

Heritage Months and Cultural Observances

Academic Year 2024-25



At NEC we acknowledge, celebrate, and honor the socio-cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious beliefs and identities of those on campus. This calendar aims to be a representation of the NEC community, while acknowledging traditions may evolve.

This list of cultural observances presents an opportunity for NEC community members to deepen their understanding of traditions, histories, contributions, scholarship, and present-day experiences of historically marginalized identities. The commemorations are not confined to a specific timeframe. This calendar serves as a resource for fostering a sense of belonging among all members of our community.

Please Note: This is not an exhaustive list. If you wish for us to include further listings, we are happy to explore. Please email monique.vanwillingh@necmusic.edu.

[Access the 2024-25 annual one-page calendar PDF here.](#)

SEPTEMBER

Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15:). Latinx Heritage Month started as a week-long acknowledgment in 1968 and has grown to a month-long celebration from September 15 through October 15. These dates were selected to incorporate the independence days of Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua. Latinx Heritage Month recognizes the legacies and contributions of individuals who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Spanish-speaking nations of the Caribbean.

Today, the Latino population in the United States today is over 60 million, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This makes up 18.9% of the total population and is the largest racial or ethnic group. Latinos continue to help fuel our economy and enrich our nation as entrepreneurs, athletes, artists, entertainers, scientists, public servants, and much more.

Learn more about [Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month](#).

September 20: HeForShe. This movement was started by the UN with the goal of promoting gender equality

September 21: International Day of Peace. Established in 1981 by unanimous United Nations resolution, Peace Day provides a globally shared date for all humanity to commit to Peace above all differences and to contribute to building a Culture of Peace.

OCTOBER

LGBTQ+ History Month, a U.S. observance started in 1994, honors members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender nonconforming, and queer communities. October was chosen to nationally commemorate LGBTQ+ history, political activism, and contributions because several important dates fall within the month, including National Coming Out Day (October 11), Spirit Day acknowledging LGBTQ+ youth (October 20), Asexual Awareness Week (during the last week in October), and others. Learn more about [LGBTQ+ History Month](#).

National Disability Employment Awareness Month, or NDEAM, celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities past and present and showcases supportive, inclusive employment policies and practices that benefit employers and employees. Disability impacts all of us. [According to the CDC](#), up to 1 in 4 adults (27%) in the USA have some type of disability. Learn More about [National Disability Employment Awareness](#).

Latinx and Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15). Continued.

October 10: World Mental Health Day. The overall objective is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilize efforts in support of mental health. The Day provides an opportunity for all stakeholders working on mental health issues to talk about their work, eradicate stigma, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.

October 11: National Coming Out Day. For those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, this day celebrates coming out and the recognition of the 1987 march on Washington for gay and lesbian equality.

October 14: National Indigenous People's Day promotes recognition of the indigenous populations affected by colonization.

October 16: International Pronoun Day. Seeks to make asking, sharing, and respecting personal pronouns commonplace. Referring to people by the pronouns they determine for themselves is basic to human dignity. Being referred to by the wrong pronouns particularly affects transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

October 26: Intersex Awareness Day. To bring to light the challenges that intersex individuals face, as well as the concept of visibility and representation. It also leads into the culmination of the Intersex Day of Remembrance on the birthday of Herculine Barbin, also sometimes known as Intersex Solidarity Day on Nov 8th.

NOVEMBER

National Native American Heritage Month, celebrates the traditions, languages, and stories of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and affiliated Island communities and ensures their rich histories and contributions continue to thrive with each passing generation.

Learn more about the history and meaning behind [National Native American Heritage Month](#).

Transgender Awareness Week. Each year between November 13 – 19, people and organizations around the country participate in Transgender Awareness Week to help increase understanding about transgender people and the issues members of the community face. Transgender Awareness Week takes place the week before Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20.

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), is an annual observance on November 20 that honors the memory of the transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence that year.

Explore resources linked to [Transgender Awareness Week](#).

November 2: Día de Los Muertos (All Saints' Day or All Souls Day): Days are dedicated to all who have passed away in the Christian faith, and the Mexican and Aztec communities.

November 16: International Day for Tolerance: This UN holiday was founded to encourage respect among people regardless of culture, language, religion, or ethnicity.

November 20: Transgender Day of Remembrance, established in 1998 to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia, and to raise awareness of the continued violence endured by the transgender community.

November 28: The National Day of Mourning is an annual protest organized since 1970 by Native Americans of New England on the fourth Thursday of November, the same day as Thanksgiving in the United States. Learn more here: [Uaine.org](#).

NEC Native American Graduate:

Wamsutta Frank James, one of the first Native American graduates (1948) of the New England Conservatory of Music helped to start the Day of Mourning, as a response to his speech at a state dinner in Plymouth being re-written and suppressed. Frank James refused to deliver a speech written by a public relations officer, and instead activated a march to the Plymouth Rock, which still occurs on Thanksgiving day every year. Learn more here: [Honoring Wamsutta Frank James](#).

DECEMBER

December 1: World AIDS Day, is an opportunity for every community and each individual to honor the more than 32 million people who have died worldwide from AIDS-related illness. December 1 is a day for voices to unite by sharing experiences, remembering those lost, and standing together in the fight against HIV. Resources and information can be found [here](#).

December 3: International Day of People with Disabilities, is designed to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities at every level of society and development, and to raise awareness of persons with disabilities in all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life. Learn more [here](#).

December 10: International Human Rights Day, established by the United Nations in 1948 to commemorate the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR). This milestone document enshrines the fundamental human rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is the [most translated document](#) in the world. Learn more [here](#).

December 26 – January 1: Kwanzaa, an African-American and pan-African holiday started by Maulana Karenga in 1966 to celebrate family, community, and culture, by joining the values and practices of Continental African and African American culture. Learn more [here](#).

JANUARY 2025

January 20: Martin Luther King Day is a federal holiday held on the third Monday of January. It celebrates the life and achievements of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., an influential American civil rights leader, the recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, and an activist for non-violent social change until his assassination in 1968. Learn more [here](#), and explore the [King Center resources](#).

January 27: International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The United Nations General Assembly designated January 27—the anniversary of the liberation of [Auschwitz-Birkenau](#)—as [International Holocaust Remembrance Day](#), a time to remember the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the millions of other victims of Nazi persecution. Learn more here: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) and the World [Holocaust Remembrance Center](#).

FEBRUARY

Black History Month in the United States and Canada. Since 1976, the month has been designated to remember the contributions of people of the African Diaspora. Learn more about the [origins](#) and [themes](#) of Black History Month, founded by the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History \(ASALH®\)](#), whose mission is to promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history, and culture to the global community.

Theme: The 2025 Black History Month theme, “[African Americans and Labor](#),” sets out to highlight and celebrate the potent impact of this work. Considering Black people's work through the widest perspectives provides versatile and insightful platforms for examining Black life and culture through time and space.

February 1: National Freedom Day. Celebrates the signing of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in 1865. [Major Richard Robert Wright Sr.](#), a former slave, fought to have a day when freedom for all Americans is celebrated.

February 6: International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM. This is a movement for the rights of women and their bodies, as well as the protection of their physical health. It is a UN-sponsored annual awareness day that is part of the effort to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM) and violence against women and girls in various countries. Learn more [here](#).

February 20: World Day of Social Justice commemorates and urges all efforts to combat unemployment, social exclusion, and poverty. The United Nations General Assembly recognizes that social development and social justice cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security, or the absence of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

World Day of Social Justice upholds the principles of social justice by promoting gender equality, and the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants; it is meant to advance social justice by dismantling and removing barriers that people face because of race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, culture, or disability. Learn more [here](#).

February 21: International Mother Language Day. It is a worldwide annual observance to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and promote multilingualism. Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened as more and more languages disappear. This day is about preserving and celebrating one's native tongue, and learned tongues. Learn more [here](#).

“One language disappears on average every two weeks, taking with it an entire cultural and intellectual heritage.” ~UNESCO

MARCH

Women's History Month. Started in 1987, Women's History Month commemorates and encourages the study, observance and celebration of the vital role of women in American history and society.

[Women's History Month](#) began as a smaller "Women's History Week" on March 7, 1982, and was later petitioned by the National Women's History Project to become a month-long celebration. The month of March officially became Women's History Month in 1987 and gives us the opportunity to acknowledge the historical contributions of women in the United States.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, was established to increase awareness and understanding of issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Learn more [here](#).

March 1: Zero Discrimination Day. Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated by UNAIDS, the United Nations' HIV/AIDS Program, in December 2013. The following year, the UN and other global organizations officially celebrated the day on March 1st, 2014 to promote everyone's right to live a full life with dignity regardless of age, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, skin color, height, weight, profession, education, and beliefs. Learn more [here](#).

March 8: International Women's Day. First observed in 1911 in Germany, it has now become a major global celebration honoring women's economic, political, and social achievements. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity and women's well-being in all aspects of life. Learn more [here](#).

March 25: Remembrance Day of the Victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. For over 400 years, more than 15 million men, women, and children were the victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade, one of the darkest chapters in human history. Every year on 25 March, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade offers the opportunity to honor and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. The International Day also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice today. Learn more [here](#).

March 31: International Day of Trans Visibility. A time to celebrate transgender people around the globe. It is a day to celebrate the lives and contributions of trans people, while also drawing attention to the poverty, discrimination, and violence the community faces.

Learn more from [GLAAD.org](https://www.glaad.org).

APRIL

Celebrate Diversity Month, started in 2004, is a time to recognize and celebrate the beauty of our unique cultures, backgrounds, and traditions. By appreciating our similarities and differences, the month aims to support people in fostering a deeper understanding of others, regardless of who they are, what they are, or how they live. It's also an opportunity to increase diversity in the workplace and academic fields. Learn more [here](#).

National Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month (SAAM) recognizes the ongoing need to put an end to the crime of sexual assault. April is also a time to acknowledge the resilience of those impacted by sexual assault including survivors and victims, as well as advocates and professionals supporting survivors, and to ensure that our homes, places of learning and work are safe for all.

Explore the [history of Sexual Assault Awareness Month](#) and [Boston Area Rape Crisis Center \(BARCC\) resources](#).

National Arab American Heritage Month honors the history, culture, and customs of people with Arab heritage, and their contributions to society. Learn more about [National Arab American Heritage Month](#).

April 2: World Autism Awareness Day. Encourages Member States of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about people within the Autism Spectrum, and celebrate and recognize people living with Autism. Autism-friendly events and educational activities take place all month to increase understanding and acceptance and foster worldwide support. Learn more at [Autismspeaks.org](#).

April 7: World Health Day. Part of the World Health Organization's mission to advocate for "Health for All" - it is a wide-drive to support countries in moving towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Learn more [here](#).

April 11: LGBTQIA+ Day of Silence on which students take a daylong vow of silence to protest the actual silencing of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students and their straight allies due to bias and harassment. Learn more [glsen.org](#) (Day of no-silence).

April 22: Earth Day promotes peace and sustainability of planet Earth, worldwide events are held to show support of environmental protection of the earth. Learn more [here](#).

MAY

Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the United States where we pay tribute to the generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders who have enriched America's history and are instrumental in its future success. 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.

The AAPI umbrella term includes cultures from the entire Asian continent—including East, Southeast and South Asia—and the Pacific Islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. As of the 2020 U.S. Census, there were about 20.6 million people of Asian or Pacific Islander descent in the United States. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), AAPI people make up about 7 percent of the total U.S. population.

Learn more about the [history of Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#) and explore [AAPI Heritage Month Resources](#).

Jewish American Heritage Month in May recognizes Jewish contributions to American culture, history, military, science, government, and more. In 2006, President George W. Bush [proclaimed May as Jewish American Heritage Month](#). This was a result of a concerted effort by American Jewish leaders to introduce resolutions in both the U.S. Senate and the House urging the President to proclaim a month specifically recognizing Jews in America and their contributions to the United States.

Learn more about [Jewish American Heritage Month](#).

Mental Health Awareness Month was established in 1949 to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness in Americans' lives, and to celebrate recovery from mental illness. Mental health is essential for a person's overall health. Prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can recover from mental disorders and live full and productive lives.

Learn more about [Mental Health Awareness Month](#)

MAY

May 3: World Press Freedom Day. Celebrates the fundamental principles of freedom of the press, to evaluate press freedom (and lack thereof) from around the world, and to defend the media from attacks on their independence to report and speak about their nation's policies, government, and actions. It also is meant to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. Learn more [here](#).

May 15: International Day of Families. Although families all over the world have transformed greatly over the past decades in terms of their structure, the United Nations still recognizes the family as the basic unit of society. The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families and to increase knowledge of the social, economic and demographic processes affecting them. It has inspired a series of awareness-raising events, including national family days. In many countries, this day is an opportunity to highlight different areas of interest and importance to families, their beliefs, and their culture. Learn more [here](#).

May 17: International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOTB). Created in 2004 to draw the attention of policymakers, opinion leaders, social movements, the public and the media to the violence and discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ people internationally. It calls for LGBTQIA+ communities and allies to mobilize on a worldwide scale. Learn more [here](#).

JUNE

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTQ) Pride Month, established to recognize the impact that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals have had on the world. Pride Month is currently celebrated each year in the month of June to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan. The Stonewall Uprising was a tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. LGBT groups celebrate this special time with pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost to hate crimes and HIV/AIDS, and other group gatherings. The last Sunday in June is Gay Pride Day. Learn more about [Pride Month](#), [Boston Pride for the People](#), and explore resources [here](#).

June 5: World Environment Day. United Nation's principal vehicle for encouraging awareness and action for the protection of our environment. Learn more [here](#).

June 12: Pulse Night of Remembrance. Annual day of US remembrance for the loss of 49 people, the majority identified as LGBTQIA+, in the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida on 12 June 2016.

June 19: Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day. It is observed as a public holiday in 14 U.S. states. This celebration honors the day in 1865 when slaves in Texas and Louisiana finally heard they were free, two months after the end of the Civil War. June 19, therefore, became the day of emancipation for thousands of Blacks.

More info: On "Freedom's Eve," or the eve of January 1, 1863, enslaved and free African Americans gathered in churches and private homes across the country awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. At the stroke of midnight, prayers were answered as all enslaved people in the Confederate States were declared legally free. Union soldiers, many of whom were black, marched onto plantations and across cities in the South reading small copies of the Emancipation Proclamation and spreading the news of freedom in Confederate States. Only through the [Thirteenth Amendment](#) did emancipation end slavery throughout the United States.

Yet, not everyone in Confederate territory would immediately be free. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control. As a result, in the westernmost Confederate state of Texas, enslaved people would not be free until much later. Freedom finally came on June 19, 1865, when some 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas. The army announced that the more than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state, were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "[Juneteenth](#)," by the newly freed people in Texas. Info from the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#).

JUNE

June 28: Stonewall Riots Anniversary. To remember the Stonewall Riots that are described as the start of the LGBTQIA+ Liberation Movement in the United States. June 28, 1969 marks the beginning of the Stonewall Uprising, a series of events between police and LGBTQ+ protesters which stretched over six days. It was not the first time police raided a gay bar, and it was not the first time LGBTQ+ people fought back, but the events that would unfold over the next six days would fundamentally change the discourse surrounding LGBTQ+ activism in the United States. Learn more [here](#).

JULY

Disability Pride Month. The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990, a landmark law that prohibited discrimination against people with disabilities. In that same year, Boston held the first Disability Pride Day.

People with disabilities are the largest and most diverse minority group within the population, representing all abilities, ages, races, ethnicities, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. 1-in-4 adults in the United States have a disability. Disability pride is defined as accepting and honoring each person's uniqueness and seeing it as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity.

The month is a chance to honor each person's uniqueness as "a natural and beautiful part of human diversity," according to [America's Disability Community](#).

July 14: International Non-Binary Day. Annual day celebrating the contributions of non-binary people and focusing on the issues affecting them, as well as raising awareness on what non-binary is and means. Learn more [here](#).

July 18: Nelson Mandela International Day, launched in recognition of Nelson Mandela's birthday on July 18, 2009, via [unanimous decision of the UN General Assembly](#). It was inspired by a call Nelson Mandela made a year earlier, for the next generation to take on the burden of leadership in addressing the world's social injustices when he said "It is in your hands now". It is more than a celebration of "Madiba's" life and legacy. It is a global movement to honor his life's work and act to change the world for the better. Learn more [here](#).

July 26: Disability Independence Day, which marks the anniversary of the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Learn more [here](#).

AUGUST

August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. Promotes and protects the rights of the world's indigenous population. This day also recognizes the achievements and contributions that Indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.

There are an estimated 476 million indigenous peoples in the world living across 90 countries. They make up less than 5 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 per cent of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures.

Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. Learn more [here](#).

“On this annual observance, let us commit to fully realizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the rights to self-determination and to traditional lands, territories and resources.”

~UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

August 19: World Humanitarian Day. World Humanitarian Day is a day dedicated to recognize humanitarian personnel and those who have lost their lives working for humanitarian causes. Learn more [here](#).

August 26: Women's Equality Day, commemorates the August 26, 1920 certification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution that gave women the right to vote. Congresswoman Bella Abzug first introduced a proclamation for Women's Equality Day in 1971. Since that time, every president has published a proclamation recognizing August 26 as Women's Equality Day. Learn more [here](#).

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[Access the full annual visual calendar PDF here.](#)