

Best Wishes for a Diverse and Meaningful Week  
March 27, 2010

To all,

As we all settle in to the upcoming Spring Break, and for most of us a religiously important week ahead, I am thoughtful about the overlap of religious celebrations, the magnificence of nature in Spring and the value of friendships among people of diverse backgrounds in an otherwise polarized and polarizing society.

I am mindful that Holy Week and Passover overlap this week, which in itself should give most of the world pause to reflect. I know too that our society is broader than that and we must not be myopic. Other springtime religious observances are upcoming as well.

As described by the Dean of Students at Cal Poly Pomona ([http://dsa.csupomona.edu/deanofstudents/cpp\\_multicultural\\_calendar\\_spring.asp?setactive=page](http://dsa.csupomona.edu/deanofstudents/cpp_multicultural_calendar_spring.asp?setactive=page)), here are some other upcoming religious observances of which we should be aware in consideration of others:

-March 30th: Songkran (Buddhist - Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand) - In Southeast Asia, Songkran is recognized as the New Year for Buddhists. For Thais, it is a three-day religious festival in which homes are routinely cleaned, and water is sprinkled on monks paying visits and on statues of Buddha.

-April 21st-May 2nd: Feast of Ridvan, 1st day (Bahá'í) - 'Ridvan' means paradise and the 12-day festival is the holiest time for the Bahá'ís. It commemorates the 12 days that Bahá'u'lláh spent in the Garden of Ridvan in the last days of his exile in Baghdad and announced that he was the prophet whose coming had been foretold. The Bahá'ís do not work on the first, ninth and twelfth day of Ridvan.

-May 27th: Wesak (Buddhism) - The most important Buddhist festival, Wesak celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha as one event.

-May 29th: Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh (Bahá'í) - The prophet and founder of Bahá'í Faith passed away near Haifa, Israel. The event is observed at the actual time of his passing at 3 a.m

(If other faiths' religious observances will occur this Spring, I am not aware of them but apologize for their omissions.)

For most of us, the events and rituals of Holy Week and Passover will occupy our attention this week. As a celebrant of *Pesach*, I value the important message of freedom from bondage in the Exodus story we retell. I am aware that slavery still exists in the world, including an illicit and deplorable trade in children; I am aware that genocide still pervades some parts of the world and am mindful of the desperate conditions in Darfur; and I am aware that some fundamental freedoms have been taken away from some Americans because of their lifestyle, which is different from the majority's, but which is now being addressed in our Federal Court system. I am hopeful for a day such issues no longer pervade modern society.

In the meantime, I wish each of us a hopeful, inclusive, diverse and meaningful week ahead.

David I. Karp