

# March Diversity Tip Sheet: Why Celebrate Women's History Month

Diversity

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[www.alanet.org/diversity](http://www.alanet.org/diversity)

Women's history month was adopted in the United States in the early 1980's. In 1981, Senator Orrin Hatch and Representative Barbara Mikulski co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution proclaiming a "Women's History Week." In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March.

Since then, the National Women's History Month Resolution has been approved every year with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. On February 28, 2011, President Barack Obama signed a Proclamation designating March as Women's History Month.

One might wonder why is it important to recognize women through Women's History Month. There are several reasons. The first is that Women's History Month serves as an acknowledgment of the important role women have played in shaping the modern world, often in spite of barriers to equal treatment such as discrimination, prejudice and harassment. Women such as Sandra Day O'Connor, Lani Guinier and yes, even our current and past ALA women in leadership have each left their marks on our shared notions of excellence, professionalism and achievement in our profession while shaping and guiding the future.

The second reason is equally important. Recognizing the accomplishments of women creates an opportunity for today's women to reaffirm and demonstrate our personal commitment toward advancement. Women are advancing into leadership roles in the business world faster than ever. As strong women ascend to high-level positions in corporate settings, they are sure to express a desire to see equally strong women within the law firms that represent them. Despite recent progress, barriers to advancement persist which must be overcome if we are to equalize the opportunities available within our workplaces and meet our clients' demands for more women in leadership.

Women represent the majority share of ALA membership, and through our Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, ALA is working to advance women in the profession. However, the decision to nurture the next generation of women in leadership starts with each of us, and individual efforts to cultivate the women in our workplaces, chapters and personal lives. To answer the call, create a plan in your office to celebrate the achievements of women in your firm, past and present. Give heed to best practices regarding the retention and advancement of women from ALA, the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, Catalyst and others. Consider throwing your firm's support behind local efforts to promote pipeline efforts that create opportunities for women in non-traditional professions such as law, technology, science and math. There is no shortage of opportunities for each of us to change the landscape for women in the profession if we only answer the call.

The easiest way to begin is to start small. Consider how you might choose to celebrate Women's History Month in your office. For calendar year 2012, the National Women's History Month Theme will be Women's Empowerment. A number of resources are included below to help you generate ideas for what you can do to celebrate the many accomplishments of women.

As always if you would like additional information or have questions, please contact Vic Maurer, Staff Liaison, ALA Committee on Diversity and Inclusion at [vmaurer@alanet.org](mailto:vmaurer@alanet.org).

## Explore Additional Resources:

**The National Women's History Project:** <http://nwhp.org/whml/index.php>

Hosts a great deal of information, including a section on celebrating women in the workplace.

**Presidential Proclamation: Women's History Month 2012:**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/28/presidential-proclamation-womens-history-month-2011>

**The National Women's History Museum:** <http://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/history/resources-and-links>

Includes quotes, resources and links and more. ■

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