



# Multicultural Calendar 2012

Greetings,  
So much about how we view the world is learned during our formative years. What if during those early years you were exposed to a language, a culture, religious traditions, a political system or a way of thinking that was different from those whose families have lived in the U.S. for generations? Each of the individuals featured in the 2012 Multicultural Calendar has traveled a different path before joining the Hopkins team. In ways both subtle and direct, they add texture, dimension and hue to the Hopkins canvas. This broader perspective and way of looking at issues enhances our ability to conduct groundbreaking research, attract and retain the best talent, and offer the best in patient care, leadership and service to our patients and their families. On behalf of the Office of Workforce Diversity, we hope the 2012 Multicultural Calendar—our third edition—will help us to better understand and appreciate the life experiences, customs, beliefs, traditions and holidays of our colleagues and patients.

*Beverly White-Seals*

Beverly White-Seals  
Director, Office of Workforce Diversity  
The Johns Hopkins Hospital  
The Johns Hopkins Health System



**Natalia Abel, Ph.D.**

*International Media Relations Specialist  
Johns Hopkins Health System*

I was born and raised in beautiful and historic Moscow, the capital of a Socialist empire that no longer exists on our maps, and completed my education in journalism in the “new” post-Soviet Moscow.

For me, the most dramatic change of all was the ability to travel and to work outside our homeland. I applied for, and was granted, fellowships in Britain and Canada, my first glimpse of the West. In 2002, I moved to Toronto and six years later to Maryland.

Among my most precious Russian traditions is the celebration of the New Year, a holiday that was an integral part of Soviet life through the 20th century, regardless of ethnic or religious background. There is no Santa Claus, but we have Father Frost and his grand-daughter, Snow Maiden, to leave presents under a spruce tree. The year begins with a feast, delicious food and drinks, friends and family, warm wishes and gifts.

Most Americans think that Russia is perennially cold. In fact, Russia has several climate zones. While some areas have extreme climates in the winter and cool summers, others, like Moscow, are more like Maryland or New York.



**Afua A. Aning**

*Senior eLearning Specialist  
Johns Hopkins HealthCare*

I was born and raised in Ghana, and in 2008 left to pursue my master’s degree here in the United States.

Ghana means “Warrior King,” and is located on the western coast of Africa. The country is roughly about the size of the state of Oregon, with two main seasons—dry and wet—and an average year-round temperature of 79 degrees.

There are a few misconceptions about Ghana that always give me a chuckle. Here are the facts:

- Ghana is different from Guyana, a country on the northern coast of South America.
- People from Ghana are called Ghanaians (pronounced Gha-nian-s) and not Ghananians (Gha-na-nais).
- People don’t live in jungles and ride on elephants. They reside in brick-and-mortar homes and ride in cars.
- Most people in Ghana speak and understand English, which is the official language and the mode of communication in schools.

My favorite Ghanaian holiday is March 6, a celebration of Ghana’s independence from the British Colony in 1957. I enjoy participating in the marching parades, merry-making, cooking and eating of great Ghanaian cuisine that takes place on that day.

Ghanaians are most popularly known for their friendliness and hospitality.



**Albert Chi, M.D.**

*Assistant Professor of Surgery  
School of Medicine*

Long before I knew the ABCs of trauma, the acronym stood for an American-Born Chinese. I was born in Detroit, the product of two math majors. Both parents came from Taiwan to the United States on academic scholarships. My mother was the first woman to graduate from her university’s math department with a master’s degree, and my father was the first in the family to attain a Ph.D.

I have to admit there were growing pains balancing our traditional Chinese values and my personal desire to be American. Mandarin was spoken at home, however, often, in rebellion, I responded in English—unless it was to say Happy Chinese New Year, as it is customary to give the children a red envelope of money as part of the celebration. The difference was the only Chinese zodiac we celebrated was year of the “Tiger mom.”

As I matured, I grew to appreciate the sacrifices and determination of my parents. I recognize that I have been blessed growing up with two wonderful cultures—both of which make me who I am today.



**Mitra Gavvani, Pharm.D.**

*Director of Infusion Services  
Johns Hopkins Home Care Group*

I was born in Iran, in the northwestern province of Azerbaijan, and moved to the United States when I was 20 years old.

The official language of Iran is Farsi. English, which I began learning in the 6th grade, and Arabic are the two mandatory languages offered in grade school in Iran.

My favorite holiday is Nowrouz, which means New Day in Farsi, or New Year’s holiday. Iranians and Persians across the world celebrate the arrival of spring as the beginning of the Persian New Year. Preparations and celebrations begin a week or two before the actual arrival of the new year, which is usually on March 21. Spring cleaning is a tradition for all families and is a symbol of leaving behind the darkness and coldness of winter and making room for new thoughts, plans and beginnings. Family members, friends and neighbors dress up in new outfits and gather around the *sofreh haft seen*, a traditional table setting, and eat the traditional fish and rice dish called *mahi sabzi polo*.

A common misconception about Iran is that Iranian women are not educated, not treated with respect or equality and not allowed to hold professional positions. Iranian women lead a very modern lifestyle and have earned the respect of Iranian society.



**Yariela Kerr-Donovan**

*HR Director, Project REACH/  
Community Education Program  
Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System*

I was born in Panama City, Panama, and moved to the States when I was young. Panama is a Latin-based country and Spanish is the primary language spoken.

One thing I’d like people to know is that there are Panamanians of African descent, whose families have lived in the country for many generations—even before the United States entered the country to build the canal.

As I look back, there are cultural attitudes and beliefs about gender roles that really stick out in my mind. For example, when we first moved to the States I couldn’t go outside to play. Girls met in the house with other girls—usually relatives or close family friends. Boys were allowed to go outside to rough and tumble about. With the encouragement of my teachers, my mother eventually allowed me to go outside to play, but only if a male relative was outside as well.

A holiday that is great fun is Carnival. People dress up in costumes, and there are parades and plenty of festivities with great food and drink that would last a couple of days.

# 2012

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- 1 New Year's Day
- 1 Gantan-sai (New Year's) *Shinto*
- 5 Fast of Tevet *Jewish*
- 5 Guru Gobindh Singh Birthday *Sikh*
- 9-12 Mahayana New Year *Buddhist\*\**
- 15 World Religion Day *Baha'i*
- 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 23 Chinese New Year *Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist*

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- National African-American History Month**
- 3 Setsubun-sai *Shinto*
- 4 Mawlid al-Nabi *Islam*
- 8 Tu B'Shvat *Jewish* New Year for Trees
- 12 Lincoln's Birthday
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 15 Nirvana Day *Buddhist, Jain\*\**
- 20 Presidents Day and Washington's Birthday
- 22 Ash Wednesday, Lent Begins *Christian*

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- National Women's History Month**
- 8 Purim *Jewish*
- 8 Magha Puja Day *Buddhist\*\**
- 8 Holi *Hindu\*\**
- 11 Start Daylight Savings
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 21 Naw Ruz *Baha'i*
- 23 New Year *Hindu*
- 30 National Doctors Day

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- 1 Ramanavami *Hindu*
- 6 Good Friday *Christian*
- 6 Lord's Evening Meal *Jehovah's Witness*
- 7-14 Pesach *Jewish Passover*
- 8 Easter *Christian*
- 14 Baisakhi New Year *Sikh*
- 15 Orthodox Christian Easter
- 22 Earth Day
- 25 Secretary's/Administrative Professional's Day

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- 3 National Day of Prayer *Interfaith*
- 5 Cinco de Mayo
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- 12 Nurses Day
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- 3 Labor Day
- 8 World Physical Therapy Day
- 11 Patriot Day
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**Bold italics** are primary holy days of a tradition.

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hopkinsmedicine.org/jhhr/EqualOpportunityDiversity/index.html

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