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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month - May 2006

May is Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, and this year's theme is, "Celebrating Decades of Pride, Partnerships and Progress."

The Chinese were the first Asians to arrive in large numbers. By the 1830s, Chinese were selling goods in New York City and toiling in Hawaiian sugarcane fields. The discovery of gold in California attracted thousands of Chinese miners and contract laborers. In 1850, just over 1,000 Asian immigrants entered the U.S., but ten years later, the figure had jumped to nearly 37,000, mostly Chinese.

The Central Pacific Railroad recruited Chinese to work on the transcontinental railroad in 1865. However, many people feared being "overwhelmed" by the influx, and some cities passed laws against Chinese and other Asians. Anti-Chinese riots erupted in California and Wyoming.

Meanwhile, increasing contact with Japan prompted Japanese to move to Hawaii and California to work in agriculture. Following the Spanish-American War, the Philippines came under U.S. control, prompting increased immigration. In 1902 the *pensionado* program, which allowed Filipinos to study in the U.S., was implemented.

During World War II, more than 100,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry were placed in internment camps. Even though many did not speak Japanese or have close ties to Japan, they were nonetheless regarded as wartime threats. Although the U.S. was also at war with Germany and Italy, Americans with ancestors from those countries did not face internment. In 1988 Congress passed a measure giving \$20,000 to Japanese Americans who had been interned during the war.

Although Asian immigration increased steadily the region still contributed fewer newcomers than Europe, Latin America, and North America. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 eliminated race as a barrier to immigration, and in 1965 national quotas were ended, facilitating Asian immigration.

Political power followed the increased immigration. Dalip Singh was elected to U.S. Congress from California's Imperial Valley, and in 1962 Hawaii sent Daniel K. Inouye to the U.S. Senate and Spark Matsunaga to the U.S. House. Two years later, Patsy Takemoto Mink of Hawaii was elected to the U.S. House, becoming the first Asian-American woman in Congress. Since then, hundreds of Asian Americans have been elected to state legislatures and municipal positions.

In 1979 the US and China resumed diplomatic relations, making immigration easier for the Chinese, but new arrivals came from other Asian countries as well. Following the Vietnam War, more than 130,000 refugees fleeing from the Communist governments of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos arrived on U.S. shores. In 1990 nearly 5 million Asian immigrants were reported, second only to Latin America.

Asian/Pacific Americans are known for their cultural values and traditions of excellence in education, community service, entrepreneurship, and love of family.

Please join me in celebrating this rich and diverse culture by participating in planned events that are taking place in your area. I encourage all employees of DoDDS-E to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities. Let us all take advantage of this time to learn more about the history of Asian/Pacific Americans and how they have contributed to the culture and heritage of our Nation.



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Director, DoDDS-Europe

