism and ableism, for example, we need to understand and share the feelings of others. Think of the phrase 'put yourself in someone else's shoes.' This is what we usually call empathy. But some experts, like a psychologist named Paul Bloom, say that relying too much on empathy might not be such a good idea.

Bloom explains that one of the limitations is having too much empathy, which can actually make it harder for us to help others. People who feel empathy really strongly might become overburdened by absorbing the harm others go through, resulting in compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is a state of emotional exhaustion and burnout that can occur when a person is exposed to, and deeply affected by the distress of others, particularly in a caregiving or helping role. It often arises when individuals consistently provide support or care for those who are experiencing significant physical, emotional, or psychological harm.

Also, empathy is like a spotlight that we can only point at one thing at a time. So, if we're trying to understand and feel for one group of people, we might not be able to do the same for another group at the same time. Interestingly, research shows how groups of people have a stronger tendency to feel empathy for those who look like them, talk like them, love like them, so on and so forth. So, because the empathy we feel is limited, and is usually directed at groups of people that are familiar to us, the idea that using it to solve the injustices that affect those who are not like us, has proven to be difficult, if not misguided. Empathy is limited by our own experiences and who we relate to. So, we might not feel as much empathy for people who are different from us.

Putting too much emphasis on empathy can sometimes make things worse. In order to inspire empathy from others, marginalized communities have to show their pain in ways that make sense to those who aren't affected in the same way, which serves to re-traumatize instead of helping. This puts the responsibility of inspiring empathy on marginalized communities. In other words, marginalized communities end up carrying the burden of convincing others that they are deserving of empathy, all the while the injustices they endure are kept unchanged.

Did You Know?

The Problem with Empathy Continued...

Trying to make others feel the same way you do can sometimes mean that only issues that are relatable to a lot of people get attention, while more serious but less familiar problems get ignored. So, while empathy is important, it's not the only solution. We need to find better ways to support and care for others, even if we can't fully understand their feelings. It's more about showing that we value everyone's lives and experiences, even if they're different from our own. Learn more about empathy and its limitations from other points of view below by clicking on the video titles.



How to Deal with Compassion Fatigue?

By Sharmeen Khan



How to Manage Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving

By Patricia Smith



The Limits of Empathy: Technology and difficult history in museums.

By Silvina Fernandez-Duque, Daniel Davis, and Abigail Newkirk.

Sources:
The Baby and The Well: The Case Against Empathy (Sam Bloom)

Words & Concepts of the Month

Being Conscious of our own biases is
more important than ever.

Search engines and Artificial Intelligence reflect and amplify existing biases present in society. So, when we do research (for example using google) or when we use Artificial Intelligence to produce video, images and/or stories we need to make sure the information being fed to algorithms is accurate. If you want to know more about how to spot misinformation look at our August Newsletter and how to practice Critical Thinking, a skill that everyone can benefit from.

Here's how search engines and AI reproduce biases:

Algorithmic Bias: Search engines use complex algorithms to determine the order in which search results are presented. These algorithms are trained on existing information that has been sourced and produced by human beings, which we know to be naturally biased (think of implicit or unconscious bias). Because search engines and AI learn from biased or discriminatory data, they can inadvertently perpetuate and amplify, for example, racial biases.

Content Ranking: Search engines rank content based on popularity, relevance, and other factors. If content with racist or discriminatory views gains popularity, it might appear higher in search results, giving it more visibility and credibility. This can reinforce harmful narratives and stereotypes.

Autocomplete Suggestions: Autocomplete suggestions can inadvertently reflect biases present in the broader culture. If people frequently search for racist or offensive terms, search engines might suggest those terms, making it easier for users to find such content.

Confirmation Bias: People tend to click on search results that align with their existing beliefs. This type of bias shows how people overwhelmingly click on content that reinforces their views instead of, for example, checking where the information comes from (sources) and whether the information comes from a credible source (who is coalified to speak on the subject). Over time, this can create a feedback loop where the search engine shows more similar content, deepening the person's beliefs.



Lack of Diversity in Results: Search engines lack diversity in the types of sources and perspectives that appear in search results. When certain voices or perspectives are marginalized, it contributes to a one-sided view of issues.

Digital Redlining: Certain communities are disproportionately affected by biased algorithms (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and People with Disabilities) due to historic patterns of discrimination. When an algorithm disproportionately promotes negative content about a particular group, it can perpetuate stereotypes and contribute to increased discrimination or erasure.

Context and Intent Misinterpretation: Search engines might misinterpret the context or intent behind a search question, leading to inappropriate or biased results. For example, a well-intentioned search about a particular racial/ethnic/religious group might yield offensive and stereotypical results.

Take the following real-life example. Jeremy Andrew Davis asked an AI image generating program more than 100 times to generate pictures of “a person with Autism/an Autistic person, lifelike, photoreal, photojournalism” and he always got the same types of images. He started noticing a pattern, there was no diversity in terms of race, gender, or age. All the results he got depicted young, skinny boys with mostly red hair.

The more attention he paid to the images the more trends he discovered. None of the young men in the pictures were ever smiling, not a single one. They were instead depicted as moody, melancholic, and depressed or upset. If you notice the key words he used in his search (as shown above) were “lifelike” “photoreal” and “photojournalism” because when he only used the term Autism, the results only yielded puzzle pieces in cartoon form and cartoon characters. Out of the 148 results he got, only 2 were girls, not a single one was Black, Asian, or Indigenous, only 5 were depicted as older than 30, and not a single one was smiling. Search engines and AI are simply a reflection of the marginalization produced by our society. If we connect this piece to the concerns that Devanda has in the first story of this newsletter, we start to notice a troubling journey ahead where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities might be reduced to stereotypes, including in the medical field.

The AI we know today is not really artificial intelligence, meaning that computers are not actually able to think for themselves. What these programs do is called machine learning. In very simple terms, machine learning focuses on patterns (repetition) so it looks for the majority of similarities on a given search, and then excludes outliers (think of new research debunking what we have thought to be facts for decades). So, if the data that these programs are accessing is mostly young, white boys, like in the Autism search Jeremy did, the program itself will amplify that bias. This means that we need to be better at figuring out what information is reliable, and what information is based on human bias. However, the scary part of this is that if someone is already prone to confirmation bias (explained above), or is not aware of unconscious bias, they will most likely believe in the results that the search engine or AI program offers without questioning them.

To address these issues, search engines need to continuously work on reducing algorithmic biases, improving content ranking mechanisms, and providing more diverse and accurate results. Developers should strive for transparency and accountability in their algorithms and work to ensure that their platforms promote equitable and inclusive information. But we cannot rely only on the tech industry to keep tech bias at bay. We have an important role to play as well as users of this technology. We need to be critical consumers of online information (using critical thinking skills) and make sure we do not take anything at face value, check the sources of the information we consume, and make sure their credibility is backed by experience, knowledge, and/or credentials.

This Month...

Hispanic, Latina/o/e/x Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15)

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

[Learn more](#)



Hunger Action Month

This September, communities across America are committing to fight hunger during Hunger Action Month. With every action, we get one step closer to making hunger a thing of the past. Put on your finest orange shirt, pants or accessories for Hunger Action Month and share a photo of yourself on social media. Tell others about the fight to end hunger using the hashtags #HungerActionMonth and #EndHungerNow.

[Learn more](#)



National Literacy Month

September is National Literacy Month, a time to encourage the young people in your life to go to the library, pick up a good book, and explore new worlds. The number of books banned last year topped 1,600 and included dozens of titles recommended by the educators at NEA's Read Across America. This year's Banned Book Week, Sept. 18-24, takes place during an unprecedented time of book bans and challenges in U.S. schools.

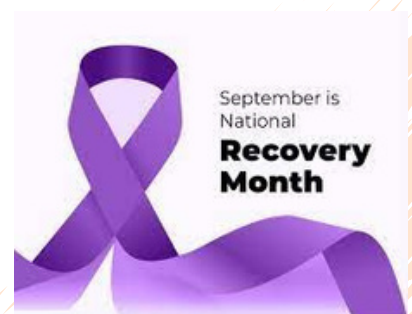
[Learn more](#)



Recovery Month

Recovery Month celebrates the gains made by those in recovery, just as we celebrate health improvements made by those who are managing other health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease. This observance reinforces the positive message that behavioral health is essential to overall health, prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can and do recover.

[Learn more](#)



National Suicide Prevention Month

We can all help prevent suicide. Every year, the Lifeline and other mental health organizations and individuals across the U.S. and around the world raise awareness of suicide prevention during September, National Suicide Prevention Month.

[Learn more](#)



National Guide Dog Month

National Guide Dog Month is a celebration of the work of guide dogs in the United States as a way to raise awareness, appreciation and support for guide dog schools across the United States.

[Learn more](#)



Days of the Month

September 4 Labor Day

Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers and is traditionally observed on the first Monday in September. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894. Labor Day weekend also symbolizes the end of summer for many Americans and is celebrated with parties, street parades and athletic events.

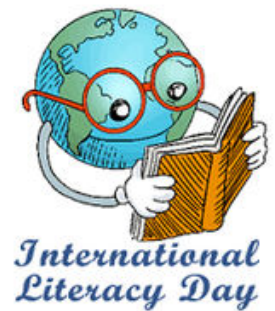
[Learn more](#)



September 8 International Literacy Day

International Literacy Day is an international observance, celebrated each year on 8 September, that was declared by UNESCO on 26 October 1966 at the 14th session of UNESCO's General Conference. It was celebrated for the first time in 1967

[Learn More](#)



September 10 World Suicide Prevention Day and September 10 to 16 Suicide Prevention week

Generally taking place the week after Labor Day, National Suicide Prevention Week begins with World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) recognizes the entire month of September as National Suicide Prevention Month: a moment in time in which we rally the public to create awareness of this leading cause of death, and inspire more and more people to learn how they can play a role in their communities in helping to save lives.

[Learn more](#)



September 10 - 16 DSP Recognition Week

Direct Support Professional Recognition Week is a great opportunity to highlight the dedicated, innovative direct support workforce that is the heart and soul of supports for people with disabilities



[Learn more](#)

September 11 9/11 Day of Service & Remembrance (Patriot Day)

Patriot Day on September 11th honors the memory of the nearly 3,000 innocent victims who died in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Each year Americans dedicate this day to remembering those who died and the first responders who risked their own lives to save others



[Learn more](#)

September 14 National Sober Day

Ideally scheduled during National Recovery Month, the day supports removing the stigma associated with addiction. It opens the lines of communication that lead to better understanding. The day provides an opportunity to build educated support networks. It also strengthens existing ones. Success is more likely when systems are paved with an aware, loving, and honest cheering section. If we stumble, aren't we more likely to get back up again when we have a solid support system?



[Learn more](#)

September 15 - 17 Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah is the birthday of the universe, the day God created Adam and Eve, and it's celebrated as the head of the Jewish year. Rosh Hashanah is observed on the first two days of the Jewish new year, Tishrei 1 and 2, beginning at sundown on the eve of Tishrei 1. Rosh Hashanah 2023 begins at sundown on September 15 and continues through nightfall on September 17. Rosh Hashanah is celebrated with candle lighting in the evenings, festive meals with sweet delicacies during the night and day, prayer services that include the sounding of the ram's horn (shofar) on both mornings and desisting from creative work.

[Learn more](#)



September 17 Constitution Day and Citizenship Day

Constitution Day is an American federal observance that recognizes the adoption of the United States Constitution and those who have become U.S. citizens. It is normally observed on September 17, the day in 1787 that delegates to the Constitutional Convention signed the document in Philadelphia.

[Learn more](#)



September 18 National HIV/Aids and Aging Awareness Day

September 18 is National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (NHAAD). NHAAD brings attention to issues related to HIV among older Americans, including new infections among older adults and adults over 50 aging with HIV.

[Learn more](#)



September 18 - 24 International Week of Deaf People

It's a time when people can come together annually to recognize and celebrate the vibrant Deaf community. This year's theme is 'Building Inclusive Communities for All'. As well as Deaf people feeling connected to their Deaf community, they should also feel connected to wider society and those without a hearing impairment. If people come together to show awareness for Deaf people within communities, it can help to better connect them to others. People can become more educated about how to communicate with Deaf people, contributing to positive change and breaking down stereotypical barriers.

[Learn more](#)



September 18 - 24 Diaper Need Awareness Week

A signature initiative of the National Diaper Bank Network launched in 2012, the National Diaper Need Awareness Week provides individuals, organizations, communities, and elected officials the opportunity to engage in real talk and simple actions. By working together we can ensure that all babies have access to clean diapers and other basic necessities required for them to thrive and reach their full potential.

[Learn more](#)



September 19 National Voter Registration Day

National Voter Registration Day, observed on a Tuesday in September, is a nonpartisan civic holiday in the U.S. creating broad awareness of voter registration opportunities and celebrating democracy. In 2023, National Voter Registration Day will be celebrated on the 19th of September. Learn more about the complex history of voting rights.

[Learn more](#)



September 21 International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace, also officially known as World Peace Day, is a United Nations-sanctioned holiday observed annually on 21 September.

[Learn more](#)



September 22 Native American Day

Native American Day is celebrated on the fourth Friday of September every year, falling on September 22 this year, as a way of honoring Indigenous Nations on Turtle Island (USA).

[Learn more](#)



September 22 American Business Women's Day

September 22 marks the 1949 founding date of the American Business Women's Association, the mission of which is "to bring together businesswomen of diverse occupations and to provide opportunities for them to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally through leadership; education, networking support and national recognition"



[Learn more](#)

September 23 International Day of Sign Languages

The International Day of Sign Languages is a unique opportunity to support and protect the linguistic identity and cultural diversity of all deaf people and other sign language users.



[Learn more](#)

September 24 - 25 Yom Kippur

Day of Atonement, the most solemn day of the year; there are restrictions on work and travel. May all who practice have an easy fast.



[Learn more](#)

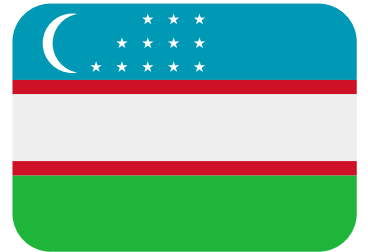


Independence Days Around The World

September 1 Uzbekistan Independence Day

Independence Day (Uzbek: O'zbekiston Respublikasi Mustaqilligi kuni) is an official national holiday in Uzbekistan, celebrated on the first of September. fireworks, concerts, competitions, military parades, and wreath laying ceremonies are held in Tashkent during the independence day celebrations.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 2 Vietnam Independence Day

September 2nd, 1945 is an important landmark marking a major turning point of Vietnam. It was an establishment day of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and is also considered the National Independence Day of the current Socialist Republic of Vietnam. President Ho Chi Minh read the Declaration of Independence at Ba Dinh Square, officially claiming the independence and sovereignty of Vietnam from France and Japan.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 7 Brazil Dia da Independência

The Independence Day of Brazil (Portuguese: Dia da Independência), commonly called Sete de Setembro (Seventh of September), is a national holiday observed in Brazil on September 7 of every year. The date celebrates Brazil's Declaration of Independence from the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves in 1822.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 8 North Macedonia Independence Day / Den na nezavisnosta

If 8th September falls on a weekend, a different day is usually proclaimed to observe the holiday. This holiday is North Macedonia's National Day and is known in Macedonian as 'Den na nezavisnosta'. This holiday marks the date of the 1991 Referendum for Independence.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 9 Tajikistan Independence Day

According to the law "On the feast days", September 9 is the main official state holiday in the country and is celebrated every year.[7] [8] The traditional 21-gun salute and fireworks annually take place in honor of the holiday, which is also a non-working day

[Click to learn more](#)



September 15 El Salvador Día de la Independencia

Independence day in El Salvador is celebrated yearly on September 15th; this date is a commemoration of the country's 1821 independence from Spain. El Salvador observes Independence Day with other Central American nations, which declared independence from Spanish Rule on September 15th, 1821.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 15 Guatemala Independence Day

It commemorates the day on September 15, 1821 when a regional congress in Guatemala City signed "The Act of Independence of Central America." Guatemala was fortunate in that it didn't have to fight a war to become independent.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 15 Honduras Independence

Honduras was home to several Indigenous civilizations including Mayans of Copán. Spaniards colonized Honduras in 1524. In 1609, the region became part of the Spanish Captaincy General of Guatemala which controlled Central America from Guatemala City.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 15 Costa Rica Día de la Independencia

Following their defeat in the Mexican War of Independence, Costa Rica, along with the rest of Central America, was granted their independence from Spain on September 15th, 1821. On this day it was that Costa Rica began to redefine itself & its' identity as a country. Since then they have carried along a few customs every year to remind the people of this very special & significant day.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 15 Nicaragua Independence Day

September 15th is a national day of celebration in much of Central America. The annual celebrations mark the end of Spanish rule, when Central American people won new freedoms without bloodshed. The day honors the Declaration of Independence signed by a group of countries that included what are now Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. They were also referred to as the United Provinces of Central America or the Kingdom of Guatemala.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 16 Mexico Cry of Dolores / Grito de Dolores / Día de la Independencia

It is the star of Mexico's Independence celebrations. The impassioned grito de Dolores or 'cry of Dolores' has been celebrated annually for over 200 years. Fittingly, while the grito de Dolores takes its name from the small town of Dolores, México, near Guanajuato, the word dolores can also be translated as 'pains.' Indeed, the people of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, as the territory was then known, labored under foreign occupation and colonial rule. Enough was enough.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 16 Papua New Guinea Independence Day

Papua New Guinea Independence Day is celebrated on September 16th each year. This public holiday commemorates the country's independence from Australia in 1975. The cultural aspects of this holiday are significant as it is a day of national pride and unity. Papua New Guinea is a diverse country with over 800 languages spoken, and Independence Day is an opportunity for people to celebrate their unique cultures and traditions. The day is marked by parades, cultural performances, and traditional feasts. It is also a time for reflection on the country's history and the struggles that led to its independence. Overall, Papua New Guinea Independence Day is a vibrant celebration of the country's rich cultural heritage and its journey towards independence.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 18 Chile Día de la Independencia or Fiestas Patria

Fiestas Patrias – otherwise known as “dieciocho” – is the celebration of Chile's independence from Spain in 1810, and the 18th and 19th of September – which commemorate the first day that the Chilean government gathered to declare independence from Spain.

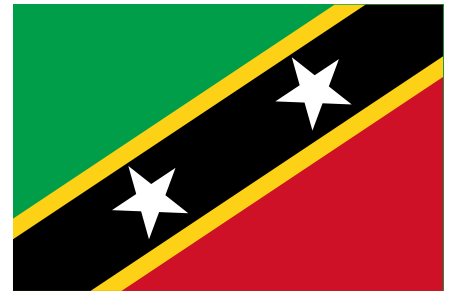
[Click to learn more](#)



September 19 Saint Kitts and Nevis Independence Day

St. Kitts Tourism notes, “Independence Day serves to ensure that the nation’s citizens never forget their past — and how far they’ve come to arrive at this point.” The history of St. Kitts and Nevis has the same hallmarks of other Caribbean islands. Columbus originally called St. Kitts St. Christopher, after his patron saint. Long before it became the first of Britain’s colonies in the West Indies in 1623, it was inhabited by the Carib people. Because of this, some call it the mother colony of the West Indies.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 21 Armenia Independence Day

On August 23, 1990 the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Armenia, proclaiming the dissolution of the Armenian SSR and the establishment of the Republic of Armenia. On this day in 1991, the Republic of Armenia held a referendum, with 99% of participants answering “Yes” to the question of secession from the Soviet Union.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 21 Belize Independence Day

On September 21, 1981, Belize, the only British colony in Central America, became an independent nation. On this day each year, Belizean's gather throughout the country (and worldwide) to celebrate their independence, history, culture, people and their beautiful nation.

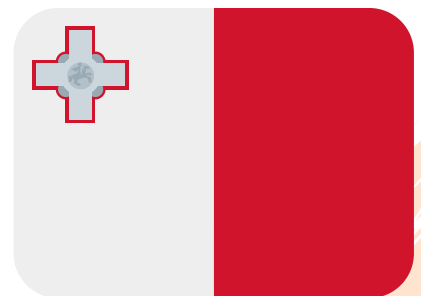
[Click to learn more](#)



September 21 Malta Independence Day

Malta Independence Day commemorates the country's achievement of independence from the United Kingdom on September 21, 1964. The celebration is marked by various activities, including patriotic speeches, parades, and cultural events, shedding light on the rich heritage and the progress made by Malta as a sovereign nation.

[Click to learn more](#)



September 22 Mali Independence Day

On September 22, 1960, Mali gained independence from France. When the new country was born, so was a new flag. Mali's flag is green, yellow, and red. The green represents the fertility of the earth. The yellow symbolizes Mali's natural resources or mineral wealth and purity. The color red is a reminder of the blood that was shed to gain independence from French rule.



[Click to learn more](#)

September 24 Guinea Bissau Independence Day/ National Day

Guinea Bissau gained its independence from the Portuguese in September 1974. The country had fallen under colonization in 1879, and later became one of the Portuguese provinces located overseas. In 1956, Amilcar Cabral established the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), and the war of liberation against the Portuguese presence started in 1963. The party succeeded to liberate two-thirds of the country, and the citizens of the liberated areas elected the first National People's Assembly in 1972.



[Click to learn more](#)

September 27 Turkmenistan Independence Day

It is the day to celebrate its independence from the U.S.S.R. in 1991. It is a national holiday in Turkmenistan. The day itself is widely celebrated throughout the country, with the central event being a grandiose military parade which takes place on Independence Square in Ashgabat. Free concerts, fairs and public festivities are held all across the country, and the day ends in most cities with a grand fireworks show.



[Click to learn more](#)

September 30 Botswana Independence Day

The Independence Day of Botswana, commonly called Boipuso, is a national holiday observed in Botswana on September 30 of every year. The date celebrates Botswana's Declaration of Independence from the United Kingdom on September 30, 1966.



[Click to learn more](#)

Sukkot, a time to rejoice in the harvest!

By Susan Gill-Orange

During the month of September, particularly if you live in the metropolitan NY area, you may see homes and apartment balconies dotted with what looks like little huts. It is called a sukkah (say "sook-kaw"). The roof covering must be made of something that used to grow in the earth. It can be made of palm leaves or bamboo sticks.

These huts meant to recall the tents that the Israelites lived in for forty years in the desert between escaping persecution in Egypt and reaching the Promised Land. Jewish men are supposed to sleep in these structures for a week. During that time, there are feasts which include bread and meat, and wine, and family and neighbors invite each other over to eat together in the sukkah.

This is the time when Jewish households celebrate the good things they have to eat and it is like a harvest festival where the fruits of the earth are displayed. Sukkot is a time of rejoicing and comes after the more solemn festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Sukkot is also a time to remember. In many households each night a different story of an Old Testament figure comes to life and children and adults alike reaffirm their faith by hearing the traditions of the past and being inspired by the lives of their spiritual forefathers.

The branches are known as lulav and there is a special blessing that is spoken as they are placed on the schach: Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat lulav. "Blessed are You, Adonai our God, sovereign of the universe, who has sanctified us through You. This is the most important facet of this holiday. Aside from the socializing and celebrating, Sukkot is a time to thank God for the blessings the household has received, and to pray for continued sanctification in the coming year.



Recipe of the Month

By Susan Gill-Orange

Sukkot broccoli kugel

A beautifully baked casserole with starch (usually noodles or potatoes), eggs and fat. While that's the base, kugels have many variations, from savory to sweet.

Ingredients

- 1 (2-pound) bag frozen chopped broccoli cuts, thawed and drained.
- 1 cup light mayonnaise
- 4 eggs
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon coarse black pepper
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper



Directions

- Preheat oven to 375° F.
- Liberally coat a 9-inch round baking dish with non-stick cooking spray.
- In a large bowl, place broccoli, mayonnaise, eggs, salt, black, and cayenne peppers, and mix well.
- Pour broccoli mixture into prepared baking dish.
- Bake at 375°F for 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until set with golden edges.

Call for Submissions, Feedback and Suggestions

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Monthly Newsletter invites contributions to our monthly publication that fits into the following categories:

- News items and announcements
- Short stories
- Recognitions
- Member profiles



Tell us what you want to see more of!

Send us your feedback!



Submit your materials to:
Dr. Sarah Gonzalez Noveiri
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