

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY THE JOINT DEI
COMMITTEE

Table of Contents

- Making Connections Through DEI Discourse. P.2
- Did You Know? P.5
- Words And Concepts of the Month P.7
- This Month... P.10
- Days of the Month P.12
- Independence Days Around the World P.18
- Call for Submissions, Feedback and Suggestions P.20



Making Connections Through DEI Discourse

Disability Rights and The Civil Rights Movement

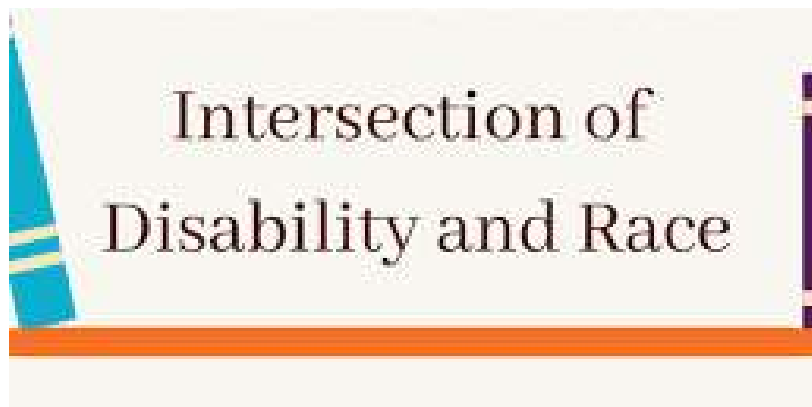
“Disability rights initiatives have often taken a colorblind approach [...] and then diversity initiatives do not tend to think of disability as an aspect of diversity. [BIPOC people with disabilities] are stuck in the middle because our needs cannot be met through a single-issue lens. Rather an intersectional focus is needed to understand how our multiple identities impact our lives”

Dr. Angel Miles (Policy expert at Access Living in Chicago)

The American disability rights movement has been significantly influenced by the civil rights work of Black Americans, some of whom played pivotal roles in both movements. Black Americans with disabilities have worked to bring about good change for historically marginalized individuals and groups for decades. In order for us to understand these contributions, it is important for us to come to terms with how disability is connected to race. So let us briefly start from a historical perspective.

It's common to imagine racism and ableism as opposing oppressive systems that function independently to maintain social hierarchies. This style of thinking about the world ignores not only the realities of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) who have disabilities but also fails to look at how racism was built upon pathologizing (representing someone's characteristics as a disease or something to be medically treated) race among other things.

Disability and race scholars, as well as disability and racial justice activists try to reconcile these connections in order to center those most marginalized within racial justice and disability movements. One example is the acknowledgement of the impact that Brad Lomax had on the disability rights movement. Lomax became an important figure when he joined in the 1977 occupation of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare offices (HEW) in San Francisco California. The goal of this sit-in was to convince the government of enforcing a section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that had been ignored. Section 504, which was modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawed the discrimination of people with disabilities for recipients of federal aid.





Known as the 504 sit-in, this demonstration became the largest peaceful occupation of a federal building in the nation's history. Lomax was both a disabilities activist and a racial justice activist. He realized, as a Black wheelchair user, that people with disabilities were regularly denied access to education, access to housing, and to the workplace, especially if they were also Black. Today, we talk about this connection as an intersection – when two systems of oppression coalesce to inform the lived experience of a single person. Misunderstanding these intersecting systems of oppression limit our efforts towards equity and inclusion, especially when it comes to people with disabilities that also happen to be Black, LGBTQIA+ and/or immigrants among many others. For example, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2021) Black students with disabilities are more likely to experience segregated, restricted placements than White students with disabilities.

According to Vilissa Thompson, disability consultant, writer, and activist, “the disability community has a very stark racism problem and has a very stark issue with creating space for Black disabled folks and other disabled folks of color to understand disability that is not whitewashed.” Contributions to the disability movement by people like Lomax are not remembered and celebrated as much by disability rights communities. When they are recognized, more often than not, the racism that Black people with disabilities experience is largely ignored.

Talila “TL” Lewis, a community lawyer, educator and organizer recognized as a 2015 White House Champion of Change, works on the intersections between the nature of ableism (the system of power which oppresses, devalues, and discriminates against people with disabilities) and anti-Black racism. TL recounts the societal presumption that Black people in the U.S. lacked the intellectual capacity to participate or compete on an equal footing in society with White Americans, which was the foundation upon which the economic system of slavery was built. The emergence of various diseases that were thought of only being found in Black people has proven this theory to be true. For instance, drapetomania, a disorder that ‘irrationally forced’ enslaved people to desire freedom, and attempt to escape, was described as “much an illness of the mind as any other kind of mental alienation” (Price, 1997).

The example above, among many others shows how ableism and racism have been intimately interconnected for centuries. Racism and ableism together impact political and cultural institutions, our work and workplaces, our interpersonal relationships and our beliefs around value and disposability. So, as we learn together, we will continue to unpack the connections that disability rights have with other isms (for example, racism and sexism). Even though we cannot automatically stop living within existing societal structures of oppression, we are able to dig deeper and critically analyze the histories and belief systems in which these structures are built so we can better understand how to dismantle them.





In order to determine more accurately who is being excluded from disability activism and why—as well as what steps future disability rights strategies can take to more intentionally center racism/ableism in its framework—the future of disability rights calls for advocacy and consciousness that holds racism/ableism and intersecting systems of oppression at its center. The future viability of disability rights is threatened by the lack of a critical racism/ableism consciousness in its approach.

There are numerous opportunities to work in solidarity and promote systemic change while bringing attention to systems of oppression. Disability, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other identity markers, intersect to shape systemic barriers. With this written piece, I want to inspire each of us to consider how we might actively work on a daily basis to promote the voices of people with disabilities living with other intersecting identities, and how do we use our work in our, policies, practices, and organizational culture. Ask yourselves; how do we prioritize and learn from minority perspectives, experiences, and sources of information? How do we change the structures of privilege and power that prevent equity and inclusion for all?

Work Cited

Price, Margaret. “Defining Mental Disability.” *The Disability Studies Reader*. By Lennard J. Davis. New York: Routledge, 1997. 298. Print.

McCoy McDeid , Reyma. Sherwin, Liz. “IL Movement and African Americans: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.” 2016.

Schalk, Sami. *Black Disability Politics*. Duke University Press, 2022.



Did You Know?

Bias, Conscious and Unconscious & Microaggressions

Bias

Bias is often characterized as stereotypes about people based on the group to which they belong and/or based on an immutable physical characteristic they possess, such as their gender, race, disability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This type of bias can have harmful real-world outcomes. People may or may not be aware that they hold these biases.

Conscious Bias or Explicit Bias

The attitudes or beliefs someone knowingly holds. In other words, individuals are aware of their attitudes or beliefs and express them directly.

Unconscious Bias or Implicit Bias

Unintentional or automatic mental associations an individual has. Unconscious bias operates outside of a person's awareness and may not directly correlate with their beliefs and values. Unconscious bias is expressed indirectly since it seeps into a person's attitudes and behaviors, causing an individual to make assumptions based on limited information to fill in gaps and make decisions.

Microaggressions

Defined as the everyday, subtle, intentional – and oftentimes unintentional – interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups. The difference between microaggressions and overt discrimination or macroaggressions, is that people who commit microaggressions might not even be aware of them.

Learn More by Watching the Following Videos
Click on the title to access the link



How to Reduce Bias in your Workplace

By
Kim Scott & Trier Bryant

We all have bias -- especially the unconscious kind -- and it's preventing us from doing our best work. Gone unchecked, bias can make employees feel resentful, frustrated and silenced, and it can even lead to outright discrimination and harassment. Check out three key ways to reduce bias at work, according to Just Work cofounders Kim Scott and Trier Bryant.

Did You Know?

Bias, Conscious and Unconscious & Microaggressions



How to Overcome our Biases? Walk Boldly Toward Them

By
Vernā Myers

Our biases can be dangerous, even deadly – as we've seen in the cases of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner, in Staten Island, New York. Diversity advocate Vernā Myers looks closely at some of the subconscious attitudes we hold toward out-groups. She makes a plea to all people: Acknowledge your biases. Then move toward, not away from, the groups that make you uncomfortable. In a funny, impassioned, important talk, she shows us how.



How Prejudiced Are You? Recognizing and Combating Unconscious Bias

By
Jennefer Witter

Overt racism is easy to identify. But what about unconscious bias – soft prejudices that we all have, but of which we are basically unaware? In today's heated social and global climate, this lack of awareness can deeply impact your professional and personal life, as well as the way you unintentionally communicate and think. It can even have serious economic ramifications. This provocative talk will take a deep dive into the subject, where you will confront your own biases and see how you – regardless of race, status, income or education – have been a victim of unconscious bias.

Words & Concepts of the Month

Intersectionality

For this month's concept, I want to start by broadly explaining Intersectionality, where it comes from and what it means. Intersectionality will also be the framework/worldview/lens through which we understand DEI work. So even though I am just outlining the concept, I want you all to know that this will inform how we understand identity-based inequities.

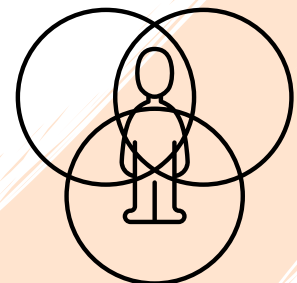
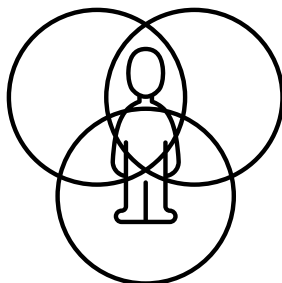
I am also linking a TedTalk from the one and only Kimberlé Crenshaw. In the video, she will ask the audience to participate in an exercise. I strongly recommend you use this video to conduct the same exercise on your own. I have used it in my seminars and have found that it always has an eye-opening effect on my non-Black students.

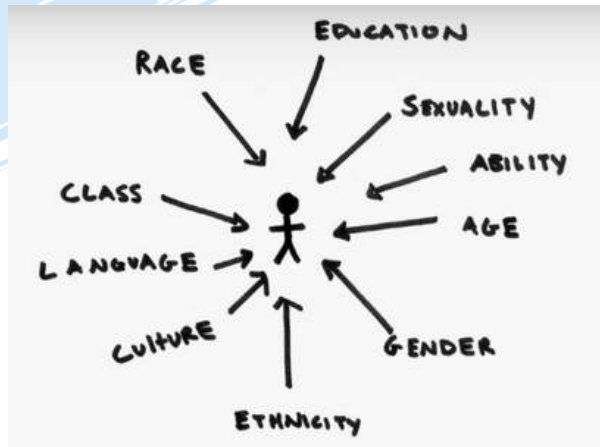
So, what is Intersectionality?

Intersectionality is a framework, or a way of understanding the world around us that exposes how different forms of discrimination/inequality are connected to each other and inform each other. This results in many identity-based roadblocks being unaddressed by your typical social advocacy and/or DEI.

This understanding of how identity-based discrimination takes place was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 (yes, thaaaat long ago). Kimberlé Crenshaw is a critical race theorist, law professor, and legal scholar that introduced the concept to explain racial discrimination that Black women experience in the courts and workplace. Kimberlé Crenshaw points out how Black women's experiences can only be understood by uncovering the intersection of both race and gender.

At the time when she introduced the term to expand legal studies, she had taken on the case of a Black woman who was discriminated against in the workplace because of being a woman AND being Black. However, the courts would only recognize, or take on one or the other. The judge dismissed her case on the basis that she could not file two complaints at the same time, against the same workplace.





What the judge failed to see is that the Black woman was being discriminated against because of BOTH identities (please watch the video for information on this case). Separating both identities fails deeply in understanding the experiences Black women face.

Intersectionality is a necessary lens to analyze social hierarchies, power imbalances and discrimination.

Here's the thing, even though intersectionality started to understand the legal and professional roadblocks that Black women face, it is not the only framework that addresses this complexity. Meaning that this way of understanding the world around us is so important, and so needed, that other scholars, from many academic fields have theorized similarly.

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins has identified concepts like intersectionality in early work by Black, Latinx, Indigenous and Asian American feminists (some are Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and Gloria E. Anzaldua). Since the introduction of the concept of intersectionality (1990s) intersectional feminists have explored the impact of social hierarchy and inequality related to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, age, disability, class and citizenship among others.

How do we translate this information into practice? Here are some initial suggestions (not all):

1. Self-reflexivity, recognize your own identity. The experiences of Black women are very different from those of a White woman, Black man or White man. The experiences of Black LGBTQIA+ are ALSO very different. Recognizing that these differences exist can help us build empathy, understand struggles, and take necessary steps to improve the lives of those who are discriminated against based on identity.
2. Self-reflexivity also means that we need to question every stereotype that comes up. Every single individual embodies more than one identity (for example, a single person can be Black, part of the LGBTQIA+ community and Neurodivergent at the same time). Oversimplifying people's identity is very harmful, we are all complicated and multilayered beings. So before making assumptions, ask yourself, and consider that they might have an identity that you are not aware of.



The Urgency of Intersectionality

Trigger and Content Warning: The content and discussion in this video will necessarily engage with racism and violence against Black Women by authorities. After minute 16:00 there is graphic or intense content. For a moment to decompress, for any comments or concerns, please contact me at snoveiri@ahrc.org or 516.626.1000, ext. 1210.

Please, honestly watch the video, and even if you are watching alone, participate in her activity, you might be surprised

“The way the gender of [B]lack women is constructed differs from constructions of white femininity because it is also subject to racism” (Hazel V. Carby, p. 112).

This Month...

Gender Equality Month

Commemorated every March, Gender Equality Month brings awareness to gender biases and challenges. Historically, gender inequality has been framed as a binary, but gender inequalities have effects across the gender spectrum. Gender Equality Month is an opportunity to notice and strategize on continued disruption of gender bias, discrimination, and inequity within personal views, laws, policies, institutions, and communities. Today, gender inequalities exist within career and compensation opportunities, particularly in technology, science, and financial industries; in marriage laws; and in healthcare.



[Learn more](#)

Women's History Month

Women's History Month had its origins as a national celebration in 1981 when Congress passed Pub. L. 97-28 which authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as "Women's History Week." Throughout the next five years, Congress continued to pass joint resolutions designating a week in March as "Women's History Week." In 1987 after being petitioned by the National Women's History Project, Congress passed Pub. L. 100-9 which designated the month of March 1987 as "Women's History Month."



[Learn more](#)

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM), a time when we join with our partners to educate the public about developmental disabilities and highlight the many ways people with and without disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities.



[Learn more](#)

Greek American Heritage Month

March is Greek-American Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the core components of Greek culture and ideals. Also known as Hellenic History Month, the celebration coincides with National Greek Independence Day on March 25.

[Learn more](#)



Irish American Heritage Month

The month of March was chosen to coincide with St. Patrick's Day on March 17, which is both a Catholic religious holiday and a national holiday in Ireland that has evolved into a celebration of all things Irish. The world's first St. Patrick's Day parade occurred in 1762. This month, we recognize and celebrate the nearly 33 million Americans with Irish ancestry and their tremendous contributions to US culture and history with a selection of online programs, resources, reading recommendations, and more.

[Learn more](#)



Days of the Month

March 1 Employee Appreciation Day

Employee Appreciation Day is an event, observed on the first Friday in March, meant for employers to give thanks or recognition to their employees. It was created by Dr. Bob Nelson who was a founding member of Recognition Professionals International in 1995.

[Learn more](#)



March 2 US Citizenship to Puerto Ricans

In Puerto Rico, March 2 marks the anniversary of when, in 1917, the U.S. Congress granted U.S. citizenship to anyone born in the islands. But for some Puerto Ricans, American Citizenship Day is a grim reminder of the unequal citizenship rights that deny them access to federal disability benefits because they are residents of Puerto Rico.

[Learn More](#)



March 8 International Women's Day

International Women's Day is a global holiday celebrated annually on March 8 as a focal point in the women's rights movement. IWD gives focus to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence and abuse against women.

[Learn more](#)



March 8 Maha Shivarati

Maha Shivratri festival is celebrated on Chaturdashi Tithi of Krishna Paksha in the month of Phalgun. This year, the festival of Mahashivratri is going to be celebrated on March 8, 2024. Mahashivratri festival is celebrated across India with immense happiness and enthusiasm.

[Learn more](#)



March 10 Ramadan begins

This year, Ramadan is expected to begin on Sunday March 10, 2024, and end on Tuesday April 9th, 2024, depending on the sighting of the moon. Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the blessed month of Ramadan. This year (2024) Eid al-Fitr is expected to be celebrated on the evening of 9th April 2024. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community.



[Learn more](#)

March 10 Harriet Tubman Day

Although Harriet Tubman Day commemorates the anniversary of her passing on March 10, 1913, historic experts have determined her birth occurred during the first half of March. Harriet Tubman was born to Ben Ross and Harriet “Rit” Green, and given the name Araminta “Minty” Ross at birth.



[Learn more](#)

March 14 Equal Pay Day

This date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. Equal Pay Day was originated by the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) in 1996 as a public awareness event to illustrate the gap between men's and women's wages.



[Learn more](#)

March 17 St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day, an Irish and Irish-American holiday commemorating the death, as legend has it, of Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, on March 17, circa 492. It is also the occasion, in many American cities, for celebrating Irish heritage with a parade.



[Learn more](#)

March 18 Neurodiversity Celebration Week

When it comes to inclusion, neurodiversity refers to a world where neurological differences are recognized and respected as all other human variations. Depending on how our brains are wired we think, move, process information and communicate in different ways. Many people in our community use neurodiversity as an umbrella term used to describe alternative thinking styles such as Dyslexia, DCD (Dyspraxia), Dyscalculia, Autism and ADHD. But regardless of labels, neurodiversity is about recognizing those who think differently.

[Learn more](#)



March 20-23 Nowruz (Persian)

Nowruz, which translates into “new day” in Farsi, originated in ancient Persia, more than 3,000 years ago. It marks the traditional Iranian New Year, which begins on the vernal equinox and celebrates the arrival of spring. It is a 13-day celebration that, this year, starts on March 20, 2023 at 2:24 p.m. (PDT).

[Learn more](#)



March 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN)

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on the day the police in Sharpeville, South Africa, opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid "pass laws" in 1960.

[Learn more](#)



March 21 World Down Syndrome Day

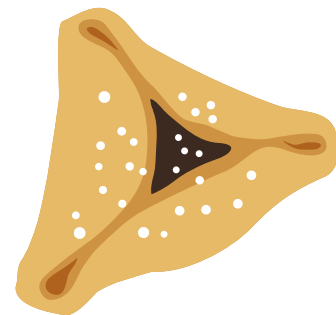
World Down Syndrome Day is marked each year on March 21, beginning in 2007. The 21st day of March was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome. The General Assembly of the United Nations has decided to observe it each year since 2012.

[Learn more](#)



March 23 – 24 Purim

The festival of Purim commemorates the Divinely orchestrated salvation of the Jewish people in the ancient Persian Empire from Haman’s plot “to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day.” It is celebrated with Megillah readings, gifts of food, charity, feasting, and merriment.



[Learn more](#)

March 24 Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is the Christian moveable feast that falls on the Sunday before Easter. The feast commemorates Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in each of the four canonical Gospels. Palm Sunday marks the first day of Holy Week; in Western Christianity, this is the beginning of the last week of the solemn season of Lent, preceding Eastertide, while in Eastern Christianity, Holy Week commences after the conclusion of Great Lent.



[Learn more](#)

March 25 Holi

In 2024, Holi begins on March 24 (Holika Dahan) and officially takes place on March 25. The holiday changes dates from year to year because it corresponds with the twelfth month of Phalguna in the Hindu calendar, which is actually a network of calendars tied to lunar and solar cycles.



[Learn more](#)



March 25 International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The United Nations' (UN) International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is commemorated on 25 March each year. The day honours and remembers those who suffered and died as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade, which has been called "the worst violation of human rights in history", in which over 400 years more than 15 million men, women and children were the victims. The transatlantic slave trade, often known as the triangular trade, connected the economies of three continents. It is estimated that between 15 to 20 million people, men, women and children, were deported from their homes and sold as slaves in the different slave trading systems. The yearly remembrance serves not only as an opportunity to reflect on those that suffered and perished at the hands of slavery, but also as an occasion to raise awareness to the world's youth about the dangers of racism and prejudice.

[Learn more](#)



March 29 Good Friday

March 29. Good Friday is a Christian religious holiday commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his death at Calvary. The holiday is observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum on the Friday preceding Easter Sunday.

[Learn more](#)



March 31 Easter

Easter, also called Pascha (Aramaic, Greek, Latin) or Resurrection Sunday, is a Christian festival and cultural holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred on the third day of his burial following his crucifixion by the Romans at Calvary. It is the culmination of the Passion of Jesus Christ, preceded by Lent (or Great Lent), a 40-day period of fasting, prayer, and penance.

[Learn more](#)

March 31 Cesar Chavez Day

Cesar Chavez Day is a U.S. federal commemorative holiday, proclaimed by President Barack Obama in 2014. The holiday celebrates the birth and legacy of the civil rights and labor movement activist Cesar Chavez on March 31 every year.

[Learn more](#)

March 31 Transgender Day of Visibility

Trans Day of Visibility takes place every 31 March. It marks a time to celebrate trans and non-binary people, and to raise awareness of the discrimination faced by the community worldwide. It also provides an opportunity for trans and non-binary people to feel seen through positive and realistic representation – and for allies to learn more about how they can stand in solidarity. Visibility is crucial. Without exposure to others who think, feel, and live in a similar way to us – especially for those who exist outside of society’s norms – we can feel lost and alone. Visibility allows community to bloom, and for people with shared lived experiences to form bonds across borders.

[Learn more](#)



Independence Days Around The World

March 6 Ghana Independence Day

After 83 years of British colonial rule, Ghana established itself as a free African nation on 6th March 1957. Today, over 30 million people and over 90 ethnic groups call this dazzling sub-Saharan country home. And another 1.7 million Ghanaians living abroad frequently return to visit family and friends.

[Click to learn more](#)



March 12 Mauritius Independence Day

Mauritius Independence Day is a national holiday celebrated annually on March 12th to commemorate the country's independence from British colonial rule in 1968. This day marks a significant moment in the history of Mauritius and is celebrated with great enthusiasm by the people of the country.

[Click to learn more](#)



March 15 Hungary Revolution Day

The holiday celebrates the 1848 Revolution that led to the Dual Monarchy (Austro-Hungarian Empire) which survived until WWI. After that he continued as an independent monarchy ruled not by a king, but by an admiral.

[Click to learn more](#)



March 20 Tunisia Independence Day

Tunisian independence was a process that occurred from 1952 to 1956 between France and a separatist movement, led by Habib Bourguiba. He became the first Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tunisia after negotiations with France successfully had brought an end to the colonial protectorate and led to independence.

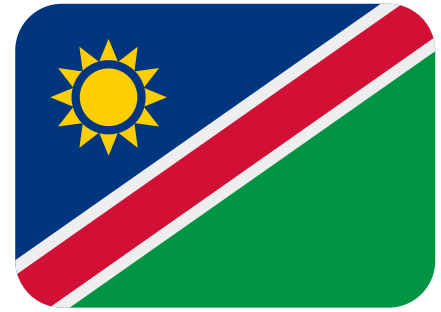
[Click to learn more](#)



March 21 Namibia Independence Day

Namibia Independence Day is marked on March 21 every year to commemorate the day the nation became a sovereign state. Namibia is a country located in the southern part of Africa that has seen many shifts in political power over the years. Namibia gained its full independence from South Africa in 1990 and got its recognition as an independent nation. This independence day is marked as a national holiday in Namibia, and the day is celebrated with parades and political ceremonies attended by the top leaders.

[Click to learn more](#)



March 25 Greece Independence Day

Greek Independence Day is celebrated annually on March 25th to commemorate the beginning of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1821. This event marks the beginning of the modern Greek state and will be celebrated across the country with cultural events and religious ceremonies showcasing the rich history and traditions of Greece.

[Click to learn more](#)



March 26 Bangladesh Independence Day

The Independence Day of Bangladesh is celebrated every year on March 26. It is the national holiday of Bangladesh that commemorates the country's independence from Pakistan in 1971. On the morning of March 26, 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan, which were known at the time as East Pakistan and West Pakistan, respectively. The day is characterized by parades, speeches, fairs, and ceremonial events to commemorate that historic day in 1971.

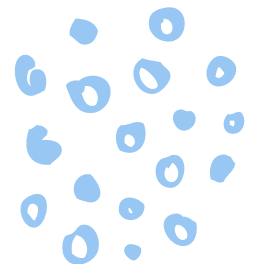
[Click to learn more](#)



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
DEI Officer
snoveiri@ahrc.org