

THE TACKLE BOX

Celebrating Lunar New Year

In 2026, February 17 marks the first new moon of the first month in a lunisolar calendar used across multiple East and Southeast Asian cultures, including China, signaling the start of Lunar New Year and ushering in the Year of the Fire Horse (1). Although dates and traditions can vary by culture, Lunar New Year—sometimes referred to as Chinese New Year or the Spring Festival—is typically a two-week celebration, lasting from the first new moon to the first full moon, and is honored by millions across Asia and the Asian diaspora (2,3,4). While particularly prominent in China, Lunar New Year is also celebrated in at least 13 other countries and within Asian communities around the world, meaning that roughly a quarter of the world's 8.2 billion people observe this holiday (1,5,6). Considered by many to be the most important event of the year, Lunar New Year is not only a time to prepare for a successful year ahead but also an occasion to honor ancestors by reuniting with immediate and extended family (1,2,5).

Common Lunar New Year traditions across many Asian cultures may include house cleaning, paying off debts, purchasing new brightly colored clothing, placing symbols of good luck around the home, watching lion dance troupes, and lighting firecrackers (1,3,4). In China, homes are decorated with red paper cuttings bearing auspicious wishes for the new year, and a family reunion dinner marks the official start of the holiday. This feast features symbolic dishes intended to bring good fortune, abundance, and luck in the year ahead. The consumption of symbolic foods continues throughout the celebration of Lunar New Year, including during the Lantern Festival, when people eat tangyuan—sweet glutinous rice balls—and children carry lanterns through nighttime streets to mark the end of the festivities (1).

Since Lunar New Year is based on a lunisolar calendar that considers both the moon's phases and the Earth's orbit around the sun, its date varies each year. Following this cyclical calendar, we now find ourselves galloping into the Year of the Fire Horse, associated with vibrant and fiery energy that symbolizes adventure, vitality, and momentum (3,4,7).



Red envelopes (hongbao/lai see) emblazoned with a golden horse and flowers. These are given during Lunar New Year to symbolize good fortune, happiness, protection and blessings for the new year. Traditionally they are given by elders to children, family, and employees.

AWARENESS MONTH & DAYS

[Black History Month](#)

[American Heart Month](#)

[National Freedom Day - Feb 1](#)

[Rosa Parks Day - Feb 4](#)

[Safer Internet Day - Feb 6](#)

[Lunar New Year - Feb 17](#)

[International Day of Women and Girls in
Science - Feb 11](#)

[International Epilepsy Day - Feb 9](#)

[International Childhood Cancer Day -
Feb 15](#)

[World Day of Social Justice - Feb 20](#)

It is important, however, not to let this exuberant energy carry us too far and lead us to assume that all individuals of Asian origin or descent celebrate Lunar New Year. Asia is vast and culturally diverse, encompassing numerous traditions and religions, some of which observe the new year at different times or in different ways (4). We encourage you to use this occasion to learn more—through respectful conversation or independent exploration—about the many ways people observe the new year. If colleagues or friends choose to share their Lunar New Year traditions, taking the time to listen can build understanding and strengthen relationships.

References

- 1.[Celebrate Lunar New Year - Asian Art Museum](#)
- 2.[Lunar New Year - National Museum of Asian Art](#)
- 3.[Lunar New Year Dates & Animals of the Zodiac - Royal Museums Greenwich](#)
- 4.[Celebrating the New Year in Asia - Asia Society](#)
- 5.[In pictures: Welcoming the Lunar New Year - BBC](#)
- 6.[Countries That Celebrate the Lunar New Year 2026 - World Population Review](#)
- 7.[Here's The Date For Chinese New Year 2026 — And What Animal You Are - Forbes](#)



A festive Lunar New Year illustration with a red horse, lanterns, clouds, and plum blossoms symbolizing the year of the Fire Horse.

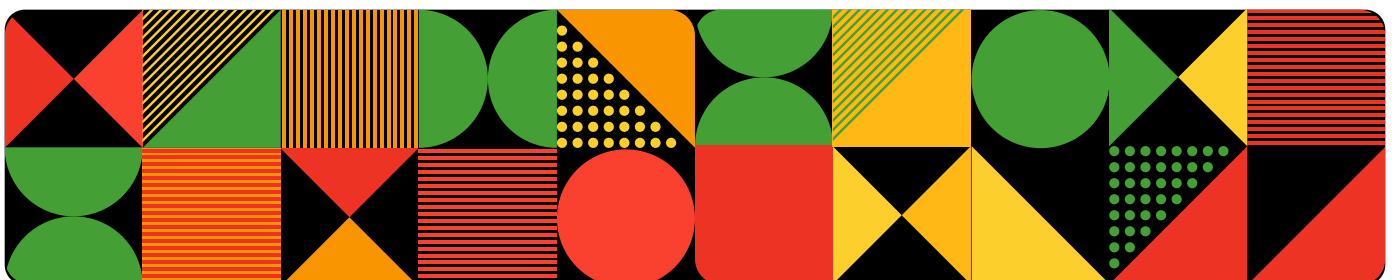
HONORING A CENTURY OF BLACK HISTORY

It is undeniable that people of African descent have played a foundational role in the development of the United States, and Black History Month offers an opportunity to reflect on and honor those contributions. This February marks a particularly significant milestone, as it represents a century of national commemoration of Black history. The theme selected by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) is “A Century of Black History Commemorations,” honoring both the founders of the organization and the legacy of Black History Month itself.

Well before Dr. Carter G. Woodson established Negro History Week—the celebration that would later evolve into Black History Month—Black historians worked diligently to ensure that the contributions, successes, and struggles of people of African descent were documented and preserved. These scholars understood that if their history was not recorded, it risked being erased, depriving future generations not only of knowledge of their past but also of the foundation upon which their futures could be built. Building on this belief, Dr. Woodson established Negro History Week with the goal of transforming not only how the world viewed African Americans but also how they viewed themselves in the narrative of the United States. His contemporary, W. E. B. Du Bois, once wrote: “He literally made this country... recognize and celebrate each year a week in which it studied the effect which the American Negro has had upon the life, thought, and action of the United States. I know of no other man who in a lifetime has unaided built up such a national celebration.”

As part of the nation’s bicentennial celebration, President Gerald Ford formally recognized Black History Month in 1976, and in 1986 Congress passed Public Law 99-244, officially designating February as Black History Month. It seems auspicious that the same year we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the United States Independence also marks the 100th anniversary of honoring Black History. Across Michigan, there are numerous Black History Month events and celebrations, which can be found through event platforms such as Eventbrite, as well as the social media channels and websites of local municipalities, museums, libraries, and universities.

It is important that we take time to learn about the legacy of people of African descent in the United States, even when those histories are rooted in painful chapters of our national past. We cannot turn away because their stories are painful to reflect on or interrupt the narrative of unity and prosperity we prefer. With conversations around equity, representation, and justice ever evolving, Black History Month reminds us that history is deeply connected to the challenges we face today. Honoring this legacy means taking intentional actions, seeking out opportunities to learn, participating in community events, and supporting efforts that advance racial equality.





FEATURED ARTIST: LAETITIA KY



Laetitia Ky is an artist and activist who uses her hair as a medium for her message. As a child growing up in the West African country of Ivory Coast, Laetitia was taught that the natural curl and texture of her hair was undesirable. After years of using chemical relaxers and suffering injuries from these treatments to fit a European-centered standard of beauty, Laetitia was inspired to embrace the beauty and culture of her natural hair.

She began her artistic journey by mimicking the intricate hairstyles adorned by African women pre-colonization. Laetitia says that this experience made her realize that hair is not just a tool for beauty, but a way to communicate and tell stories about who we are and where we come from. Now, Laetitia creates her designs to convey messages of strength, resilience, and protest against the inequality she observes.

One subject that Latitia feels highly motivated to advocate for is gender and sex equality. Latitia and the other women of her community were exposed to violence, exploitation, and fewer opportunities because of their sex. Now, Latitia seeks to empower women by promoting bodily autonomy, self-agency, and education. It was not easy for her to erase the societal expectations and pressures that she was raised with, but by fully embracing her blackness, Latitia has forged a path for herself and many other people toward complete self-love.

Listen to Latitia Ky speak on her ornate tresses and her story in this [TED Talk](#).

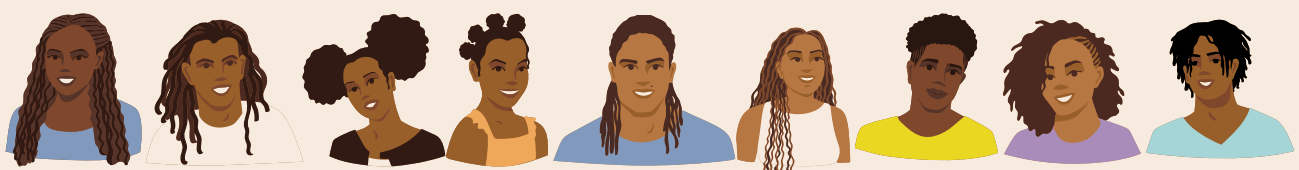


CROWN ACT: AN END TO HAIR DISCRIMINATION



Black Americans have long faced discrimination due to the texture of their hair and how they choose to style it. The American workforce has long favored applicants and employees that mimic the hair characteristics of European descent; straight and tucked away. In fact, Black Women with textured hair are two times more likely to experience microaggressions at work than Black Women with straight hair and they are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from work because of their hair.* The CROWN (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act is a piece of legislation that was created to address that exact problem. The CROWN Act aims to protect individuals from experiencing workplace discrimination, as well as discrimination when applying for federal assistance programs, based on the texture and style of the person's hair. While this legislation has been enacted in 27 states and Washington DC, it has failed to gain the support it needs in Congress, and it is unlikely to pass as the House and Senate stand currently. To learn more about the people involved in the CROWN Act and its mission, visit their [website](#).

*Reference: [The Official CROWN Act](#)



Ally Corner: Love is Love Edition

Valentine's Day is coming up soon and is a day dedicated to celebrating love. With that in mind, we wanted to share how you can be inclusive when talking to folks about their significant others. Instead of using gendered language like "wife", "husband", "boyfriend", or "girlfriend" when you are getting to know someone better, you can use more inclusive terms like "partner", "spouse", or "significant other." These terms allow you to avoid assuming the gender of the partner of your new acquaintance. Another option is to mirror the language/pronouns your new acquaintance uses to refer to their partner. This often makes LGBTQIA and queer folks feel more comfortable talking openly and feel that they will be accepted, since it was not assumed they are in a straight relationship. Building this trust is key when first getting to know someone.

A Love Story

When Jack Baker and Michael McConnell were introduced at a party in 1966, little did they know it would lead to a lifelong, and ongoing, love story. There are many ways to declare and show your love, but earning a law degree so you can marry your partner has to be at the top of the list. This is exactly what Jack did. Combining creativity with a loophole in Minnesota's state law they applied for and were granted a marriage license in 1971. This made their marriage the first such union recorded in the public files of any civil government, and thus Jack and Michael became the first legally married gay couple. Unfortunately, for Jack and Michael their marriage license sat in legal limbo until the Supreme Court's ruling on Obergefell made same sex marriage the law of the land in 2015. Jack and Michael celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary in September of last year, with hopefully many more to come. For more information about Jack and Michael's love story we recommend [NPR's StoryCorps](#) and [YesterQueers](#) pieces on the couple.



Michael McConnell (left) and Jack Baker (right) stand smiling behind their wedding cake.

Know that you are part of a caring community and never alone. This Valentine's season, we invite you to celebrate with connection, compassion, and care for one another. The DEIJB Committee is working to foster a welcoming environment and to ensure that MI AFS is inclusive and supportive of all. If you're interested in participating in the committee, have content you would like to share or feedback for us please contact us at mifishcastafs@gmail.com or [anonymously](#).

Warm Wishes -

Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)