



U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE



U.S. Department of State DEIA Accomplishments 2021-2024

Building a Workforce
that Reflects America



“We released the first-ever DEIA Strategic Plan. We made our recruiting fairer and more transparent. We incorporated commitment to diversity and inclusion as an important metric for Foreign and Civil Service evaluations.”

— Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken

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Cover: Secretary Blinken takes a selfie with interns at the State Department after a swearing-in ceremony in June 2024. (Official State Department photo by Chuck Kennedy)

Message from the Secretary



American diplomacy can only succeed if it fully harnesses all of the talent that our richly diverse nation has to offer. That is why I created the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council to give DEIA the dedicated senior-level attention that it deserves at the U.S. Department of State. During the past four years, we have made significant progress on this front and we are thrilled to share that with you in the following pages.

I'm especially grateful to Zakiya Carr Johnson for hitting the ground running as our new Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer in early 2024. She carries on the outstanding work of her predecessor, Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley. Having a State Department that truly reflects the country we serve is mission-critical. It makes our foreign policy stronger, smarter, and more creative.

From my earliest days as Secretary, I prioritized making the Department a place where every member of our team can contribute, lead, and advance their careers.

We released the first-ever DEIA Strategic Plan. We made our recruiting fairer and more transparent. We incorporated commitment to diversity and inclusion as an important metric for Foreign and Civil Service evaluations.

The majority of State employees report feeling that change is underway. But as part of our modernization agenda, all of us at the Department must continue to work to advance DEIA if we are to create the inclusive workplace environment we need to attract and retain the nation's top talent. When the people making decisions on behalf of the American public don't reflect the full diversity of our nation, we all lose, and that impacts our national security. Together, we will ensure the United States is best positioned to meet the challenges and opportunities of our increasingly complex world.


Antony J. Blinken

Message from the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer



Shortly after the Secretary appointed me Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, I noticed there had been a profound commitment to inclusion and marked shift in the U.S. Department of State’s workplace culture since I last served here in 2017. This is not work one takes on alone. It is a collective endeavor to reach our goals together.

As the Department’s primary official responsible for implementation of Executive Order 14035 on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA), I sought to harness this grassroots energy and channel it into how we build a workforce that brings the full might of America’s diversity to the table. This document, our overview of Department of State DEIA accomplishments from 2021 to 2024, outlines the many steps that have been taken to create an institution of inclusion.

The U.S. Department of State’s efforts to advance DEIA are a key part of Secretary Blinken’s modernization agenda and his goal to win the competition for diverse talent.

Finally, the Department’s DEIA efforts also built on prior efforts from many offices, bureaus, DEIA councils, and employee organizations who historically were responsible for Department DEIA efforts prior to the 2021 establishment of the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

As we look back to celebrate what we have accomplished, let us also remember that more work lays ahead. And as we embark on that work, our journey together, let us remember that each of our contributions – small and large – create meaningful change within our organization and beyond. By embracing accountability and working collaboratively, we can build a Department that reflects the rich tapestry of our society and upholds the principles of equity, fairness, and respect for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zakiya Carr Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Zakiya Carr Johnson



Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and civil society awardees at the 2024 Global Anti-Racism Champions awards ceremony in October 2024. (Photo by Chuck Kennedy)

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Modernizes State

With input from employees and key stakeholders from across the U.S. Department of State and around the world, the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (S/ODI) drafted the Department's 2022-2026 DEIA Strategic Plan at state.gov/deia-strategy and now oversees its implementation. The plan is responsive to Executive Order 14035 on DEIA in the Federal Workforce and Secretary Blinken's Modernization Agenda and helps ensure that U.S. diplomacy is stronger, smarter, and more creative. Highlights for DEIA accomplishments are outlined in the following pages, with those below led by S/ODI.

- ★ **Established a quantitative and qualitative baseline** for the Department to better track organizational health; see the following data section for more details.
- ★ **Made a dedicated Core Precept for the Foreign Service** so that advancing DEIA became the responsibility of every Foreign Service employee, seeing this as another way to improve organizational strength and advance U.S. policies and priorities abroad.
- ★ **Ensured that Foreign Service Deputy Assistant Secretary positions were advertised.** After the introduction of this added transparency, bidders are better

informed about and able to compete for these key positions, which often lead to an Ambassadorial or other senior assignment.

- ★ **Established the “We Have Your Back Policy”**, or the Anti-Discriminatory Treatment of Overseas Personnel Policy, that tasks Embassy leadership with engaging with host country officials when U.S. diplomats are harassed because of their skin color or other immutable characteristics.
- ★ **Assembled a DEIA Distinguished Scholar Speaker Series** in which nine academics presented on evidence-based DEIA; over 2,000 employees participated in the series and learned about inclusive workplace best practices.
- ★ **Hosted the Inaugural DEIA Leadership Summit**, “Start Out Right,” from June 5-6, 2024, to train 250 first-time Department managers from across the world on inclusive leadership. This cohort included representatives of the Locally Employed Staff Advocacy Council. All learned about accountability—how we take care of each other, not how we police each other—from Secretary Blinken and other principals.

American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) staff attend Taiwan Pride, an annual LGBTQ+ pride parade held in Taipei, to support the advancement of human rights and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility values, on October 28, 2023. (Photo by Jeff Dutton)



- ★ **Released guidance on religious inclusion** to include accommodations around religious practices as well as interfaith religious expression and responsibilities. Our Religious Observances Calendar now assists supervisors in scheduling around religious holidays.
- ★ **Published updated Department guidance regarding transgender employees in the workplace** in 2023, which outlined supervisor responsibilities and best practices related to gender transition; noted employees should be addressed by the name, pronouns, and honorific that they use in everyday interactions; and stated that at Department facilities, individuals can access restrooms and other facilities that best align with their gender identity.
- ★ **Trained employees on bystander intervention**, reaching over 3,000 Department employees posted in more than 50 countries to teach conflict resolution skills and allyship. Testimonials included: “You help give a voice to people who may feel powerless”.
- ★ **Released guidance on gender identity language best practices** in 2024, including pronoun usage and language that conveys respect.
- ★ **Launched the DEIA Champions Program** in which mid-level Foreign Service personnel pair with senior officials who mentor them in a year-long program on DEIA. The successful two-year pilot empowered future leaders.
- ★ **Launched the iCount Campaign** to allow employees with disabilities to self-identify, which cultivated disability pride and led to accessibility improvements.
- ★ **Launched an American Sign Language instruction pilot** as part of our Inclusive Workplace initiative to equip Department employees with an additional way to communicate, including in emergencies, where verbal communication is not possible for either hearing or Deaf individuals. Visual communication is not just for Deaf individuals.

DEIA History

1949 saw the appointment of the first Black U.S. Ambassador—Ambassador to Liberia Edward Dudley— and the first woman U.S. Ambassador—Ambassador to Denmark Helen Eugenie Moore Anderson.



**“We are building a team that reflects
America, led by extraordinary public
servants”**

— Antony J. Blinken



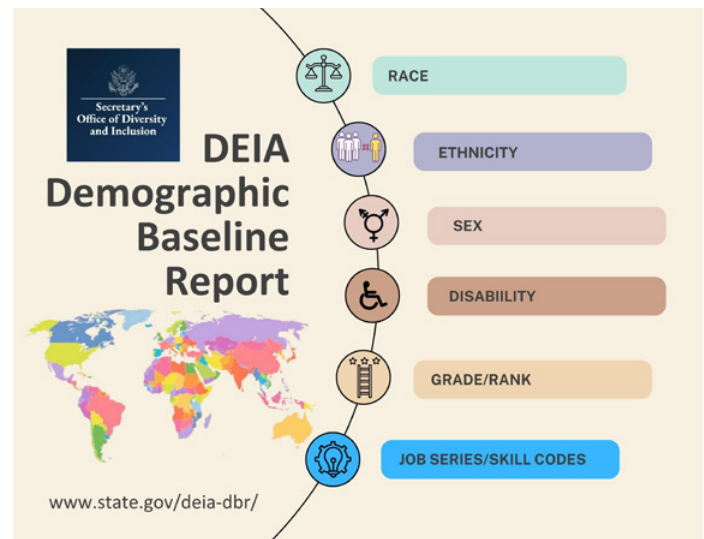
State Department Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Zakiya Carr Johnson meets with civil society, private sector, and Afro-Colombian as well as Indigenous partners in Colombia. (Embassy Bogota photo)

Evidence-Based, Data-Informed Decision-Making

S/ODI is committed to making recommendations on how to advance DEIA based on science-backed evidence and data. With this in mind, S/ODI moved, in its first year, to establish both a quantitative and qualitative DEIA baseline for the Department to help assess future progress toward creating a model workplace.

★ **Established a DEIA Demographic Baseline Report (DBR)** for the Department with a publicly available, interactive dashboard that is updated at the beginning of every new calendar year. The Report provides a bureau-by-bureau breakdown of the Department’s Civil Service, Foreign Service Generalists, and Foreign Service Specialists by race, ethnicity, sex, disability status, grade/rank, and job series/skill codes. Data is compared to the total U.S. population, per the most recent census, and U.S. labor market data that provides information on who is most likely to be recruited in any given job series/skill code. As of January 2024, the DBR contains three years of demographic data and is available at state.gov/deia-dbr. This groundbreaking report will allow us to see trendlines over time.

★ **Created a DEIA Climate Survey** that is designed to run biennially. The survey results provide the Department actionable information by allowing it to assess important indicators related to organizational health and culture, including employees’



self-reported experiences with discrimination (including harassment), bullying, related retaliation, and views on organizational transparency, accountability, reasonable accommodations, and DEIA policies using a range of behavioral and attitudinal measures.

- **In 2022**, the inaugural DEIA Climate Survey garnered more than 8,600 responses from the Department's U.S. Direct Hire workforce (USDH), which includes Civil and Foreign Service employees as well as employed Eligible Family Members.
- **In 2024**, the DEIA Climate Survey continued to survey all USDH employees and collected responses from more than 8,200 employees, or about 28% of the workforce.

DEIA History

1963 was one of the first instances when the Department gathered employee demographic data on racial and ethnic identities, through a Minority Group Survey that aimed to provide data to the President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.



From left: Robb Dooling, Roberta Mather, Neal Murata, American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter Sequoia Taylor-EI, Traci Goodrich, and Julia Wolhandler teach the audience how to sign “deaf diplomacy” in ASL during the Deaf Diplomacy at State event, April 15. (Photo by Amanda McCarthy)

Inclusive and Accessible Consular Operations

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) takes seriously its role as the largest public-facing presence of the Department of State, both domestically and overseas, and is committed to ensuring all personnel have an inclusive, equitable, and accessible workplace and to expanding outreach to underserved, diverse communities in the U.S. and abroad.

- ★ **Trained 3,000 Consular staff in disability allyship under the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program**, an international allyship initiative that trains people and organizations around the world to better support individuals, both staff and customers, with non-apparent – “hidden” – disabilities, including hearing loss, multiple sclerosis, or autism.
- ★ **Gave U.S. citizen passport applicants the ability to select the “X” gender marker in regular (tourist) U.S. passport books or cards.** The gender selected does not have to match the gender

on the applicant’s evidence of citizenship or photo ID, and no medical documentation is required.

- ★ **Joined the Deaf Diplomacy at State team for panel discussions** focused on the experiences of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) employees and consular applicants. The first two panels, in English and American Sign Language, focused on how to create an accessible and inclusive workforce for DHH colleagues and consular customers on both sides of the interview window.
- ★ **Conducted accessibility reviews** to better understand the customer journey through consular waiting rooms. Consular Chiefs have partnered with post Regional Security Officers and Facilities Managers to identify accessibility challenges and generate suggestions to improve training, processes/procedures, and physical infrastructure to better accommodate consular applicants.



From left: Heather Pishko, Alex Barrasso, and Elizabeth Latham wear Sunflower lanyards at the office in Washington, February 6, 2024. (Photo by Isaac D. Pacheco)

★ **Established CA Delivers**, an initiative providing up to \$5,000 per year in project funding for overseas posts and domestic offices to further outreach to underserved customers and enhance consular services through a DEIA lens in the United States and around the world.

- **In its first year**, CA Delivers provided nearly \$140,000 for projects at 47 overseas consular posts and 15 passport agencies – from our largest consular missions to sole consular officer posts.
- **Examples include** translating guidance into indigenous languages; creating spaces for nursing parents in consular waiting rooms; making fingerprint scanners more accessible for visa applicants; and exploring diverse populations through group discussions and outside speakers.

★ **Announced the new CA Leadership and Management Tenet: “Cultivate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion”**, to which “Accessibility” was later added

and incorporated into the Bureau’s key professional development resources: the Consular Leadership Indicator, the Consular Bidder Assessment Tool, and the annual Consular Leadership Day.

★ **Made consular services more accessible** to DHH individuals. Funded projects through CA Delivers to increase accessibility for DHH individuals, such as introducing a new text-based communication device (UbiDuo), captioning consular waiting room videos, creating new instructional videos in local sign languages, and training consular officers to provide basic sign language greetings.

★ **Amplified and distributed trainings and presentations on DEIA topics** among consular professionals worldwide on topics such as colorism on the visa line and interactions with non-binary customers and colleagues. These presentations – created by consular professionals infusing DEIA into their daily work – have been amplified and spread across the Bureau, empowering consular sections to better serve our mission.

DEIA History

2022’s rollout of the gender-neutral passport made the State Department the first federal government agency to offer the X gender marker on an identity document.

Training, Learning, and Professional Development

As the Department's training academy and driver of historical transparency initiatives, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has a special responsibility to model and advance the Department's DEIA values. The following highlights ways FSI is promoting an inclusive work culture throughout the Department:

- ★ **Launched the IDEA Center for Inclusive Leadership**, an internal, inclusive workforce and workplace development unit focusing on policy, competency, development, and Department-wide coordination.
- ★ **Designed and developed the IDEA Lens Resource**, an educational tool that provides a practical set of resources to help define and contextualize DEIA approaches for the Department.
- ★ **Developed FSI's People Principles**, outlining FSI's expectations regarding employee behavioral conduct during meetings, presentations, classes, workshops, on/offsites and other individual and/or team-based activities.
- ★ **Completed toolkits in more than 50 languages** that provide DEIA vocabulary and resources in areas including race and racism, women's and gender issues, LGBTQI+ issues, religious freedom, refugees and migration, and disability rights.
- ★ **Published a study on how U.S. diplomats leverage diversity** to advance policy goals, including a case study on Reaching Afghans to Build Support for Women in Public Life.
- ★ **Honored women codebreakers** in World War II in the dedication of the cafe in Building B at the FSI.
- ★ **Prepared senior leaders to apply new frameworks** to U.S. foreign policy so as not to disadvantage marginalized communities abroad in collaboration with the Department's Special Representative for Racial Equity and Justice.
- ★ **Developed recommended reading lists** for Department officials to answer questions on how race and racism affect U.S. foreign policy, the experiences of foreign affairs agency employees, and international relations.
- ★ **Published a timeline of diversity** in the Foreign Service for use in the FSI classroom, including webinars on the History and Impact of the Lavender Scare on the Department and Disability History and U.S. Foreign Policy.
- ★ **Piloted RISE (Respectful, Inclusive, and Safe Environments)**, a virtual training developed by USAID with content by Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).



Secretary Blinken delivers remarks to a crowd at the second annual Minority Serving Institutions Conference at the Department of State. (Official State Department photo by Chuck Kennedy)

Initiatives from the Bureau of Global Talent Management (GTM), Including in Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

- ★ **Converted student internships to paid** internships to broaden recruitment to traditionally underserved communities, all socio-economic groups, and outside of the Washington, D.C. metro area. We also focused recruitment efforts on minority-serving institutions, women’s colleges, public and land grant universities, and community colleges. The summer 2024 cohort included 343 interns from 47 states.
- ★ **Launched a fully virtual Foreign Service Officer Assessment** to significantly increase accessibility for candidates and eliminate travel costs and other logistical burdens.
- ★ **Made DEIA part of all Civil Service performance evaluations**, so that advancing DEIA became the responsibility of all civil and foreign service employees, seeing this as another way to improve organizational strength and advance foreign policy.
- ★ **Hired 787 employees with disabilities** through the non-competitive Schedule A Hiring Authority between 2021 and 2024. Since 2021, the Department has increased the representation of employees with disabilities from 14.6% to 20.1% (as of June 30, 2024), surpassing both the EEOC’s and the Agency Priority Goal (APG) targets, in part by hiring 300 employees with disabilities through the non-competitive Schedule A hiring authority in FY 2023 alone.
- ★ **Changed the name of the Foreign Service “Oral” Assessment to the “Officer” Assessment** to recognize that communication can be either verbal or through sign languages.
- ★ **Hosted the Department’s inaugural Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) Conference** in 2023 to raise awareness of the Department’s work. This occurred after 13 previous conferences for Historically Black Colleges and Universities and 3 symposia for students of Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Secretary Blinken presented at both the 2023 and 2024 MSI Conferences.
- ★ **Created the Ambassador Edward J. Perkins Memorial Awards for Leadership in Diversity and Inclusion.** This award recognizes Department employees who have a demonstrated track record of advancing DEIA in concrete terms and have shown exceptionally effective leadership, skill, imagination, and innovation in extending and promoting DEIA for our workforce, as Ambassador Perkins did throughout his 25 years at the State Department.



Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Richard Verma speaking and Sign Language Interpreter Rafael Treviño signing “Accessibility” at the 33rd Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. (State Department photo)

Accessibility and Accommodations

In a world where 16% of the population has a disability, disability talent empowers diplomacy. At the negotiating and policy-making table, people with disabilities contribute the insights gained from their lived experiences. That includes a wide range of apparent and non-apparent disabilities, neurodiverse perspectives, and knowledge of the 300 sign languages in the world as well as protactile languages based on touch. 2021-2024 State Department accomplishments in disability inclusion included the following milestones.

★ **Hosted the first-ever Sign@State**

Symposium in 2022 to introduce the Department's Deaf Leaders in Diplomacy and share what the future of diplomacy looks like when we include the 16% of the world population that has a disability.

★ **Streamlined the Department's process for reviewing personal electronic medical devices and assistive technology (EMDAT)**

as reasonable accommodations for a disability. The new process helps to reduce approval time for device use and keeps employees informed at each step of the approval process.

★ **Developed and implemented a new biennial customer experience survey** for employees who inquire about or request reasonable accommodations, to address and improve the employee experience related to reasonable accommodations.

★ **Released a suite of accessibility applications**

that allow all employees to independently download and use screen-reading software, magnification software, a color contrast tool, and more, removing the barrier of employees asking an IT administrator to install the applications individually.

★ **Redesigned the "Disability and Reasonable Accommodations"**

training course that is mandatory for all first-time supervisors and managers with additional information on the reasonable accommodation process, the legal framework, and disability inclusion best practices. The first year after the course was revised, 1,381 employees took the course, a 200% increase in course completion over the previous year, representing 30% of the 4,678 employees who have taken the course since its creation in 2013.

DEIA History

In **2016**, the Department created the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA) out of a desire to be more accessible and responsive to reasonable accommodation requests. OAA was created from different, already-established entities that merged into a hub of expertise on accessibility, accommodations, and disability. The creation of OAA shows the Department's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible workplace.

★ **Launched American Sign Language interpretation at the Department Press Briefing**, underscoring our commitment to inclusion and providing information that everyone can access.

★ **Expanded use of the Access Center** that opened in December 2020 as a multipurpose, multifunctional space for everyone committed to creating and supporting a more diverse, inclusive, and accessible Department. The facility provides tools, resources, and support to employees with disabilities, contributing to the Department’s broader effort of cultivating a culture of inclusion. The Department continues to increase tours and outreach centered on assistive technology, accommodations, and accessibility services, with nearly 1,000 individuals having taken an in-person or virtual tour of the Access Center since 2021.

★ **Launched a yearly accessibility and accommodations survey** for posts to assess post-specific information for accessibility of public spaces and buildings, public transportation, housing, U.S. government buildings, and accommodations for persons with disabilities. Between 2021 and 2024, more than 231 posts (out of about 260) completed and submitted the accessibility and accommodation survey for persons with disabilities to learn about the accessibility of a post and surrounding areas.

★ **Established a new Judith “Judy” Heumann Memorial Award for Leadership and Service in Accessibility, Disability Rights, and Inclusion**, in 2024. The award recognizes an employee’s outstanding accomplishment in furthering the Department’s accessibility, disability rights, and inclusion goals and also memorializes Heumann’s work at the Department and around the world.



Judith Heumann, the first Special Advisor on International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State. (Photo by Taylordw)

Overseas Activism

Volunteer DEIA Councils at overseas posts are instrumental to the Department's DEIA progress. Councils include members of our Locally Employed (LE) staff who live in the countries within which we serve and make up nearly two-thirds of the State Department's overall workforce. They and DEIA Councils are key partners in building an inclusive workplace.

★ **Embassy New Delhi instituted a DEIA Hall of Fame** in which employees receive a certificate from the Ambassador after they are publicly nominated by four different coworkers in the four categories of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for their actions.

★ **Embassy Belgrade organized workshops on DEIA** in Serbia to include environmental advocacy and feminism in rural and small communities; one participant noted that inclusion was “demystified” for them and that the events helped them understand it is about giving people the opportunity to express themselves.

★ **Embassy Kathmandu established a LE Staff DEIA Advisor position** to sustain institutional knowledge on DEIA and build accessibility as well as inclusion of rural, women, multifaith, and other underrepresented populations in recruitment practices.

★ **The LE Staff Advisory Council (LESAC) brought together LE Staff from around the world** in regular meetings with the Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, participation in June 2024's inaugural DEIA Leadership Summit, and advocacy for LE Staff worldwide.

★ **The Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation launched the Women in Strategic Trade (WiST) initiative** to promote the advancement, leadership, and meaningful participation of women in strategic trade controls, and organized a roundtable with women leaders in Panama's law enforcement agencies to discuss shared professional advancement challenges, exchange best practices, and form a support network.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken participates in the launch of the U.S.-Afghan Consultative Mechanism with Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights Rina Amiri at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. in July 2022. (Photo by Chuck Kennedy)





Ambassador Sharon L. Cromer (seated, center) sits for a group photo with the Women's Leadership Group of Embassy Banjul in January 2024. (Photo by Gabriel C. Njie.)

Small Project Initiative

In FY 2022, the Secretary’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion launched its Small Project Initiative where State Department personnel may submit project proposals to make the Department a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible workplace. The Department’s worldwide workforce demonstrated phenomenal creativity in submitting 24 proposals in FY22, 71 in FY23, and 76 in FY24. Projects included:

- ★ **Embassy Panama City hosted inclusive language training** on how the Spanish language discusses women and gender, Panamanians with disabilities, LGBTQI+ Panamanians, Afro-Panamanians, indigenous communities — specifically Wounaan Panamanians, and HIV-positive Panamanians and the stigmas they face.
- ★ **The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs launched a reverse mentoring program** to pair colleagues who self-identified as members of different communities to explore their diversity and better understand one another.
- ★ **Embassy Banjul organized career development training for Gambian women**, and participants included The Gambia’s First Lady, Fatoumata Bah Barrow, as well as Fatoumatta Njai, one of the country’s few female members of parliament.
- ★ **Embassy Muscat sponsored an American Sign Language Course** for an LE staff member who was already fluent in Arabic Sign Language, to bridge communication between the Deaf population in Oman and the U.S. Mission.



Black History Month paintings grace the main State Department cafeteria as part of the Diversity Calendar Gallery of paintings created by a Locally Employed Staff member from U.S. Consulate General Dubai in February 2024. (Photo by Robb Dooling)

- ★ **Embassy San Jose trained employees on gender equity and inclusion** in partnership with Efecto Boomerang, a local women-led organization that taught allyship and bystander training skills.
- ★ **Consulate Sao Paulo commemorated Black Consciousness Month** with an event in which employees learned about inclusion of Afro-Brazilian culture through Capoeira music and LGBTQI+ culture through Vogue dance.
- ★ **Embassy Santo Domingo diversified its Local University Internship Program** by funding transportation and sundries to make possible internships at the U.S. Embassy for local students from historically underrepresented backgrounds, including smaller, local universities, promoting geographic diversity.
- ★ **Embassy Phnom Penh launched a DEIA Library** for all ages, featuring over 150 books in English and Khmer on DEIA and the traditions and cultures of both the United States and Cambodia. Nearly one-third of the library’s catalog was checked out in the first three weeks of its operation.



Secretary's Office of Diversity and Inclusion

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