



“

“Nothing will work unless you do.”

– Maya Angelou

”

PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

IVANNA OLACHI NWOKEJI

My name is Ivanna Olachi Nwokeji I’m a sophomore at CUNY School of Medicine. I was drawn to P-CoC because of the mission of wanting change for young children of color by supporting initiatives such as education for all. I have always been a strong believer that all children of color should have the same opportunities in life.

While working in P-CoC I have experienced being able to grow when it comes to presenting research, participants in events such as Juneteenth Celebration, and many more. I love working for P-CoC because I have had many opportunities to network with my peers.



ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Arab American Heritage Month isn’t just a time to celebrate, it is an opportunity to reclaim the narrative. Arab Americans have played a crucial role and even now hold a great impact on American culture. This stems from the emergence of Little Syria in the 1870s to the birth of some of our favorite movies and songs. It is important to observe heritage months not only to discover the true roots of American culture, but also to recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion. In this, people will grow in perspective, widen their scope of the world, and develop empathy and understanding towards those who are different from themselves.

Notable Names

George A. Kasem of Lebanese descent, stepped into history on January 3, 1959. He became the first Arab American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Representing California’s 25th District, Kasem, broke barriers at a time when Arab American identities were nearly invisible in the political landscape. Born in Oklahoma and raised in Los Angeles, he ran as a Democrat during a critical national turning point. His victory, a close 50.1% win over Republican Prescott O. Lieberg, flipped a previously red district and reflected a shift towards liberal values in American politics. Democrats gained 48 seats in a sweeping midterm rebuke of President Eisenhower’s administration. Kasem’s election was more than a political win—it was a signal that Arab Americans were claiming space in the rooms where power is negotiated, policy is written, and representation takes shape.



Deena Shakir is redefining what leadership looks like at the intersection of technology, philanthropy, and public service. An Iraqi American changemaker, Shakir has moved fluidly between diplomacy and innovation—first at the State Department, where she led diaspora entrepreneurship programs, then at Google.org, building out its civic innovation arm, and later within Google itself, spearheading product partnerships for new ventures. Her entrepreneurial spirit emerged early—she co-founded her first company while still an undergraduate at Harvard. Today, Shakir continues to leverage her influence to elevate underrepresented voices, serving on several nonprofit boards, including TechWadi, which bridges Silicon Valley and the Middle East by empowering and investing in tech entrepreneurs. Her work isn’t just impressive—it’s transformative, proving that representation in powerful spaces can drive equity across borders.



Azzedine Alaïa, the Tunisian-born designer once revered by iconic ‘90s supermodels like Naomi Campbell, didn’t just create clothes—he sculpted power into fabric. Known for his architectural silhouettes and unapologetic celebration of the female form, Alaïa built a fashion empire that challenged Eurocentric norms and elevated Arab artistry to the global stage. His namesake label, Alaïa, remains a force in the fashion world, with current Creative Director Pieter Mulier continuing to channel the bold, boundary-pushing beauty that defined Alaïa’s vision. More than a designer, Alaïa was a revolutionary—proving that elegance could also be resistance, and that heritage could reshape high fashion from within.



Takeaways

Arab American Heritage Month is a time to uplift the stories that have too often gone untold. As poet Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese American icon, once wrote: *“You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.”* It’s through honoring those who came before that we aim our future toward justice, beauty, and truth.

- 1.<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/subjects/social-studies/arab-american-heritage-month>
- 2.<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/january-3/george-a-kasem-first-arab-american-congressman-california>
- 3.https://www.huffpost.com/entry/10-inspiring-arab-american-leaders-to-watch-in-2017_b_598fae2ce4b0ed1f464c0b5a
- 4.<https://www.lofficielusa.com/fashion/most-influentiaal-designers-from-the-arab-diaspora-hedi-slimane-azzedine-alaia>

REPRESENTING OUR PARTICIPANTS AND SUPPORTERS

Public Relations Team

2025 marks the fifth year of P-CoC and its Newsletter. P-CoC began organizing at a time when, as a result of the Covid pandemic, personal contact was limited--and ever more precious. Communities gain strength by regular and direct contact; seeing a face on a screen isn’t a sufficient connection. Our “Participant of the Month” feature helped to fill that gap, making the Newsletter more than just a record of our work. Today it reaches almost 500 participants and subscribers in five states.

Using events, advocacy, and professional collaboration, P-CoC learned first to walk and then found its stride. The Newsletter’s collateral material supports the spirit of the organization as we move forward. An important role for the PR team is to consider the way we represent P-CoC to neighbors, donors, and partners.

Taken as a whole, Heritage Month articles, announcements, Hails and Wails, and Participant of the Month profiles portray a collective personality. We show that the lives of people of color are integral to the fabric of U.S. history, we recognize that these experiences create rich and complex stories of living in America and being Americans, and we accept that as a result, the threads of justice and humanity in this country are many and diverse.

Beneath it all, the Newsletter maintains a feeling of positivity and resolve. We believe people aspire to be fair and understanding because there is no alternative to living together. We know that the journey to a higher ground for all is filled with distractions, but there are always signs pointing the way. We strive to keep our feet on the path and claim our lane as equals. If the Newsletter encourages someone to take a single step, we’ll consider it to be a job well done.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fun Fair & Juneteenth Celebration

Join the Fun—Volunteer for the Fun Fair & Juneteenth Celebration!

Looking for a meaningful way to give back while having a great time? Sign up to volunteer for the Fun Fair & Juneteenth Celebration through the Volunteers of New York portal!

This is more than just a community event—it’s a chance to be part of something joyful, connect with others, and help create an amazing experience for everyone involved. Whether you’re passionate about service or simply looking for a fun way to engage, your time and effort will make a real difference.

Students: Do you need community service hours? This is a fantastic opportunity to gain experience while contributing to a vibrant and uplifting event.

Join us in making this celebration unforgettable! [Sign up](#) today and be part of the excitement

Support those who support us!

Patronize the businesses of our sponsors and partners—find details on our website.

Meet us at our Tabling!

Meet some of our participants at our Tabling Events around town, and reach out to see if we can bring a table to your event—email us at info@p-coc.org.

Join the P-CoC Team!

Looking to get involved? Join or volunteer with P-CoC and make a difference! Visit <https://www.p-coc.org/join> to learn more.

Stay engaged!

Follow us on our social platforms for updates, events, and more ways to get involved.



WHO We Are!

We are a collective that cultivates a culture of support, embracing the ideology of one human race while celebrating ethnic uniqueness and the diverse skin tones that enrich our shared humanity.



WHAT We Do!

Through our race, color, and ethnicity-centered initiatives to address marginalization, we create dynamic spaces for service, networking, collaboration, and leadership development, empowering everyone to embrace fair and equitable coexistence.



HOW We Do It!

Our outreach includes cultural exchange events that celebrate ethnic heritage, positive public messaging to combat stereotypes, and our local social circle hubs for collaborative solution-oriented approaches to societal challenges, all aimed at fostering equitable coexistence.