

Calendar of Observances 2018

The increasingly pluralistic population of the United States is made up of many different ethnic, cultural, faith and religious communities. To enhance mutual understanding and respect among various groups, the Anti-Defamation League offers this Calendar of Observances as a tool to increase awareness and sensitivity about religious obligations as well as ethnic and cultural festivities that may affect students, colleagues and neighbors in your community.

Religious Observations

The multi-faith calendar includes significant religious observances of the major faiths represented in the United States. It can be used as a resource when planning school exam schedules and activities, or when scheduling workplace festivities and community events. Note that Bahá'í, Jewish and Islamic holidays begin at sundown the previous day and end at sundown on the date listed.

National and International Holidays

The calendar notes U.S. holidays that are either legal holidays or observed in various states and communities throughout the country. Important national and international observances that may be commemorated in the U.S. are also included.

Calendar System

The dates of secular holidays are based on the Gregorian calendar, which is commonly used for civil dating purposes. Many religions and cultures follow various traditional calendar systems that are often based on the phases of the moon with occasional adjustments for the solar cycle. Therefore, specific Gregorian calendar dates for these observances will differ from year to year. In addition, calculation of specific dates may vary by geographical location and according to different sects within a given religion.

January 2018

- January 1** **NEW YEAR'S DAY**
The first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar, commonly used for civil dating purposes.
- January 2–4** **MAHAYANA NEW YEAR • Buddhist**
In Mahayana countries the New Year starts on the first full moon day in January.
- January 5** **GURU GOBIND SINGH JI'S BIRTHDAY • Sikh**
Guru Gobind Singh was the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs who initiated the Sikhs as the Khalsa (the pure ones) and is known as the Father of the Khalsa.
- January 6** **EPIPHANY • Christian**
Known as *Theophany* in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the manifestation of Jesus as Christ. In addition, the Western Church associates Epiphany with the journey of the Magi to the infant Jesus, and the Eastern Church with the baptism of Jesus by John.
- January 6** **CHRISTMAS • Armenian Orthodox Christian**
Armenian Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on Epiphany, except for Armenians living in Israel, who celebrate Christmas on January 19th.
- January 7** **CHRISTMAS • Eastern Christian**
Most Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas 13 days later than other Christian churches based on their use of the Julian rather than the Gregorian version of the Western calendar.
- January 14** **MAKAR SANKRANTI • Hindu**
Seasonal celebration recognizing the increasing length of days.
- January 15** **DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S BIRTHDAY**
The birthday of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is celebrated on the third Monday in January.
- January 15 –**
January 19 **NO NAME-CALLING WEEK**
Annual week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling and bullying of all kinds.
- January 21** **WORLD RELIGION DAY • Bahá'í**
Observance to proclaim the oneness of religion and the belief that world religion will unify the peoples of the earth.
- January 27** **UN HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**
Annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust coinciding with the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in 1945.
- January 31** **TU B'SHVAT • Jewish**
New Year's Day for Trees, and traditionally the first of the year for tithing fruit of trees. Now a day for environmental awareness and action, such as tree planting.

February 2018

- February** Full Month **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**
Celebrates Black History and African American culture in the United States.
- February 1** **NATIONAL FREEDOM DAY**
Commemorates the signing of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in 1865.
- February 13** **SHROVE TUESDAY • Western Christian**
A day of penitence as well as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. Also known as Mardi Gras.
- February 13** **MAHA SHIVARATRI • Hindu**
Also called *Shiva Ratri*, it is the Great Festival of Shiva.
- February 14** **VALENTINE'S DAY**
Celebrates the idea of romantic love.
- February 14** **ASH WEDNESDAY • Western Christian**
The first day of Lent for Western Christian churches, a 40-day period of spiritual preparation for Easter, not counting Sundays.
- February 15** **SUSAN B. ANTHONY DAY**
Birthday of Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906), a pioneer in the Women's Rights Movement.
- February 15** **NIRVANA DAY • Buddhist**
Celebrates the day when the historical Buddha achieved Parinirvana, or complete Nirvana, upon the death of his physical body. Sometimes celebrated on February 8.
- February 16** **LUNAR NEW YEAR**
On this day Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese New Year are celebrated.
- February 19** **PRESIDENTS' DAY**
Honors all past presidents of the United States of America.
- February 19** **CLEAN MONDAY • Eastern Christian**
The beginning of *Great Lent* for Eastern Christian churches, which starts 40 days before Orthodox Easter (Pascha), counting Sundays.
- February 25 –
March 1** **AYYÁM-I-HA OR INTERCALARY DAYS • Bahá'í**
The Ayyám-i-ha, or "Days of Ha" are devoted to spiritual preparation for the fast, celebrating, hospitality, charity and gift giving. They are celebrated the four days, five in leap year, before the last month of the Bahá'í year by inserting days into the calendar in order to maintain their solar calendar.

March 2018

March	Full Month	NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH Honors women as significant agents of historical change.
March 1		PURIM • Jewish The "Feast of Lots" marks the salvation of the Jews of ancient Persia from extermination.
March 2– March 20		NINETEEN-DAY FAST • Bahá'í Baha'is between 15 and 70 years of age do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset and set aside time for prayer and meditation.
March 2		HOLLA MOHALLA • Sikh An annual event which is a martial arts parade historically coinciding with Holi, the Hindu festival of colors. Celebrations related to Holla Mohalla may be held in various locations over several weekends preceding the actual date of the holiday.
March 2		HOLI • Hindu A spring festival in India and Nepal dedicated to the god of pleasure, also known as the festival of colours or the festival of sharing love.
March 8		INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY Celebration of the economic, political and social achievements of women worldwide.
March 17		ST. PATRICK'S DAY • Christian Feast day of the patron saint of Ireland. In the U.S., a secular version is celebrated by people of all faiths through appreciation of all things Irish.
March 20		VERNAL EQUINOX The date when night and day are nearly the same length. It marks the first day of the season of spring.
March 20		NOWRÚZ • Zoroastrian A traditional ancient Iranian festival celebrating the first day of Spring and the Iranian New Year. Also celebrated as New Year's Day in Baha'i tradition (Naw-Ruz).
March 25		PALM SUNDAY • Christian Observed the Sunday before Easter/Pascha to commemorate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
March 25		RAMA NAVAMI • Hindu Celebrates the birthday of Rama, king of ancient India, hero of the epic Ramayana, and seventh incarnation of Vishnu.
March 28		KHORDAD SAL • Zoroastrian The Zoroastrian celebration of the birth of Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrianism religion. The holiday is specifically celebrated in India and Iran, immediately following the Persian new year, Nowrúz.
March 29		HOLY THURSDAY • Christian Also known as <i>Maundy Thursday</i> , it is celebrated on the Thursday before Easter commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion.

April 2018

April	Full Month	GENOCIDE AWARENESS MONTH A month that marks important anniversaries for past and contemporary genocides. Throughout the month, individuals, communities and organizations join together to commemorate and honor victims and survivors of mass atrocities.
April 1		EASTER • Christian Known as <i>Pascha</i> in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.
April 12		YOM HASHOAH • Jewish “Holocaust Remembrance Day” memorializes the heroic martyrdom of six million Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust.
April 14		VAISAKHI (also spelled Baisakhi) • Sikh The festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community as the Khalsa (community of the initiated). On this day, Sikhs gather and celebrate Vaisakhi at their local Gurdwaras (Sikh house of worship) by remembering this day as the birth of the Khalsa.
April 21–May 2		FESTIVAL OF RIDVÁN • Bahá’í Annual festival commemorating the 12 days when Bahá’u’lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá’í Faith, resided in a garden called Ridván (Paradise) and publicly proclaimed his mission as God’s messenger for this age. The first (April 21), ninth (April 29), and twelfth (May 2) days are celebrated as holy days when Baha’is suspend work.
April 24		ARMENIAN MARTYRS’ DAY Memorializes the genocide of some 1.5 million Armenians between 1915 and 1923 in Turkey.
April 27		DAY OF SILENCE Students take a day-long 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.
April 30–May 2		THERAVADA NEW YEAR • Buddhist In Theravada countries the New Year is celebrated on the first full moon day in April.

May 2018

May	Full Month	ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH Recognizes the contributions and celebrates the culture of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States.
May	Full Month	JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH Recognizes the history of Jewish contributions to American culture, acknowledging the diverse achievements of American Jews.
May 1		INTERNATIONAL WORKER'S DAY Also known as <i>May Day</i> , it celebrates the social and economic achievements of workers worldwide. The day commemorates the Haymarket Riot of 1886 in Chicago, in which police and protesters clashed following a workers' strike for an eight-hour work day.
May 3		WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY Serves as an occasion to inform the public of violations of the right to freedom of expression and as a reminder that many journalists brave death or jail to bring people their daily news.
May 3		LAG B'OMER • Jewish Celebrates the end of a divine-sent plague and/or Roman occupation during Rabbi Akiva's lifetime (died c. 135 CE).
May 5		CINCO DE MAYO In 1862 Mexican forces defeated French occupational forces in the Battle of Puebla.
May 10		ASCENSION DAY • Christian Celebrated 40 days after Easter/Pascha, it commemorates the ascension of Jesus into Heaven.
May 13		MOTHER'S DAY Children of all ages show appreciation for their mothers and mother figures.
May 17 – June 14	Full Month	RAMADAN • Islamic A month of strict fasting from dawn until dusk in honor of the first revelations of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad.
May 20		PENTECOST • Christian Also known as <i>Whitsunday</i> , the seventh Sunday after Easter/Pascha commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and women followers of Jesus. Marks the birth of the Christian Church.
May 20–21		SHAVUOT • Jewish The "Feast of Weeks" celebrates the covenant established at Sinai between God and Israel, and the revelation of the Ten Commandments.
May 21		WORLD DAY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY Recognizes cultural diversity as a source of innovation, exchange and creativity, as well as the obligation to create a more peaceful and equitable society based on mutual respect.
May 24		DECLARATION OF THE BAB • Bahá'í Commemoration of May 23, 1844, when the Báb, the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith, announced in Shíráz, Persia, that he was the herald of a new messenger of God.

- May 27** **ALL SAINTS' DAY • Eastern Christian**
In Orthodox churches observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost, it commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints.
- May 28** **MEMORIAL DAY**
A federal holiday in the United States for remembering the people who died while serving in the country's armed forces.
- May 29** **ASCENSION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH • Bahá'í**
Observance of the anniversary of the death in exile of Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith.
- May 29** **VISAKHA PUJA • Buddhist**
Also known as *Vesak* or *Buddha Day*, it marks the birth, spiritual awakening and death (nirvana) of the historical Buddha.

June 2018

June	Full Month	LGBT+ PRIDE MONTH Commemorates the anniversary of the June 28, 1969 Stonewall riot in New York City, the incident that initiated the modern gay rights movement in the United States. Pride Day is the last Sunday in June.
June 10		RACE UNITY DAY • Bahá'í Observance promoting racial harmony and understanding and the essential unity of humanity.
June 11		LAILA AL-QADR • Islamic “The Night of Power” marks the night in which God first revealed the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad. Often fixed as the night before the 27th day of the Islamic month of Ramadan, Sunnis may also observe it on the 21st, 23rd, 25th or 29th. Shi’ites observe it on the 19th, 21st or 23rd of Ramadan.
June 12		ANNE FRANK DAY Birthday of young Jewish girl whose diary describes her family’s experiences hiding from the Nazis through assistance of gentile friends.
June 12		LOVING DAY Observes the anniversary of the 1967 United States Supreme Court decision <i>Loving v. Virginia</i> which struck down the miscegenation laws remaining in 16 states barring interracial marriage.
June 14		FLAG DAY Anniversary of the adoption of the United States flag by Congress in 1777.
June 15–17		EID AL-FITR • Islamic The “Feast of the Breaking of the Fast” marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting from dawn until dusk.
June 19		JUNETEENTH Originally commemorating the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas in 1865, it is now celebrated throughout the U.S. to honor African-American freedom and achievement.
June 20		WORLD REFUGEE DAY Raises awareness about the plight of refugees and displaced persons.
June 21		FATHER’S DAY Children of all ages show appreciation for their fathers and father figures.
June 21		SUMMER SOLSTICE In the northern hemisphere, the longest day of the year. It marks the first day of the season of summer.
June 26		ANNIVERSARY OF LEGALIZATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN THE UNITED STATES On June 26, 2015, in the case of <i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i> , the Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples.

July 2018

July 4

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence in 1776.

July 9

MARTYRDOM OF THE BÁB • Bahá'í

Observance of the anniversary of the execution by a firing squad in Tabríz, Persia, of the 30-year-old Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb, the prophet-herald of the Bahá'í Faith.

July 22

TISHA B'AV • Jewish

Mourning of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE.

July 26

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) DAY

Commemorates the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which guarantees equal opportunity for people with disabilities.

July 27

DHARMA DAY • Buddhist

Also known as *Asala Pujá*, it commemorates the historical Buddha's first discourse following his spiritual awakening.

August 2018

August 9

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Celebrates the richness of indigenous cultures and recognizes the challenges indigenous peoples face today, ranging from poverty and disease to dispossession, discrimination and denial of basic human rights.

August 12

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Celebrates young people and the integral role they play in helping to create a world fit for children.

August 22–25

EID AL-ADHA • Islamic

The “Feast of Sacrifice” concludes the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), and is a three-day festival recalling Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God.

August 23

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE SLAVE TRADE AND ITS ABOLITION

Memorializes the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade, coinciding with the anniversary of the uprising in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) that initiated its abolition.

August 25

ULLAMBANA (also known as Obon) • Buddhist

Ullambana, a Sanskrit term that means “hanging upside down and suffering,” honors the spirits of past ancestors and strives to relieve aching souls from suffering. It lasts about half of the month of August. Obon, the Japanese transliteration of Ullambana, is only three days and varies from region to region—July in the eastern region and August in the western region.

August 26

RAKSHA BANDHAN • Hindu

Also called *Rakhi*, this festival celebrates the protective relationship between brothers and their sisters.

October 2018

October	Full Month	LGBT HISTORY MONTH Marks and celebrates the lives and achievements of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people in the United States.
October	Full Month	NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH Recognizes the contributions of workers with disabilities.
October	Full month	NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH A campaign to unite communities nationwide to educate and raise awareness of bullying prevention.
October 1		SHEMINI ATZERET • Jewish “The Eighth (Day) of Assembly” is observed on the day immediately following Sukkot.
October 2		SIMCHAT TORAH • Jewish “Rejoicing in the Torah” celebrates the conclusion of the public reading of the Pentateuch and its beginning anew.
October 8		INDIGENOUS PEOPLE’S DAY (Native American Day) Celebrates and honors Native American history and culture. [The second Monday of October is also marked as a U.S. federal holiday, Columbus Day. Many people are opposed to the celebration of a man who led and committed atrocities against Indigenous people. Some states and cities in the U.S. have officially changed the day to Indigenous People’s Day. Similarly, it is celebrated as <i>Día de la Raza</i> , “Day of the Race”, in Spanish-speaking countries and communities.]
October 10 – 18		NAVARATRI • Hindu Nine-day festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil. It worships God in the form of the universal mother commonly referred to as Durga, Devi or Shakti, and marks the start of fall.
October 11		COMING OUT DAY Encourages honesty and openness about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Commemorates October 11, 1987, when 500,000 people marched on Washington, DC, for gay and lesbian equality.
October 17		INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY Call to action for the eradication of poverty and destitution worldwide.
October 19		DASSERA • Hindu Anniversary of the day when Rama killed the evil demon Ravana. Also known as <i>Durga Puja</i> , which celebrates the goddess Durga.
October 20		BIRTH OF THE BÁB • Bahá’í Bahá’í observance of the anniversary of the birth in 1819 of Siyyid, “the Báb,” the prophet-herald of the Bahá’í Faith, in Shíráz, Persia.
October 20		GUR-GADDI GURU GRANTH SAHIB • Sikh Since 1708, Sikhs have accepted Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their eternal Guru that holds the spirit of all Ten Gurus of the Sikhs. They consider Guru Granth Sahib to be a spiritual guide

not only for Sikhs but for all of mankind; it plays a central role in guiding the Sikhs' way of life.

October 24

UNITED NATIONS DAY

Commemorates the founding of the world organization in 1945.

October 31

REFORMATION DAY • Christian

Commemorates the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517.

October 31

HALLOWEEN

The eve of All Saints' Day.

November 2018

- November** Full Month **NATIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH**
Celebrates and honors the history and culture of Native Americans in the United States.
- November 1** **ALL SAINTS' DAY • Western Christian**
Commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints. Eastern Christianity observes it on the first Sunday after Pentecost.
- November 2** **ALL SOULS' DAY • Christian**
Commemoration of all faithful Christians who are now dead. In Mexican tradition it is celebrated as *Día de los Muertos* between October 31 and November 2, and is an occasion to remember dead ancestors and celebrate the continuity of life.
- November 6** **ELECTION DAY**
A day set by U.S. law for the election of public officials.
- November 7** **DIWALI • Hindu**
Also called *Deepavali*, "Festival of Lights", it celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance.
- November 7** **BANDI-CHHOR DIWAS • Sikh**
A commemorative occasion having no fixed date which occurs in October or November and celebrates the release of the Sixth Guru Har Gobind Sahib from imprisonment and coincides with Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.
- November 9–10** **KRISTALLNACHT**
Commemorates the 1938 pogrom against Jews throughout Germany and Vienna.
- November 11** **VETERANS' DAY**
Honors military veterans and the U.S. Armed Services.
- November 12** **BIRTH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH • Bahá'í**
Observance of the anniversary of the birth in 1817 of Bahá'u'lláh, prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, in Núr, Persia.
- November 12–16** **AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK**
Celebrates public education and honors individuals who are making a difference in ensuring every child in the U. S. receives a quality education.
- November 16** **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE**
Emphasizes the dangers of intolerance and is a call to action for the advancement of human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, as well as a day to encourage tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures and peoples.
- November 20** **TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**
Memorializes those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice.
- November 20** **MAWLID AL-NABI (Also known as MILAD AL-NABI) • Islamic (Sunni)**
The observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Shi'a Muslims celebrate it five days later than Sunni Muslims.

November 22

THANKSGIVING DAY

Following a 19th century tradition, it commemorates the Pilgrims' harvest feast in the autumn of 1621. It is considered by some to be a "national day of mourning," in recognition of the conquest of Native Americans by colonists.

November 23

GURU NANAK DEV JI'S BIRTHDAY • Sikh

A very important holiday in the Sikh faith as Guru Nanak Dev's was the First Guru of the Sikhs and the Founder of Sikhism. He was born in mid-November; the holiday is celebrated according to the lunar date.

November 25

MAWLID AL-NABI (Also known as MILAD AL-NABI) • Islamic (Shi'a)

The observance of the birthday of Islam founder Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar. Sunni Muslims celebrate it five days earlier than Shi'a Muslims.

November 26

DAY OF THE COVENANT • Bahá'í

Day of the Covenant is a festival observed to commemorate Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of His son, Abdu'l-Baha, as His successor.

December 2018

- December 1** **WORLD AIDS DAY**
International day of action on HIV and AIDS.
- December 2–
24** **ADVENT • Christian**
Advent is a season of spiritual preparation in observance of the birth of Jesus. In Western Christianity, it starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. In Eastern Christianity, the season is longer and begins in the middle of November.
- December 3** **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**
Raises awareness about persons with disabilities in order to improve their lives and provide them with equal opportunity.
- December 3–
10** **CHANUKAH • Jewish**
Eight-day “Festival of Lights”, celebrating the rededication of the Temple to the service of God in 164 BCE. Commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Greek King, Antiochus, who sought to suppress freedom of worship.
- December 8** **BODHI DAY • Buddhist**
Also known as *Rohatsu*, it observes the spiritual awakening (bodhi) of founder Siddharta Gautama, the Buddha, ca. 596 BCE. Celebrated on the eighth day either of December or the 12th month of the lunar calendar.
- December 10** **HUMAN RIGHTS DAY**
On this day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- December 12** **OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE • Christian**
Celebrates the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (by her title, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of Mexico and the Americas) before Juan Diego, an indigenous convert to Roman Catholicism, on the Mexican hill of Tepeyac in 1531.
- December 15** **BILL OF RIGHTS DAY**
Commemorates the signing into law of the ten original amendments of the United States Constitution in 1791.
- December 21** **WINTER SOLSTICE**
In the northern hemisphere, the shortest day of the year. It marks the first day of the season of winter.
- December 25** **CHRISTMAS • Western Christian**
Commemorates the birth of Jesus.
- December 26–
January 1,
2019** **KWANZAA**
A seven-day celebration honoring African American heritage and its continued vitality. “Kwanzaa” means “first fruits (of the harvest)” in Swahili.
- December 29** **WOUNDED KNEE DAY**
On December 29, 1890 more than 200 Lakota Sioux were massacred by U.S. troops at Wounded Knee in South Dakota.