AAPI Heritage Month

Dear Vanderbilt community,

The month of May is Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month — not to be mistaken with “history” month, as heritage puts particular emphasis on our active engagement and reflexivity to the cultural and historical contributions of AAPIs in the United States.

As a mixed-raced Filipina who was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the States as a child, I was often encouraged to leave overt traces of that heritage behind if I wanted to be successful as an “American.” I dutifully followed my mom, a Filipina immigrant, in her instruction to stop speaking Tagalog and to pick up books by white Western authors. I watched her journalism career on the Filipinx front lines of the Marcos era and People’s Power devolve into merely answering phones in the states — and then, because of her accent, to quieter administrative work — and I watched her trademark short hair grow steadily long, not knowing till much later that it was because she had been denied service from salons.

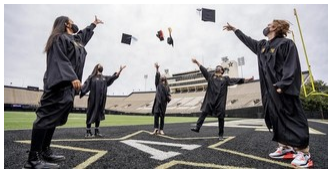
Unfortunately, my story isn’t uncommon. Every time I give workshops at AAPI conferences and cultural centers, many under the AAPI umbrella talk about the impact and enduring histories of colonialism and cultural amnesia that had pressed so many of us into agreeable ahistorical citizens. Assimilation and erasure sterilized our heritages’ unique gifts and concealed these contributions to American history by going undocumented, undertaught or ignored. It left many of our youth less empowered, our elders, quieter.

Though the pandemic has illuminated that AAPIs still struggle with being viewed as both foreign and domestic, I'm happy to see intergenerational groups increasingly taking pride and continued education in AAPI heritage and the contributions of our AAPI elders. What's both a blessing and a burden is that sometimes this way of *seeing* requires a closer look—not just of the magnitude of contributions from the Amy Tans, Larry Itliongs and Yuri Kochiyamas of our American histories, but of the unnamed Chinese railroad workers who contributed to such fortunes that helped launch universities including Vanderbilt; the local AAPI Nashville leaders who continue to mobilize financial, artistic and educational efforts toward broader collectivist care; and I think back, even, to my graduate school days of sifting through archives for any trace of the Filipinx-American laborers and thinkers whose documented lives would ultimately disappear under the flashy headlines of a new building or innovation. Thankfully, with the coming advent of Vanderbilt's Asian American Studies program, we'll need less of our imaginations to fill these silences and know these names.

AAPI Heritage Month invites us to really see the many different strands of contributions from our AAPI communities and reflect on how those contributions shape and empower us today. What's more, we continue to renew our vision—just as Grace Lee Boggs reminded us to deepen our democracy in times of crisis—by looking even further into the intersections of AAPI heritage and the broader connections that bind us to mutual liberation.

Stephanie Mahnke, Ph.D. (she/her)
Director of the Office of LGBTQI Life

Vanderbilt University celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month



Get Connected: Upcoming Events

HR Employee Learning & Engagement experiences for 2022

4/28: The Future Is Female: But We Black? —

May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month. Learn about what various student organizations across campus are doing to promote and bring awareness to the community's many contributions to Vanderbilt. Read More +

Daniel Diermeier formally installed as Vanderbilt University's ninth chancellor

In keynote remarks delivered at an investiture officially marking his tenure as Vanderbilt's ninth chancellor, Daniel Diermeier urged the university community to seize this aspirational moment and join him in building "The Great University" for today's world. Read More +

Lawson helps launch Vanderbilt institute rooted in nonviolent social change

The Rev. James Lawson returned to Vanderbilt University for the April 7 launch of an institute that carries forward his commitment to achieving justice and equality through nonviolent movements and strategies. Read More +

Lunch & Learn with Nicole Joseph and Cynthia Chapple

4/29: Queer Prom

5/1: Final day of exhibition: "On the Horizon: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Pérez Art Museum Miami"

5/3:VUSN School Life Committee presents "Nurse Mental Well-Being: Hope, Health and Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation"

5/4: Inclusive Book Group will discuss "Hamnet"

5/4: Lavender Graduation Ceremony

5/10: VUGlobalCitizens Graduation Recognition Celebration

5/10: InclusAbility Graduation Recognition Celebration

5/10: MilitaryVU Graduation Recognition Celebration

5/11: APIDA Graduate Recognition Ceremony

5/11: Network First-Gen Graduation Recognition Celebration

5/11: PersistVU Graduation Recognition Celebration

5/11: Work-Life Workshop: "Navigating Gender Bias in Professional Communication"

Emilie Townes to conclude deanship of Vanderbilt Divinity School in 2023

Emilie M. Townes, who has led the reenvisioning of theological education at Vanderbilt Divinity School while increasing the visibility of the institution's historical commitment to seeking justice, will step down as dean effective June 30, 2023. Read More +

Neurodiversity Inspired Science and Engineering graduate trainee program now accepting applications

Applications are open through June 15 for the Neurodiversity Inspired Science and Engineering graduate trainee program. The NISE program engages students across STEM disciplines in the development, deployment and commercialization of future of work at the human technology frontier (FW-HTF) approaches and devices that support neurodiverse individuals, and/or that are inspired by their abilities. Read More +

5/12: Black Graduation

5/17: VUSN Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office presents: BIPOC Lunch & Learn

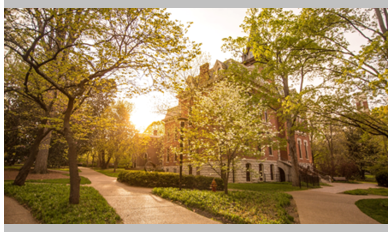
ISSS recruiting hosts for EAT program

Wednesdays: For faculty and staff — Mindful Stretch Break

COVID-19 vaccination leave available for employees accompanying children to get vaccinated

For employees and staff — Access televideo counseling services

Continuing the Conversation



WATCH: Understanding the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty: How Economic Research Can Inform Policy

WATCH: Reform for Redemption: Cyntoia

Student Care Network launches Social Justice CARE website

The Student Care Network has launched the Social Justice CARE website, where students have access to resources relative to connecting with affirming community, action that can be taken on social justice issues, resources for restoration and self-care, and education on a number of social justice-related topics. Read More +

Staff WAVE Council seeking new members

The Staff Women's Advancement and Equity Council is seeking new members. Established in January 2019, Staff WAVE works to foster an environment of equity, opportunity, fulfillment and empowerment for all women at Vanderbilt University. Nominations are being accepted through May 7. Read More +

Brown Long and Gov. Bill Haslam call for criminal justice reform

WATCH: MLK Commemorative Event keynote: Poet and author Nikky Finney

WATCH: Afro-Latinx in the Academy

WATCH: This Moment in America: How to Be an Ally and Its Meaning in a Time of Social Justice

Resources

Heritage Month

Workshops

Connect With Us

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

2022 Spring Faculty Assembly will be in person on April 28

Chancellor Daniel Diermeier and the Faculty Senate will celebrate Vanderbilt's faculty by presenting many of the university's highest honors at the 2022 Spring Faculty Assembly on Thursday, April 28. Read More +

Vanderbilt adds volleyball as a varsity sport

Vanderbilt University has announced the addition of women's volleyball as the university's 17th varsity sport. Enabled by the transformational Vandy United campaign, the sport will begin competition in the 2025–26 academic year. Read More +

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