



## AAJA@UNITY

### J Camp

Multicultural High School Journalism Program

Fri, July 30 — Wed, Aug 4

Co-sponsored by American Airlines, Chevron/Texaco, The McClatchy Company/Minneapolis Star-Tribune/Sacramento Bee, Knight Ridder, The Washington Post. Additional funding from The Challenge Fund for Journalism

### Executive Leadership Program (ELP) Advanced Session

Mon, Aug 2 — Tue, Aug 3

ELP is made possible through a grant from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation. The Advanced Session is sponsored by Gannett Co., Inc., with additional funding from People magazine.

(pre-registration)

### AAJA / New York Times Pilot Mentor Program:

**BUSINESS SIDE OF JOURNALISM**  
9-11am • Wed, Aug 4

### AAJA | New York Times Panel Discussion & Career Counseling:

**"MAKING THE SWITCH"**  
12-4pm • Wed, Aug 4

### AAJA General Membership Meeting

12:30-2:00pm • Thu, Aug 5  
Sponsored by DaimlerChrysler

### WHERE IS THE MEDIA INDUSTRY HEADING?

4-5:30pm • Thu, Aug 5

### REACHING FOR THE TOP

8:30-9:45am • Fri, Aug 6

### US MEDIA OR INDEPENDENT MEDIA:

How American Journalism has Covered the Middle East and Influenced How We are Perceived Around the World  
4-5:30pm • Fri, Aug 6

### SILENT AUCTION & RECEPTION

6-10pm • Fri, Aug 6

### ANNUAL GALA SCHOLARSHIP & AWARDS

## Banquet

7-9:30pm • Fri, Aug 6  
Co-sponsored by Buick/Cadillac

the south asian journalists association PRESENTS

### **CIVIL LIBERTIES SINCE 9/11**

4-5:30pm • Sat, Aug 7

**KARAOKE NIGHT** 9pm till late • Sat, Aug 7

## Thousands expected at UNITY 2004



In the same year as the summer Olympic Games and the U.S. presidential election, journalists of color will make their own mark this summer at UNITY 2004, one of the largest gatherings of journalists ever held.

Organizers expect more than 7,000 journalists, community leaders and politicians to attend the convention, themed "A Powerful Alliance. A Force for Change" on Aug. 4 to 8 at the Washington D.C.

Convention Center. The five-day conference brings together members from the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Journalists Association.

Ernest Sotomayor, UNITY's president, said some of the goals for this year's gathering are to continue promoting diversity in newsrooms, especially at top management ranks, and to encourage attendees to work together to make journalism better. "There's got to be a will," Sotomayor said. "We want to change the industry's mindset."

Mae Cheng, AAJA national president, said she hopes the convention will stimulate change in the future of staffing newsrooms. "We need to find new voices," she said. "We need to have our newspapers find more voices within the community so they become more relevant."

Convention goers can attend the more than 140 panels and workshops that explore a variety of hot topics in the industry – fair news coverage, equal representation in the industry and homeland security – as well as training sessions and writing workshops for interns and students.

### Unity at UNITY 2004

With thousands of journalists convening in the nation's capital, how is the convention designed to promote unity among attendees?

Sotomayor said it's important to recognize each organization's separate voices while working together to support each other's causes. "We have differences," he said. "We have very big differences of opinion. We should never be seen as always looking in unison."

Ivan Roman, NAHJ's executive director, said that UNITY 2004 is not only a convention, but a coalition about 7,000 people strong. Roman also pointed out some ways that the convention's structure will help foster interaction among all members and "force people to mingle" more so this year than at previous conventions:

Each organization will not have a central headquarters location and most of the events will be held at two sites: the Grand Hyatt Washington hotel or the convention center. Each organization will also only sponsor a total of four workshops that are open to everyone. AAJA's sessions include

- Aug. 5 Where is the Media Industry Heading?
- Aug. 6 U.S. Media or Independent Media: How American Journalism has Covered the Middle East and Influenced How We Are Perceived Around the World
- Aug. 6 Reaching for the Top
- Aug. 7 The South Asian Journalists Association Presents: Civil Liberties Since 9/11.

"I'm hopeful that all four panels will be of interest to all convention attendees," Cheng said.

Each organization will still host several of their own special events, including the NABJ Idol Search, the NAJA Tribal Media Institute and AAJA's Celebrity and Karaoke Night.

Roman encourages everyone to drop by NAHJ's El Gran Baile for some salsa dancing, following Friday's silent auction and reception. He said many AAJA members joined in the salsa celebration at previous conventions. "That's open to everyone and we expect them to come," Roman said. "It's designed in a way to encourage as much interaction as possible."

### Exploring Diversity

Roman also said that a big issue for everyone in the industry is addressing the demographic changes in the country and how the U.S. media is struggling to cover these changes accurately. "We need to learn what the new America is all about," Roman said. "We also need to learn and understand each other, the history of each group."

While convention goers discuss these issues and effectively learn how to work together, families and guests will have their own opportunity to explore diversity in the nation's capital. Capital Services Inc. will offer daily tours around the area. Destinations include the National Museum of Asian Art, the National Museum of African Art, the Hispanic Cultural Heritage Tour and Old Town Trolley Tours.

Sotomayor said he hopes journalists will take the lessons they learn back to their workplaces and communities and advocate for change. "A lot of people leave very charged and feel that they can make a difference," he said.

Sherry Anne Rubiano will be a senior at the University of Southern California. This summer, she is interning at the *Indianapolis Star*.

# AAJA Advantage



With the UNITY convention around the corner, I know many of you, like me, are excited about the opportunity to meet up again with old friends and peers, brush up on our newsroom skills and participate in thought-provoking discussions about the future of our industry.

I also know that while record numbers of AAJA members will be attending UNITY, still hundreds more will not be able to go due to cost constraints, family commitments and work obligations.

But the good news is that at AAJA, membership no longer centers around an annual national convention. In recent years, the AAJA national office and leadership has worked tirelessly to ensure that we continue to add value to your membership.

So in addition to an annual national gathering, AAJA has increased the number of national programs it provides its members year-round. The programs are designed so that they will be of interest to members with various experience levels, from students and starting journalists to mid-career and senior journalists.

I've often heard from AAJA members that the cost of attending a training session has prevented them from polishing their newsroom skill sets. With many companies scaling back on their training budgets, AAJA members cannot afford to attend the sessions when they consider the cost of tuition, travel and lodging.

While not meant to be a replacement for participating in training workshops, AAJA has begun providing learning opportunities over the Internet. With the partnership of the Poynter Institute and Cox Newspapers, our members from Los Angeles to Hong Kong and from Cleveland to London have taken advantage of the online classes we've begun to offer on topics like reporting across cultures and the art of interviewing. We will continue to offer these and many more classes via the Internet in the months to come.

I've also heard from many mid-career and veteran journalists that they're tired of their current jobs and are contemplating a move outside of the industry.

At AAJA, we've created a week-long business fellowship with host papers like the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *The New York Times* to introduce to the business side of the industry people with either aspirations to be a publisher of a paper or with an itch to do something new. The success of the program has encouraged AAJA to continue offering these opportunities. The next fellowship will be hosted by the *Arizona Republic*.

It's often a sore point for me when I'm asked by top editors around the country for the names of AAJA members who are high-level editors who they can recruit. Without having to consult our membership list, I can tick off the handful of AAJA members in that category. Yet there are dozens of AAJA members in the starting and mid-level managerial levels who are finding advancement difficult. With that in mind, AAJA is proud to announce its latest partnership, this time with Gannett Newspapers, for a management development mentor program to kick off in January. The goal of the program is to help our members become top editors in the industry by first helping them crack through to the mid-level managerial levels.

The response to these and many other new programs AAJA has offered has been tremendous. I'm proud to announce that this year, we've surpassed last year's historic membership number. In 2003, AAJA was 1,999 members strong. This year, with half a year left to go, AAJA has grown to about 2,150 members.

There is much more to come at AAJA in the next few months, and I encourage all of you to take full advantage of your AAJA membership. ☺

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# AAJA's Iritani wins Pulitzer Prize

By THOMAS LEE  
MINNESOTA CHAPTER

**E**velyn Iritani was researching a story last year on how American companies were shifting manufacturing jobs to China when she came across a startling statistic: about ten percent of U.S. imports from China originated from one source – Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

“The facts just jumped out at us,” said Iritani, who covers international business for the *Los Angeles Times*. “Wow, that’s significant. That company is a very large influence not just in retail but around the world. ...It became increasingly clear the incredible clout Wal-Mart plays in the global economy and what that brings.”

Iritani, along with fellow business reporters Nancy Cleeland and Tyler Marshall, would later write “The Wal-Mart Effect,” a three-part series that examined the enormous economic power of the world’s largest company and how it uses that power. For their work, Iritani and her colleagues were awarded the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting. (Cheryl Diaz Meyer, a photographer for the *Dallas Morning News* and another AAJA member, also won a Pulitzer Prize for her work in covering the Iraq conflict.)

That the series struck such a chord with readers and ultimately the Pulitzer judges is a testament to the public’s love/ hate relationship with Wal-Mart. The company, based in Bentonville, Ark., is the country’s largest retailer, largest grocer, and sells

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**A**IMEE PHAN is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa’s creative writing program. Phan has written for *The Oregonian*, *USA Today*, and *The New York Times*. She is also an alumnus of the *Voices* student newspaper project. During the UNITY convention, Phan will speak at two workshops: “Getting Published: An Author’s Guide” and an “Author’s Panel.” Phan’s book “We Should Never Meet”, published by St. Martin’s Press, will be on sale in September. Here she talks with *DateLine* via e-mail about what inspired her book, blank computer screens, and why struggling authors need a day job.

**Q: What is your book about?**

A: My book is a fictional recounting of the historical events of Operation Baby Lift, the emergency evacuation of 2,000 Vietnamese and Amerasian orphans from Vietnam a few weeks before the fall of Saigon. I got the idea while I was trying to write a story about a social worker dealing with a problem child. My mother was a social worker in Little Saigon, California, and worked with unaccompanied minors from Vietnam. These were boat refugees who escaped from Vietnam without any family, and didn’t have any family or friends to live with in America, so they ended up in foster homes. After school, she’d pick me up and I’d go with her on these foster care home visits. What happened to a lot of these kids could be very sad. Some of the boys ended up joining Vietnamese gangs. Some of the girls got pregnant and ended up going from foster care to welfare. Once foster children turn eighteen, they are officially emancipated from the state and considered adults. Then, there was no one was looking out for them. They were alone, and in a country that could still seem very foreign.

**Q: You used to be a journalist. What are the biggest similarities/differences between being a journalist and an author?**

A: The biggest similarity is the research I do to make my fiction appear as realistic and legitimate as possible. I also write in the same way: in bits and pieces and put them all together like a puzzle. The biggest difference is that in fiction, I get to make stuff up. I can make up all the juicy quotes I want for my characters.

**Q: Describe your writing process.** A: I spend about a month before each story gestating over what I want to happen and who the characters are. The plot and characters usually come together for me. I write in waves. I need downtime between each story I write to think about what I want to write. I can’t sit down in front of the computer without thinking the entire plot and characterization through. This doesn’t mean that the plot or characters don’t change while I’m writing, but I need to know what I’m doing. I hate staring at a blank computer screen.

**Q: How much research did you do for this book?**

A: A lot. Every time I found a book or information on the baby lift or Vietnamese refugee children, I bought it. I searched the Internet for Web sites on Vietnamese orphanages and adopting Vietnamese children. Research was very important to me because even though this is fiction, I wanted the world to seem just as authentic as the historical event, so it could feel like it really did happen.

**Q: Describe your experiences with the publishing industry. Is what you thought it would be? Any surprises? Are you little more wary about the process?**

A: I know lots of people get disillusioned by the publishing industry because it does all come down at the end to being about money and profits. I am very lucky to have a good agent who handles a lot of the money and negotiations stuff for me. Writing is a craft and publishing is a business. My agent handles most of the business part, but I have to know a lot about it too. The advance was not huge and wild, which is what every aspiring writer wishes. I still have to work to make a living. The money from the book helps, but cannot sustain me. Very few writers live purely off their books and I knew this coming into the craft. My creative writing teachers in college always told us: “Don’t do this for the money. You’ll be very disappointed. Do this because you cannot help it, because you cannot do anything else.” And it’s very true. I do this because I want to, knowing well, that it’s not a very secure job, and I’ll have to find supplementary income elsewhere. ☺

**FROM STUDENT TO PUBLISHED AUTHOR**

(Prestige? Yes. Wealth? No.)



**program news**

Five members of the Asian American Journalists Association participated in a 5-day media trip to Myanmar (Burma) January 24-30, 2004, co-sponsored by AAJA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Hearst Newspapers. The purpose of the trip is to enable participants to gain a better and more informed perspective of major programs being undertaken by UNDP in this South Asian country. Vanessa Hua recounts her experience with the AAJA/UNDP media trip to Burma.



# experiential learning

**AAJA | UNDP media tour ~ BURMA**

bulbs, which glow like Jedi sabers. Shwedagon Pagoda, the nation's holiest Buddhist site, glimmers gold in the distance.

We check into the plush Nikko Hotel, across the street from Royal Lake, where the staff greets us with fruit juice and a smile. The cost: \$35 per night – cash only. Like elsewhere in Burma, the hotel no longer honors U.S. credit cards, but accepts its greenbacks.

In July 2003, President Bush signed an executive order which banned the exportation of financial services to Burma – after junta-

**BY VANESSA HUA**  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA  
CHAPTER

backed thugs attacked hundreds of opposition members and the government put Noble Peace Prize

winner and opposition leader Aung Sang Suu Kyi back under house arrest.

Poolside, a crowd sings karaoke. The luxury is surreal, in a country where the per capita income is \$300 annually.

**January 24-25**

**C**ROSSING THE INTERNATIONAL DATELINE. From the airplane window, I look down at the alien landscape. I see archipelagos of light. I could be on Mars. I could be underwater, lit by luminescent fish whose colors only come out at night. I fall asleep with my head against the window, in the deep sleep of elementary school bus-rides. When I wake up, the 11 hours have gone by out of a 15 hour flight that left San Francisco at midnight.

Originally, I was supposed to go to Sri Lanka in November, on a fellowship sponsored by AAJA and the United Nations Development Program. Because of the country's recent political upheaval, we are instead going to Burma. After all, dictatorships tend to be more stable than democracies.

Along with myself, the press contingent included Amy Yee, assistant editor at the *Financial Times*, Prashant Gopal, a reporter for the *Sun Sentinel*, Leela Jacinto, a producer at ABCNEWS.com, and Kyung Song, a staff reporter at the *Seattle Times*. Rene Ciria-Cruz of Pacific News Service was also selected to go, but he fell ill just before the trip.

I wonder about what lies ahead, and how much access I will have to sources or if I will be followed. I will only know once I arrive.

**Sunday, January 25**

I connect first through Hong Kong's sleek new airport, then through the bustling Bangkok terminal. The final leg, a flight from Bangkok to Yangon, takes about an hour. I am eager for my first glimpse of the country, renamed Myanmar by the military junta in 1989.

Rangoon at night is not as frenetic as other Asian cities that I've been to, such as Bangkok and Taipei. The buildings are low-slung and concrete, the architecture of the tropics. Open-air restaurants are lit up by long fluorescent



**Trishaw drivers** practice putting on condoms in Patheingyi, in Burma's delta. Population Services Int'l, a Washington D.C. non-profit, markets subsidized condoms and other health services. **Family traveling by longtail**, boats that ride low in the water and are powered by propeller at the end of a long drive-shaft. **On the "Love Boat"** en route to a village, reporters, and aid workers. *Pictured left to right:* Amy Yee, Peter Resurreccion (UNDP), Guy Stallworthy (Population Services International), Leela Jacinto, Prashant Gopal, Vanessa Hua, Kyung Song, & Tryve Olfarnes (UNDP).

**Monday, January 26**

We start off with a briefing with Charles Petrie, the resident representative for the UNDP in Burma. He has worked in some of the world's tragic places, such as Rwanda. He tells us his policy is to be completely open and transparent – since it's likely that the regime is bugging the room, tapping the phones and reading e-mail. His calm acceptance is surprising, but I guess you must learn to abide by local conditions or go mad.

We climb aboard the bus and drive four hours to the delta city of Patheingyi. We drive by fields, some flooded, and others dry and cracked or stubbled with straw. Golden stupas are as much a part of the landscape as water buffalo and houses on stilts. The roads seem to be under continuous construction, with people at the side of the road picking up gravel, piece by piece, to fill the pot-holes.

After lunch, we go to an educational center for monks, who are being trained in AIDS/HIV education. The monks teach others about high risk behaviors, such as sharing needles for religious tattoos or sharing the same blade in head shaving.

In Burma, a devout Buddhist country, many men enter the priesthood for two or three times in their life, as a child and as an adult, for a few weeks or months – which means someone infected could cycle in and out of the monastery.

We then go to the Tat U monastery, where we meet with peer health educators. I ask Aye Aye Myint, a college student, whether it is difficult to explain how to use condoms to men. The translated question draws laughter from the other female educators. Yes, she said, because they are single women. Talking about sex is taboo in the devoutly Buddhist country. That night, our group visits Shwemokhtaw Paya, with its golden bell-shaped stupa. It's

beautiful by moonlight, filled with couples and families strolling.

We then walk through the night market, filled with vendors selling dried fish, and blocks of wood, to be ground up into thanaka, the fragrant face powder worn as a cosmetic. People walk by with heavy loads balanced on their heads. Men and women alike wear longyi – the national dress of Burma, a long tube skirt worn in lieu of pants.

## Tuesday, January 27

We start off with an HIV/AIDS presentation by Burma's Department of Health. I am thrown off kilter by the use of acronyms, like ART, for anti retro viral treatment, IDP for intravenous drug users, and CSW for commercial sex workers.

We get into a debate with Min Thwe, deputy director of AIDS/STD at the Department of Health. As of mid-2002, 177,279 people were living with HIV/AIDS in Burma, according to government records – a figure that falls far short of a 1999 study by Johns Hopkins University, which suggests that at least 687,000 Burmese have HIV, or almost 3.5 percent of the country's adult population is infected. That study included pregnant women, soldiers, sex workers, gay men and blood donors, but excluded the nation's estimated 1.4 million drug users.

As for the first sexual experience of a man or a woman, and what proportion visit prostitutes – factors used in other studies to estimate the disease's scale – the government does not try to guess in its model, Min Thwe said.

Later that morning, we listen to a briefing from Population Services International, a Washington D.C. non-profit which markets condoms and other health services. Burma's health care system is decrepit, after years of under-funding from the regime.

Reporter Prashant Gopal and I have lunch with a teenage prostitute. She bursts into tears when we ask her about her family. I rub her shoulder in sympathy, but the gesture seems so inadequate.

Afterward, we stop by educational sessions of trishaw drivers and migrant workers, two high risk groups. That afternoon, we travel down the Irrawaddy River, on the bright green Love Boat, which brings AIDS/HIV education movies and videos to rural villages such as Wayagyaung, where we dock.

About 70 percent of Burma's population lives in the countryside, many without televisions. Population Services decided to bring the movies and videos to them with the Love Boat, and by car, known as Love Bug.

For her full article visit [http://www.aaaja.org/html/programs\\_html/programs\\_stundp\\_hua.html](http://www.aaaja.org/html/programs_html/programs_stundp_hua.html). ☺

Vanessa Hua is a staff writer at the *San Francisco Chronicle*.



BY ALBERT LEE  
AAJA PROFESSIONAL  
PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

On one's journey through life, we often come across speed bumps and numerous obstacles that block our paths to success. Without a guide, we can run into many dead ends. On March 10-14, twenty seven AAJA members found their own blueprints to fulfill their personal and professional goals at the Executive Leadership Program (ELP) Introductory Session, held at the Tribune Tower in Chicago, Illinois.

ELP, which is funded through a two-year grant from the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, helps AAJA members develop a greater understanding of the corporate environment and a broadened perspective of the role of leadership in the newsroom. After going through ELP, Maria Mercader, producer, CBS News said that, "Every topic that was introduced had some impact in understanding my place within the corporate structure. Things that were examined and discussed can very much help me maneuver the workplace system."

The program brought together journalists from different backgrounds. Daniel Yi, staff writer at the *Los Angeles Times* said that he "Never felt this kind of real camaraderie before. Beyond the program, I feel like I have two dozen mentors for the rest of my life." Echoing Yi's sentiments, Ameet Sachdev, business reporter, *Chicago Tribune*, added that "I also learned that I'm not in it by myself. Being a minority in a newsroom can be an isolating experience and now I have friends I can turn to."

ELP examines how cultural values affect our professional lives and how to value life/work balance. It can have a profound effect, enabling participants to take charge of their careers. HyunJu Chappell, designer, *San Jose Mercury News*, said that the program "Exceeded my expectations. ELP has been a turning point in my life. I have a firm grasp on my capabilities now and a stronger vision for what I want to accomplish in my career." Don Chareunsky, news copy editor, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, added that "A number of my colleagues who've gone through ELP said it was life changing, and they were right. The program reminded me why I love journalism and continue to be so passionate about it. The program also instilled in me the confidence to pursue opportunities and reminded me of the skills I've gained through the years and that I now bring to the table."

Yi noted that through ELP he learned, "That I am conflicted about my ambitions and how to reconcile that with the demands of being a father and husband. ELP also has helped me set a road map to clearing that."

Whether you are searching for an avenue for corporate leadership, or finding a balance between work and life, ELP can be your road map to personal and professional success. ☺

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ELP Class of 2004 *Top, from left:* Rodney Ho, Craig Nakano, Don Chareunsky, Ameet Sachdev, Lorene Yue, Daniel Yi, Michael Ko, Walden Siew. *Middle:* James Kwasnik, David Cho, Alan Tu, Nelly Min, Derek Wing, Elizabeth Lee, Maria Shao, Karen Okamoto, Terry Tang, Judy Averill, Amy Alipio. *Bottom:* Christina Leonard, Elaine Matsushita, Anne Marie Cruz, Tran Ha, Anupy Singla, Traci Tamura, HyunJu Chappell, Maria Mercader



more furniture, pet food, and toys than anyone else. Last year, Wal-Mart generated almost \$260 billion in sales, which is more than the GDPs of most countries. Its 1.5 million employees outnumber the U.S. armed forces. With that largess, the company is able to relentlessly drive down prices, earning the adoration of bargain-crazy consumers and the wrath of unions and small businesses. What Iritani hoped to do was paint a more human picture to the debate over Wal-Mart's power by exploring how the company strong-arms its overseas suppliers to continuously cut prices. As a result, workers are often required to do more with less pay.

"Wal-Mart is in the paper all of the time," Iritani said. "We were afraid nothing was new in our stories. But we wanted to help readers understand in the most personal way that the \$8 t-shirt they bought at Wal-Mart has an impact that radiates around the world."

Iritani says the stories were not anti-Wal-Mart. Rather, she said, they reflect the tradeoffs of living in a global economy. Wal-Mart helps generate jobs in poor countries where jobs are not readily available. At the same time, the company squeezes as much cost as it can from foreign manufacturers that workers often bear the consequences in terms of wages and working conditions.

"Wal-Mart brings jobs, you can't deny that," Iritani said. "But what kind of responsibility does the company have for making sure its role in the market place is a positive one? Responsibility doesn't end when it places an order" with the overseas factory. "Wal-Mart is a symbol of this incredible capitalist machine that we built and supported," she said. "There needs to be someone to be looking out for the other side...Around the world, you will find that ambivalence. It reflects mixed feelings people have about globalization and technology."

Iritani said reader reaction to the series has been overwhelming. Though she doubts people will stop shopping at Wal-Mart, Iritani hopes consumers are little more familiar with how Wal-Mart is able to offer those \$8 t-shirts. "All of us were shocked by how much reader response we got," she said. "I've been in the business for a long time and I never had this kind of response...It was very heartening that people were clearly interested in the issue." ☺

Thomas Lee is editor of *Dateline*. He is also a business reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

# Lost in 'gay' or Asian?



BY GLENN MAGPANTAY  
NEW YORK CHAPTER

In March, AAJA was flooded with complaints about a feature, "Gay or Asian?" in the April issue of *Details* magazine, written by Whitney McNally. Starting with a lead-in that demeaned working people ("One orders take-out sushi, the other delivers it"), suggestive phrases that portrayed Asian men as exotic objects ("the plumpest eel," "sashimi-smooth chest," "bonsai ass"), and caricatures of Asian men ("Delicate features," "Ladyboy fingers: Soft and long"), AAJA was among the first to respond, along with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and Asian Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF).

## THE INITIAL RESPONSE

AAJA demanded an apology from Editor-in-Chief Daniel Peres, citing the piece's "leering sexual innuendo and a litany of the most tired clichés about both Asian and gay culture with no goal other than to ridicule both groups."

AAJA further wrote in its letter, "Humor and 'edginess' are not excuses for caricaturing and insult, and the particular caricatures being played upon here – of gay men as predatory cruisers, of Asian men as exotic and effeminate (yet always scheming) – are precisely those that have been most damaging through the years."

The Gay Asian and Pacific Islander Men of New York (GAPIMNY) spearhead a coalition of twelve gay Asian groups across the country and wrote in their letter, "We are fighting for the rights of immigrants, for the right to marry, for the right to be free from profiling,

intimidation, and harassment. And now we are fighting your silly and cheap attempt at humor."

Then, an independent on-line petition drew more than 30,000 signers. Nevertheless, "*Details'* initial apology wasn't an apology,"

according to Margaret Fung, AALDEF Executive Director.

They essentially said, "We're sorry that you were offended."

To turn up the heat, GAPIMNY joined forces with a new group, Asian American Media Watchdog (AAMW) and organized 200 people to protest outside the offices of *Details*. Inside *Details*, their own employees were complaining of the feature. The editors finally got the message.

Peres and the Chairman and Editorial Director of Fairchild Publications, Patrick McCarthy, met with community groups and employees. Peres took full responsibility and apologized for crossing the line in "Gay or Asian?" They committed to working with AAJA on internal diversity trainings and promised that upcoming issues will feature more positive images and profiles of Asian Americans, as well as other people of color. The June/July issue included a full page apology and two pages of letters protesting "Gay or Asian?" These were big victories.

But did we win?

In reviewing the media coverage, ironically, gay Asians got lost in the fight against "Gay or Asian?" Most news outlets reported that the campaign was organized by gay leaders and Asian American activists. The implications were that all the gays were white and all the Asians were straight. In one daily New York newspaper, which was among the first to report on the germinating outcry, the reporter (name withheld) interviewed representatives from GAPIMNY, AAMW,

Glenn D. Magpantay, Esq. is Staff Attorney at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF). He is the co-chair of GAPIMNY.

and GLAAD, and a local politician. All were Asian American; two were gay.

According to the reporter, the story started out as a 15-inch piece, but the editors cut it down to 12 inches. Editors are always editing, and here, they edited out the gay Asians.

Coverage of the demonstration was not any better. Local newspaper and television reporters usually interviewed both Asian American and gay Asian spokespeople, but they only ran the non-gay Asian Americans in their stories. Asian Americans are well aware of being overlooked in news coverage. We're just too diverse or too small to be relevant. True, news stories just can't cover all those with something at stake. But in this campaign, the group stereotyped was the group left out.

Gay Asians joined forces with non-gay Asians to protest *Details*, not only to object to the racism in the feature, but also to respond to the vehement homophobia coming out as people responded to the piece. Some read the feature as suggesting that all Asian men were gay. So gay Asian groups not only had to educate *Details*, but also straight Asians. John Won, GAPIMNY Co-Chair offered another viewpoint. The piece suggested that "Asian men cannot be both gay and Asian. Or that when they are both, they should be mocked." He complained that "there are so few positive images of Asian Americans in the media and almost none of gay Asian men." GAPIMNY regularly responds to homophobic articles in the Asian-language press and racist articles in the gay press. His group has long complained that gay Asians face invisibility, isolation and stereotyping. Won said, "In the *Details* campaign, this all came true, yet again. Even when we win, our work continues." ☺



Last fall, Susannah Park, a 21-year-old Korean American living in Philadelphia, heard from a friend about a popular cheesesteak eatery in the city named “Chink’s Steaks.”

Taking offense at the epithet, she contacted the owner and tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to change the name.

Park’s efforts drew a smattering of news coverage, most notably a terse *Philadelphia Daily News* editorial on Jan. 15, which dismissed the outcry as a “silly waste of people’s time and energy” and accusing Park and other activists of “manufacturing” racial and ethnic strife.

That brought out the fight in us – and not just over *Daily News*’ 106-word missive. In the ensuing days, a group of us in AAJA haggled how to respond.

Should we come out with a statement supporting an Asian American journalist who got death threats for reporting Park’s protest? Should we write an open Letter to the editor, or an op-ed piece on the topic of hateful language? Should we tell the *Daily News* editors how “outraged” and “shocked” we were, or would those words just disengage them right off the bat? There was even talk of surveying the paper and finding the ethnic/racial makeup of the newsroom and the editorial board, and encouraging diversity training.

We did finally fire off a response to the *Daily News*, but in the two weeks that it took, we lost both momentum and urgency.

The experience led, in part, the AAJA national board to tweak the MediaWatch committee so that it could be more effective, engaging and relevant. Here’s what we’ve done:

- Formally named five other people to the committee, joining Media Watch chair Aki Soga and President Mae Cheng. They are: Aric Johnson of *The Arizona Republic*, Cheryl Tan of *In-Style* magazine, Mary Tan of WCCO-TV in Minneapolis, AAJA Deputy Executive Director Janice Lee and me.

- Designated Janice as the gatekeeper to vet concerns/requests emailed to the committee ([mediawatch@aja.org](mailto:mediawatch@aja.org)); she would get back to those who bring up matters outside of the committee’s work (e.g. entertainment such as film and music, talk radio, shock jocks).

- Divided up the 50 states and D.C. among Aric, Cheryl and Mary (see *the list below*) and designated them the point person for complaints/cases involving the states they’re assigned. The whole committee would help but one of those three would be in charge of leading the discussion and, if necessary, drafting a response.



## AN EYE ON THE MEDIA

BY ABE KWOK  
ARIZONA CHAPTER

- Set a goal of responding to an issue within five business days.

- Set a goal of contacting journalism schools and at-large members in markets where there’s no AAJA chapter to enlist their help at spotting news coverage problems and alerting us.

- Pledged to give MediaWatch issues more prominence on AAJA’s website.

It’s a work in progress, granted. We still struggle on occasion on getting a hold of radio/television transcripts or news segments. We find ourselves in need of a fund to pay for dubbing services or tapes. And on one occasion, we wrote a somewhat misguided letter of protest relying on second-hand accounts of others instead of thoroughly evaluating the coverage ourselves. But we’ve made great strides, too. Our response to *Details* magazine’s imbroglia

of a satire, “Gay or Asian?,” in late March packed a punch. Asian American activist/community groups took up the cause, the media covered the controversy and *Details* Editor-in-Chief Daniel Peres issued several apologies, including one in the magazine to its readers. The *Details* and *Daily News* cases bear out one other point, and it’s a significant one: MediaWatch would achieve little, if anything, if not for AAJA members and others who bring these matters to light.

We ask for your continued vigilance and welcome any suggestions and feedback.

How to get a hold of us: Email us at [mediawatch@aja.org](mailto:mediawatch@aja.org). MediaWatch contacts: MediaWatch contacts: **Cheryl’s states (18):** Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, DC, West Virginia. **Aric’s states (14):** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai’i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming. **Mary’s states (19):** Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Wisconsin ☺

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Abe Kwok is AAJA’s vice-president for print. He is also an on-line editor for the *Arizona Republic*.

## PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

**AAJA / Poynter Fellowships:** "Leadership for Visual Journalists" takes place September 8-11 for directors of design, graphics, and photography. The deadline to apply is July 14. "Convergence for Teams: Vision & Values in Action" takes place October 24-29 for senior newsroom leaders to examine the plans and best practices of converged newsrooms around the country. The deadline to apply is August 30. Poynter covers tuition and housing, AAJA covers transportation. **AAJA Business Fellowship:** AAJA offers business fellowships to members interested in developing a better understanding of the collective challenges of running a newspaper or media company. The next business fellowship takes place September 27-29, 2004 and will be held at *The Arizona Republic*. The three day fellowship will include round-trip airfare and

lodging. Applications must be received by August 8. **UNITY Critiques:** Professional journalists and recruiters will conduct critique sessions with print, television, radio, photo and online journalists and students in the Career Resources Center at the UNITY Convention. Appointments will be scheduled prior to the convention, but a limited number of appointments will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis during the convention. For more information on these or other professional programs visit our Web site or email [albertl@aja.org](mailto:albertl@aja.org)

## STUDENT PROGRAMS

AAJA National is pleased to announce the student participants for this year's Unity Student Projects and Unity Student Campus happening at the Unity convention in Washington, D.C. from August 1-8, 2004. The following is a list of programs and AAJA participants:

- **Student Campus** *The Student Campus participants are:* **Christopher Gu**, Fordham University, Lin-

coln Center; **Ruth Liao**, University of Texas, Austin; **Shruti Mathur**, The Johns Hopkins University; **Andrea Hernandez**, University of California, Berkeley; **Jaigene Kang**, University of Illinois, Chicago; **John Zachary de Dios**, University of Arizona; **Stacy Austin**, Oregon State University; **Emily V. Tan**, New York University; **Angel Q. Zhang**, Purdue University; **Aldrich Tan**, University of California, Davis; **Brittany Ducker**, University of Louisville; **Philana Woo**, Wellesley College; **Jean Luo**, Northwestern University; **Ashima Singal**, Northwestern University; **Willa Plank**, Syracuse University

- **New Media Project** *The new media student interns are:* **Laura Elizabeth Pohl**, University of Missouri; **Lianne Milton**, San Francisco State University; **Muoi Tran**, Stanford University

- **Radio Project** *The radio student interns are:* **Eric Shih**, British Columbia Institute of Technology; **Michelle Kim**, William & Mary College; **Susan Leem**, University of Minnesota

- **UNITY News** The newspaper student interns are: **Adeel Iqbal**, U.C. Berkeley; **Cynthia Cho**, Stanford University; **Keith Chu**, Northwestern University; **Janet Kim**, UCLA; **Julie Yue Zhou**, University of Pennsylvania; **Kim Nguyen**, Metro State College of Denver; **Mangai Pitchai**, Santa Barbara City College; **Susie Vang**, University of Minnesota; **Tim Martin**, Eastern Illinois University; **Yu Xing Zheng**, Northwestern University

- **UNITY News Now** *The television student interns are:* **Annalisa Burgos**, Columbia University; **Benjamin Kwan**, Northwestern University; **Catherine Cambra**, Emerson College; **Travis Han Cruz**, Glendale Community College; **Jenny Phan**, University of Minnesota; **Ade Astuti**, University of Missouri-Columbia; **Melissa Mecija**, U.C. Irvine; **Sumangali Somaskanda**, Northwestern University; **Tommy Tran**, San Jose State University; **Wen Tung**, Columbia College ☺

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