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American Spaces

BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

February 2024

With just over 600 locations, ECA's Office of American Spaces engages people worldwide through content, resources, and programming. American Spaces support U.S. foreign policy goals and strategically promote public diplomacy.

We are already six weeks into the new year--hard to believe! This issue contains new ideas for new content and new programs at your American Space. We hope you enjoy this issue!

As always, thank you for sending in your comments and suggestions to americanspaces@state.gov.

Coming Home: Place, Identity, and Belonging

Anup Mahajan joined the [Office of American Spaces](#) as a [Regional Public Engagement Specialist](#) in Fall 2023. He previously served as an [EPAP \(Expanded Professional Associates Program\)](#) in Public Diplomacy in Sao Paulo, Brazil

and Kathmandu, Nepal. Prior to that, Anup directed a [Title VI international and foreign language education resource center](#) at The George Washington University and led global business development in the nonprofit, private, and entrepreneurial sectors in the U.S, India, and Australia. Against the backdrop of [Black History Month](#) and [Presidents' Day](#), in this month's lead story Anup reflects about the meaning of home and how it shaped who he is today.



"The famous American writer, [Ernest Hemingway](#), once wrote: 'I regarded home as a place I left behind in order to come back to it afterward.' Every time I come across these words, they resonate deeply with me. For one of life's major events called me back home recently – the passing of my father – which renewed and reawakened my sense of belonging in this world.

Growing up, I often wondered what compelled my parents to immigrate from the steamy tropics of their homeland in India to the deep, gray winters of upstate New York. For me, home was often a fluid concept – not only denoting a physical place but one connoting a sense of shared experience, as well. I was keenly aware of my identity as an [Indian-American](#): neither here nor there, but always somewhere in between. Growing up and trying to find the people whom I belong to gave me a place to call home while simultaneously reshaping my thoughts on having a [dual identity](#).

As a 5-year-old growing up in the town of [Poughkeepsie](#), I did not always know what to say. That I had only those two options connected by a hyphen was confusing. Being 'Asian Indian American' did not fit neatly in the binary cultural options given to me. I was something else, an 'other' by definition, and being an 'other' rendered me feeling rather nomadic between two worlds.

Yet, as I grew up gradually stitching together the arc of my experiences, friendships, influences, and curiosities, I began to make connections between my Indian ancestors' freedom struggle under British [colonial oppression](#) to the [African American freedom struggle](#) under centuries of slavery and involuntary servitude. These journeys to freedom are both fused and revealed in passive resistance, civil disobedience, and nonviolent philosophies. I learned that [Martin Luther King Jr. was highly influenced by the writings of Gandhi](#) and traveled to India in February 1959 for a five-week tour to deepen his understanding of Gandhi's philosophy. While there, he famously told a group of reporters gathered at the airport, 'To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim.' This knowledge absolutely rocked my world as a young and impressionable person of color.

In the [Mid-Hudson Valley](#) alone – the broader region where I grew up – historic towns and villages still tell the tales of its [original inhabitants](#) and settlers, beginning with the Munsee Lenape, Wappinger, Schaghticoke, Mohican, and Hadenosaunee (Iroquois) people. A poignant reminder that history and homes are never static, these communities' boundaries shifted significantly after the arrival of colonists, but they maintain a connection to lands in the region to this day. And elegantly nestled along the banks of the Hudson River, in [Hyde Park](#), stands the lifelong home of America's 32nd and longest-serving President, [Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#). He was a champion for the oppressed and led the nation through the Great Depression and World War II. Throughout his long, challenging tenure as president, he often returned to Hyde Park to rest, recharge, and recuperate.

In closing, I suppose for me, the relationship between place and belonging is a profoundly historical one. I've often believed that as human beings, our identities are inextricably tied to the environment and community in which we choose to operate – they can exist as a visual representation of our personalities, our heritage or values and beliefs. And perhaps that is what going home best reminds me of: that I stand in solidarity with people fighting for greater [equity and justice for all](#)."

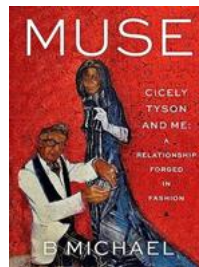
For more information about some of the topics discussed above, please also consider visiting the following institutions virtually: [the National Museum of African American History and](#)

[Culture, the South Asian American Digital Archive, and the National Museum of the American Indian.](#)

New Events and Resouces:

The **Smithsonian Institution** lists many upcoming events for [Black History Month](#) across its organization. The theme for 2024 is *African Americans and the Arts*.

Reminder about Muse--happening this Thursday!



From the **Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture**, a new book talk with B Michael about his fashion partnership with actress and activist Cicely Tyson: [NMAAHC - YouTube](#). Broadcast live on Thursday, February 15, 2024 from 7-9pm EST.

[Women's History Month](#) is soon to be upon us! The [American Spaces toolkit](#) along with resources from the Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum are available as you continue to program for this exciting month.

Two programs to highlight:

[Let's Go to the Moon and Back! To the Moon and Back \(Exploring Space Lecture\), Wednesday, March 6, 2024, 8 - 9 PM EST - Smithsonian Air & Space Museum Event](#): The lunar rocks brought home by Apollo astronauts reshaped our understanding of our Moon, the Earth, and the entire solar system. Gathering more of them is one of the most important reasons to go back to the Moon. The Artemis program is enabling lunar sample return both by humans and robots, to

places humans have never been in some the oldest, coldest places in the solar system. In this lecture, **Dr. Barbara Cohen**, NASA Goddard, will discuss the most important science from lunar samples and how we are planning for more.

In honor of Women's History Month, Julie

Blackmon's [Flatboat](#) is the inspiration for this interactive conversation with the National Gallery of Art. Join on Friday, March 15, 2024 from 1:00-2:00pm EST for a one-hour virtual session and share your observations, interpretations, questions, and ideas about this work of art.

These conversations are designed to encourage audiences to engage deeply with art, with others, and with the world around you as you hone skills in visual literacy and perspective-taking.

The program is free, open to the public, and is designed for everyone interested in talking about art. No art or art history background is required. Ages 18 and over. [Pre-registration](#) is required; due to the interactive nature of this virtual program, sessions are not recorded. It will be live captioned.

STEM & DEIA Program Highlight



In September 2023, astronaut [Nicole Mann](#), the first female indigenous person and person of Estonian heritage to travel to space with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) visited numerous locations in Estonia. Mann, who is also a United States Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel, joined NASA in 2013 as part of Astronaut Group 21 and is currently a member of the Artemis Team, which explores scientific studies of the moon and has a future goal of visiting Mars.

Partnering with American Spaces

and including USG program alumni in the planning and events

led this program to be an "out of this world" level success for many reasons. Among them, highlighting DEIA in STEM and Space programs. Diversity--as Mann highlighted during her lectures--can encompass a range of factors including gender, race, nationality, and even professional background.

How are you finding ways, such as programming with successful advocates like Nicole Mann, to inspire and engage individuals from underrepresented backgrounds at your American Space? _____

Close Up Corner!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the super viewing parties at American Spaces worldwide for the National Football League's Super Bowl. Please share your photos with americanspaces@state.gov.

U.S. Speaker Spot

As a partnership with the [Office of the U.S. Speaker Program](#), the American Spaces Newsletter is featuring selected speakers available for virtual programs with professional audiences on priority themes. For more information about the U.S. Speaker Program, and to submit a program request, please reach out to your local Public Diplomacy Section.

Upcoming speakers include:



[Susanne M. Bruyère](#) is a professor of disability studies and the academic director of the Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Bruyère's expertise is in the intersection of employment and disability, and she has held leadership

positions in national and global associations dedicated to disability advocacy. She will participate in an ECA traveling program with Saudi Arabia in April 2024.



[Kalenda Eaton](#) is an associate professor of African and African American Studies at the University of Oklahoma. She is also the director of the Oklahoma Black Homesteader Project, a program funded by the National Park Service that “seeks to recover, reevaluate, and reclaim histories of rural African Americans in Oklahoma.” Eaton can discuss African American social and cultural heritage and Black Diaspora studies. She is the author of publications on the representation of African Americans in history, literature, and popular culture and was a Fulbright Scholar in Nova Scotia.



The Office of American Spaces is excited to announce the upcoming launch of a new [eLibraryUSA](#) individual account system that will expand access to valuable resources, such as digital magazines, scholarly journals, and streaming video. These developments support our commitment to offer high quality, trustworthy information to American Spaces audiences.

[eLibraryUSA](#) is a digital collection of trusted information resources from the United States, exclusively available to American Spaces. [eLibraryUSA](#) is funded and managed by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Office of American Spaces to help posts offer access to a variety of digital resources, such as magazines, newspapers, journals,

scholarly articles, and streaming media content to support programming and engagement in American Spaces.

In 2024, the Office of American Spaces is expanding [eLibraryUSA](#) in two important ways. First, we are expanding access by providing U.S. embassies and consulates a way to offer individual [eLibraryUSA](#) accounts to American Spaces visitors and program attendees. Visitors can sign up for their own personal [eLibraryUSA](#) account in order to access digital content for free from home.

Second, we are expanding [eLibraryUSA](#) content by adding ebooks and audio books through OverDrive, a leading provider of digital books to libraries, schools, and universities in the United States. In the second half of 2024, we will add non-fiction titles that support the six pillars of American Spaces programming as well as select fiction titles to encourage country-wide, regional, and global reading initiatives.

Over the next few months we will offer training and additional resources to help American Spaces expand access to [eLibraryUSA](#) resources. Please stay tuned.

New Kanopy Films!



The Office of American Spaces has licensed several new Kanopy films over the last few months. Please review the [Kanopy](#) page through [eLibraryUSA](#) to browse and program with new titles.

One to highlight: the Academy award nominated documentary [20 Days in Mariupol](#) (photo above) about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Calendar of Events

As always, the full calendar is available on the American Spaces [website](#).

February: Black History Month - see [Resource toolkit](#)

February 2: [World Wetlands Day](#)

February 4: [International Day of Human Fraternity](#)

February 6: [International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation](#)

February 10: [World Pulses Day](#)

February 11: International Day of Women and Girls in Science

- [I am a Girl](#)
- [American Women in STEM Posters](#)

February 13: [World Radio Day](#)

February 17: [Random Act of Kindness Day](#)

February 19: [Presidents Day – Resource Toolkit](#)

February 20: **World Day of Social Justice** - See [these resources](#)

- Consider the [Civil Society Certification](#)

February 21: [International Mother Language Day](#)

March [Women's History Month](#)

March 3: **World Wildlife Day and World Hearing Day**

- [World Wildlife Toolkit](#)
- [Environmental Sustainability Toolkit](#)
- [Environmental Diplomacy Simulations](#)
- [World Wildlife Day](#)
- [World Hearing Day](#)
- [Supporting Students with Communication Access Realtime Translation](#)

March 4: [World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development](#)

See [Attract STEM Talent Toolkits](#)

March 8: [International Women's Day](#)

March 10: [International Day of Women Judges](#) - see [Empowering Women Leaders Discussion Guide](#)

March 14: [Pi Day](#) - See [International Day of Mathematics](#)

March 20: [International Day of Happiness](#)

March 21:

- [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)
- [International Day of Forests](#)
- [World Down Syndrome Day](#)

March 22:

- [World Water Day](#)
- [Environmental Sustainability Toolkit](#)
- [Environmental Diplomacy Simulations](#)
- [Module on Gender and International Waters](#)

March 23: [World Meteorological Day](#)

March 24: [World Tuberculosis Day](#)

March 25: [International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#)

April is Arab-American Heritage Month (See Toolkit) and Jazz Appreciation Month (See Smithsonian Jazz)

April 2: [World Autism Day](#)

April 4: [International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action](#)

April 5: [International Day of Conscience](#)

April 6: [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#)

April 7: [World Health Day](#) See [Health Toolkits](#)

April 7 - 13: [National Library Week](#)

April 10: [Siblings Day](#)

April 12: International Day of Human Space Flight [NASA Educational Resources](#), [NASA Classroom - American English](#), [Landing pictures](#)

April 18: [International Day for Monuments and Sites](#)

April 20: [Look Alike Day](#)

April 22: [Earth Day](#), [Environmental Sustainability Toolkit](#)

April 23: [English Language Day](#)

April 24-30: [World Immunization Week](#)

April 25: [World Malaria Day](#)

April 26: [World Intellectual Property Day](#), [Intellectual Property Day Toolkit](#)

April 29-May5: [Air Quality Awareness Week Toolkit](#)

April 30: [International Jazz Appreciation Day: Education](#)

Thanks to all of you who have shared your programming ideas and highlights with your colleagues through our American Spaces FB page. You can continue to share your news and information by emailing us at AmericanSpaces@state.gov. If you have any questions or content to add, please email [Karlene Noel Jennings](mailto:KarleneNoelJennings). To add someone to this newsletter, email us at AmericanSpaces@state.gov.

Engage & Grow (Social Media Playbook)

February

Black History Month (African American History Month) -
[#BlackHistoryMonth](#) [#AfricanAmericanHistoryMonth](#)

February 14 – Valentine's Day - [#ValentinesDay](#)

February 19 – Presidents Day - [#PresidentsDay](#)

March

Women's History Month - #WomensHistoryMonth

March 8 – International Women's Day -

#InternationalWomensDay

March 19 – First Day of Spring - #FirstDayOfSpring

And shared from our colleagues in Consular Affairs, please see some potential social media post ideas that might be adapted to share with your American Spaces (if applicable):

The Eras Tour: A Taylor Swift themed post advising U.S. citizens traveling to see the upcoming international leg of The Eras Tour to check the Travel Advisory for their destination.

- [X/Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)

2024 Paris Olympics: A post to remind those planning to travel to France for the Olympics (or D-Day commemoration events) to check their passport expiration dates now!

- [X/Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)

Voting/2024 Election: An elections-related post of the year to remind U.S. citizens to visit FVAP.gov and fill out the Federal Post Card Application to register to vote and request and absentee ballot overseas.

- [X/Twitter](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)

For a list of selected observances and their hashtags, please see [2024 Social Media Hashtags](#).

Please consult with your REPS and/or your local Public Diplomacy Section for advice about current Department of State social media posture or specific situations. Thank you.

Digital assets for use by social media managers for American Spaces are available from the [albums in the American Spaces Facebook group](#). We currently have images formatted for Facebook and Instagram for upcoming themes and you can customize the assets to fit your local community's needs.

Content Commons 2.0 was just released on November 7, 2023. Content Commons is the central Department repository for messaging guidance and digital content. It now boasts an improved search function, content in reverse chronological order that showcases the most relevant content first, and the future capacity to share content across posts. The redesign is meant to serve all PD Communicators for urgent messaging on press, as well as longer-term content for Ambassadors' speeches, event planning, and targeted audience messaging. You can find it [here](#).



American
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Want to learn about more events in your area or causes you care about? Tell us about yourself and your interests here:

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