

ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month (APAHM) is celebrated in May to commemorate the contributions of people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent in the U.S. May was chosen to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to America on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad (by many Chinese laborers) on May 10, 1869. In 1992, the official designation of May as APAHM was signed into law. Since 2009, President Obama has issued proclamations designating May as Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

**2015 Theme: Many Cultures, One Voice:
Promote Equality and Inclusion**



PROFILE: Kiran Ahuja, Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs)

Kiran Ahuja is responsible for directing the efforts of the White House Initiative and the Presidential Advisory Commission on AAPIs to advise federal agency leadership on the implementation and coordination of federal programs as they relate to AAPIs across executive departments and agencies.

For almost twenty years, Ms. Ahuja has dedicated herself to improving the lives of women of color in the U.S. Well-known as a leader among national and grassroots AAPI and women's rights organizations, Ms. Ahuja served as the founding Executive Director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) from 2003-2008. Through her leadership, Ms. Ahuja built NAPAWF from an all-volunteer organization to one with a paid professional staff who continue to spearhead successful policy and education initiatives, expanded NAPAWF's volunteer chapters and membership, and organized a strong and vibrant network of AAPI women community leaders across the country.



Ms. Ahuja grew up in Savannah, Georgia, where her understanding of race, gender and ethnicity was formed as a young Indian immigrant. She attended Spelman College, an historically black college, and the University of Georgia School of Law. Following law school, she was chosen as one of five Honors Program trial attorneys for the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, where she litigated education-related discrimination cases and filed the Department's first peer-on-peer student racial harassment lawsuit. In addition, she participated in the Division's National Origin Working Group as part of a core group of attorneys who organized response efforts for the Division after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/aapi>

