

# **ASIAN AMERICANS IN NEWSROOM MANAGEMENT**

*A Survey of TV and Newspaper Managers*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Few Asian Americans in management**

Asian Americans are under-represented in newsroom management at the nation's newspapers and broadcast-television stations.

The Asian managers that do exist are found primarily in large markets. There also are some in mid-size TV markets.

But Asian managers are just about non-existent in newspapers in mid-size markets and in both media in smaller markets.

These are among the findings of a study, by researchers at the Medill School of Journalism, that looked at 30 media markets, 10 large, 10 mid-sized and 10 small. The researchers contacted 51 newspapers and 141 TV stations in those markets.

Only 41% of the television stations and 67% of the newspapers responded to the survey, however, despite mailings and repeated telephone calls, giving the impression that Asian American representation is not an important issue for some.

None of the newspapers that responded had Asian Americans in the top three newsroom jobs, while two TV stations had Asians in one of the two top positions. Each media had seven Asians in senior-level jobs, with the remainder in middle management.

### **Why the scarcity?**

The editors and TV news managers surveyed said the shortage of Asians in management is due primarily to two factors:

- There are few Asian Americans in the job pool, and
- There are few Asians living in their market.

Other reasons cited for their scarcity were that Asians are not part of the informal "network" and that other minorities have higher numbers and need representation.

Several managers mentioned that most Asians prefer to be on-air, rather than in production, the track to advancement.

### **What can be done about it?**

The editors and TV news managers ranked the steps newsrooms could take to get more Asian Americans in management. The top four, in order of priority, were:

1. Encourage them to seek management jobs.
2. Provide mentors to junior Asian staffers.
3. Give more training in managing people, including leadership skills and assertiveness.
4. Give them important production responsibilities or beats.

Asian Americans at two California newspapers, which employed the majority of print managers found in the study, talked a lot about the

cultural stereotype of the quiet, unassertive Asian and how that can be a detriment in the “hard-charging” newspaper culture. Many had been through AAJA’s Executive Leadership Program (ELP), where they learned how others perceived them and how to better manage their own careers.

In order to address the shortage of Asians in management, the Medill researchers make the following recommendations to media companies:

- Recruit more aggressively.
- Provide mentors.
- Give more training, including leadership skills.
- Have more Asians fill in for vacationing supervisors and try out for openings.
- Sponsor those with potential in both print and broadcast for ELP.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences and leadership styles and re-examine the newsroom culture.
- Promote Asian Americans to high-profile jobs, as a message to others that they too can lead.
- Include minorities in the candidate pool when selecting managers.

Recommendations for Asian American journalists are:

- Make your wishes known and apply for challenging jobs.
- Ask for a mentor if one is not provided, and for training opportunities, including ELP.

Finally, AAJA should:

- Set up programs for TV job-seekers looking beyond on-air.
- Develop a job bank for management slots, where media companies can post openings.
- Create a DVD for production/management similar to the one for reporters.

## **BACKGROUND**

Recent surveys by the Radio-Television News Directors Association suggest that the proportion of Asian Americans in TV newsrooms nationwide is declining. Asian Americans are just 2.2% of broadcast newsroom employees in 2004, showing a steady drop from 2.7% in 2003, 3.1% in 2002 and 4.1% in 2001. By comparison, Asian Americans comprise about 4.2% of the U.S. population, according to the 2000 census.

Among TV news managers, Asian American representation lags even further behind. Asian Americans comprise just 1.3% of the nation's news directors in 2004, up slightly from 0.9% in 2003, according to the RTNDA survey. More than 87% of news directors are white, 6.7% are Hispanic, 3.2% are black and 1.3% are American Indian.

At daily newspapers, the numbers are equally bleak, though they are showing minor improvement. Asian Americans made up 2.8% of the newsroom workforce in 2004, as reported in the American Society of Newspaper Editors diversity census. They were 2% of the supervisors. These numbers were up slightly, after remaining essentially the same from 2001 to 2003, when they were 2.3% and 1.7%, respectively.

This study attempts to describe why Asian Americans are under-represented in TV and newspaper management ranks, and seeks recommendations to address the disparity.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This survey was conducted among newspaper editors and broadcast TV news managers in the nation's top 10 TV markets, along with markets 51-60 and 101-110. In all, the sample included 51 newspapers and 141 TV news operations in the 30 targeted markets – large, medium and small – as listed in the NATPE Guide to North American Media.

Self-administered questionnaires were mailed to newspaper editors in January 2004 and to TV news directors in March. Follow-up letters, e-mails and telephone interviews followed in April and May.

Twelve newspapers refused to participate, saying either that they didn't do surveys, didn't count employees by race or simply were unwilling to fill out the survey. Seven of those newspapers were in the largest markets.

In total, 58 TV surveys were completed, representing a 41% response rate, and 34 newspaper questionnaires were completed, a 67% response. The sample included respondents from the following markets:

1 – New York City	51 – Las Vegas	101 – Youngstown, Ohio
2 – Los Angeles	52 – Jacksonville, Fla.	102 – Lincoln, Neb.
3 – Chicago	53 – Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	103 – Greenville, N.C.
4 – Philadelphia	54 – Austin, Texas	104 – Charleston, S.C.
5 – San Francisco	55 – Albany, N.Y.	105 – Ft. Wayne, Ind.
6 – Boston	56 – Little Rock, Ark.	106 – Springfield, Mass.
7 – Dallas	57 – Fresno, Calif.	107 – Tyler, Texas
8 – Washington, D.C.	58 – Richmond, Va.	108 – Ft. Smith, Ark.
9 – Atlanta	59 – Dayton, Ohio	109 – Florence, S.C.
10 – Detroit	60 – Tulsa, Okla.	110 – Lansing, Mich.

Two additional TV stations, in markets 24–Baltimore and 50–Louisville, Ky., also responded to the survey. Their responses were grouped with those from stations in markets 51 to 60.

## **FINDINGS: Newspapers**

## **Asian Americans in Newspaper Management: Almost Non-existent in Small- and Mid-size Markets**

While daily newspapers in the largest markets tend to have one or more Asian Americans in newsroom management positions, those in small and mid-size markets have virtually none.

The 2004 study of 30 media markets – 10 small, 10 medium and 10 large – by Medill School of Journalism researchers, turned up no Asian American managers in the small-market newspapers surveyed. Eight of those papers had no Asians at all in their newsrooms.

In mid-size markets, there was only one lower-level manager in the 10 newspapers that responded to the survey, and half had no Asians in the newsroom.

For many of the newspapers surveyed, Asian Americans did not appear to be on their radar screen, usually, they said, because there were few Asians in the market and few – if any – had applied for jobs there. Two newspapers reported they once had an Asian American employee, but no more. “We had an Asian features editor for several years, who left,” one said.

### **Low numbers across markets**

In the largest markets, where 98% of the Asian Americans in management were found, three newspapers had no Asians in management jobs, six had one or two, and three showed between four and seven. Two newspapers, both in California markets with significant Asian populations, had a much larger representation, about one dozen and two dozen, respectively. Few had made it to senior levels, though.

The survey found no Asian Americans in the top jobs, as editor, executive editor or managing editor. Seven Asians were in senior-level positions: 3 senior editors, 3 assistant managing editors and 1 deputy managing editor, all of them in large markets.

There were, however, 57 Asian Americans in “pipeline” jobs – middle-management and supervisory positions. The most commonly held positions were assistant editor, with 13, and bureau chief, with 9.

In addition, there were 3 city editors, 7 department heads, 1 deputy AME, 1 copy desk chief, 7 deputy department editors, 8 assigning editors, 2 team leaders, 1 world editor and 4 in a category the top editor of that paper called graphics/photos/news. In the mid-size papers there was one manager listed as “supervisor.”

In just 6 of the 34 newspapers that responded, or 18%, the percentage of Asians in the newsroom equaled or exceeded the estimated

Asian population in the market. In the remaining 28, or 82%, the newsrooms didn't reach parity with their markets.

Estimates of the Asian American population in the small- and mid-size markets ranged from a low of a fraction of a percent to a high of "less than 5%." In the larger markets, the population estimates ranged from 3% to 26%, while Asians in the newsroom in these markets ranged from 1.3% to 17%. Five editors said they weren't sure how many Asians were in their markets.

### **Reasons for the shortage**

The most common reasons given for so few Asian Americans in management were:

- There are few Asians in the market, and
- There are few Asian American candidates in the job pool.

Each of these answers was given by 17 newspapers. Some editors did not see those as valid reasons, however.

"Anyone who's serious about hiring Asian Americans should go to the AAJA Convention. There's plenty of talent," said one, whose newspaper has several Asian managers.

"The pool of Asian managers is small, so we need to grow our own," said another.

Editors in smaller markets, especially, mentioned there were few Asians in their markets. Two editors said they did not recall any Asian Americans ever applying for work there, and two said they had very few Asian applicants.

"In 2\_ years as editor, I've never had an application for a job from an Asian American," one said. "It depends on the market. In the South, it's becoming harder to attract people of color. We have to recruit harder," said another.

Five newspapers said other minorities had larger numbers in their markets and needed representation at the paper. Though one hiring editor said, "We do not view newsroom representation of different ethnicities as a 'zero sum' condition."

One editor attributed the scarcity of Asian Americans in management to cultural differences, saying, "The newsroom culture is white male-dominated."

No editors agreed with the statement "Asian Americans are not assertive enough to lead," something many Asians believe is a common stereotype and perhaps the main reason they are not advancing faster.

### **Editors' recommendations for improvement**

When asked what newspaper companies could do to advance more Asian Americans into management, some editors in smaller markets said this question just did not apply to them, since they had no Asians at all.

For the others, the best ways to move more Asians in management were, in order of importance:

1. Encourage promising Asian Americans to seek positions of authority.
2. Provide mentors for Asian American staff.
3. Give more training in managing people, especially in assertiveness and leadership skills.
4. Give more Asians important beats that can lead to advancement.
5. Seek more opinions from Asian Americans in the newsroom (tied with #4).
6. Recognize differences in leadership styles and life backgrounds.
7. Give more training in managing budgets.

“Get Asian Americans interested in coming to work at newspapers, period,” said one editor who couldn’t recall ever having an Asian applicant.

“Simply put, we just must promote more people of Asian descent, prepare them as well as we can, and ensure we hire them at all levels,” said a large-market hiring editor. “This is not a complicated matter.”

Several others agreed it was important to recruit harder. Advancement was important too.

“Certainly there is no shortage of talent or people,” one editor said. “They abound. We believe we are seeing the same sort of glass ceiling at the assigning-editor level that exists for women and other minority groups. Letting time pass until ‘things work themselves out’ is not an option. Identifying and grooming talent, leadership training like that provided by AAJA, API and others, as well as eagerness ... to give people a chance to run something – all are needed, now.”

## **FINDINGS: TV Stations**

## **Asian Americans Mostly in Large Television Markets, Missing from Small Markets**

Most of the Asian American presence in broadcast-television news management was found in the top 10 markets. This study found 73% of Asian American managers employed there. Just under 25% of the Asian American managers found were working in medium markets. And Asian Americans were barely present in the small markets, with just one newscast producer working at one station that responded in markets 101-110.

The vast majority of the 58 television station news managers who responded to the questionnaire did so by telephone interview after repeated calls. The initial mailing to the stations resulted in a less than 1 % response rate. Most of the news managers did not want to be quoted by name or station and said they simply did not have the staff to answer a questionnaire by mail.

### **Low numbers across markets**

The study found 1 Asian American news director and 1 Asian American assistant news director working in the top 10 markets. It found 7 Asian American executive producers, 5 of them in the large markets, 2 in the medium markets.

The largest number of Asian American managers in all markets were working as newscast producers. There were 10 working in the large markets, 2 in the medium markets and just 1 in the small markets surveyed.

### **Reasons for the shortage**

The response that there are few Asian American applicants for producing positions came up repeatedly in the interviews. "In recruiting for management jobs, I don't recall ever having an Asian American candidate," said one manager in a top-10 market.

Another big-market manager said there needs to be more awareness of the situation, "I'm an Asian American news manager. Sure we need more representation, but we need that for all ethnic groups. We shouldn't just say we need more Asians. I think the more we talk about it, with surveys and reports, it'll help. And, probably having more programs within high schools and colleges, recruiting people early-on into the profession."

Few Asians living in the market was cited (by 52%) as the primary reason for the small number Asian American managers. One middle-

market manager said, "We tend to have more African Americans and Hispanics in this market. I know we didn't score very well, but this is a typical snapshot of a newsroom in the South that's not a major market. We're typically going to have Asian American reporters, but we've not seen Asian American producer/managers."

A small-market manager in the Heartland put it this way, "Most markets in the Midwest, and anywhere other than the West Coast, don't really have an awful lot of Asian Americans, not a large pool to choose from who want to be managers."

Another small-market manager said, "If you don't have any Asians in your viewing audience, why would you have any Asian managers or on-air personalities? We try to hire staffers who reflect people we serve. We actually have more Muslims here than Asians; we actually have a Muslim sports guy."

A top-10 market manager said, "Our market is 97% Caucasian. There are not enough Asian Americans in the job pool. I've hired about 50 people, I've interviewed maybe four Asian Americans and hired three of them. We did have a show producer who wanted to move to Los Angeles, and I helped that person get a producing job at our sister station. I have the same problem hiring African Americans and Hispanics. I am colorblind when considering promotions, but have not had the opportunity to hire or promote Asian Americans."

That comment reflected those of managers in the large and medium markets who joined small-market managers in citing too few qualified applicants in the job pool as the other primary reason for the scarcity of Asian Americans in the upper newsroom ranks.

Seven (37%) large- and 16 (76%) medium-market managers said there were just not enough Asian American applicants for the jobs. Many said they wished there were more Asian Americans interested in management. "I'd like to see more people apply for positions. I just haven't had many Asian Americans apply at all for any of my open positions," said one middle-market manager. Another said, "I have never received an application from an Asian American for producer, assignment editor or manager."

A lack of applicants may be behind the very small numbers the study found in some of the other categories of management positions. The study found only 6 associate producers working in the large and medium markets, 2 field producers, 4 assignment managers, 1 sports director, 3 public affairs directors, 1 bureau chief, 1 health producer and 1 creative-services producer.

The lure of being on-camera instead of working behind the scenes was cited often by managers, regardless of market size, as a reason for low numbers of Asian American managers. A large-market manager said,

"The track for management is producing. And I get very few Asian American applicants for producing positions."

"Most are talent, and that's not the track to management," said one middle-market manager. This sentiment was echoed by another: "The reason is, not one wants to [produce and manage], most want to be on the air."

### **Station recommendations for improvement**

Encouraging Asian Americans to seek positions of authority was seen as the primary means, cited by 65%, to increase the number of Asian Americans in television news management. One large-market manager said, "I really believe that you need to start at the beginning, to encourage people to go into this profession from the beginning. Get them interested when they're beginning to think about careers."

Providing mentors to junior Asian American staffers was cited by 62% of respondents as the next best way to increase the number of Asian Americans in management.

One large-market manager, who has hired four Asian American women managers, said that step should begin in college, particularly with men. "I think if you want to have top-notch Asian Americans in TV management, we have to convince them that's what they want to study in school first," he said. "But it seems to me that a lot of Asian American men are not choosing journalism. They're choosing to study other disciplines, and therefore when it comes time to enter the workforce, there aren't many. I think we have to do a better job of recruiting these men at the point of entry – freshmen, sophomore year of college – convince them that journalism is a good field."

Another large-market manager called for more paid internships from the industry, "I know NBC has the News Associates program, and that's great, but they only take on a few people. I'd be more than happy to take on any candidate who wants to be on the producer-manager track. When I go to AAJA or Unity, everyone I meet wants to be on-air. Encourage them to take the producer-management track."

A manager in the middle markets commented, "I do think Asian Americans are under-represented. I especially think the mentoring program you mentioned, that should be done. We have a minority reporter-trainee program, and that's how one Asian American reporter was hired." Said another mid-market manager, "Mentoring would help the most, I think."

One choice in the survey was meant to determine if stereotyping Asian Americans as not being assertive enough to manage was seen as a problem in the industry. The choice of giving Asian Americans more training in managing people, especially in assertiveness and leadership

skills, was the first solution selected by managers in the small markets. But one manager chafed at the stereotyping, "It's so untrue [that they're not assertive enough]. They are the most productive reporters... It's like, every time I go to the conferences, everybody I run into wants to be on-camera... I've met just one Asian American male who wanted to do it [produce]. I wish there were more of them who wanted to go the producing-management route."

Improving training, leadership and assertiveness skills did rank third in all markets surveyed. But the bottom line kept returning recruiting and mentoring.

"It's so stereotypical to say Asian Americans are not assertive enough to lead," said a large-market manager. "A significant number are committed to being on-air and don't explore management opportunities. What needs to be done is more aggressive recruitment of Asian Americans from on-air ranks into management."

That thought was similar to one from an Asian American manager in a medium-sized market, "Training in budgets and leadership is good, if, again, you can find people who are interested. There aren't enough of them. It's not lack of better training, but to get them interested in the first place. Most of us [Asian Americans] do on-camera work."

From a small market came a familiar lament, "...The ones who are really worth their salt, solid people, they are snapped up faster than a free beer at happy hour. They're gone. And so be it ... we're the springboard to bigger markets."

One manager in the large markets called on the Asian American Journalists Association to take its "Men of AAJA" DVD that focuses on reporters, and produce one for Asian Americans who want to be in management: "You talk about raising the awareness of who's out there – this is great. So maybe AAJA could do something similar for producers and managers?"

## **CASE STUDIES: TWO NEWSPAPERS**

## San Jose Mercury News

While many newspapers have few Asian Americans in their newsrooms and fewer still in management roles, the San Jose Mercury News has a substantial number. With a market that's about one-fourth Asian, the paper's newsroom is 17% Asian American, with a management that is 15%. This count does not include the editor and staff of its niche publication, Viet Mercury.

The newspaper recruits at the AAJA Convention and visits schools like San Jose State, San Francisco State, Berkeley and Stanford. But more than anything else, "word of mouth" and staffers working behind the scenes attract Asian Americans to the Mercury News. In the past few years, however, hiring has ground to a halt because of economic hard times in Silicon Valley, staffers said.

### Advancement

Mentoring is important at the Mercury News, according to several of the employees interviewed. While some mentoring is formal, a lot is informal. "It just happens." With economics hitting the newspaper hard, the survivors are those who had mentors, one employee said.

Many of the Mercury News' Asian American managers have gone through the Executive Leadership Program, sponsored by AAJA. Perhaps the greatest value of ELP is that it teaches Asian Americans how others perceive them and what they need to do to counteract any negative stereotypes their bosses may have. They also learn to understand the power structure and take charge of their own careers.

"It makes you more aware of the qualities valued in the newsroom," said one ELP alum at the paper. Asian Americans are traditionally not as outspoken, or as good at playing political games in the organization, one said, and they're not as comfortable in the "chest-beating environment" of a newsroom. They're less likely to "toot their own horn." At ELP, they learn that being quiet may be misconstrued as ignorance or weakness.

"You learn not to echo a point someone else makes, and not to demur," said one who went through the program. "If you wait to be called on, it won't happen."

"We're seen as 'foreign,' not part of the culture," said another. "We're always battling that perception."

Some of the things managers said they learned at ELP are:

- To seize opportunities
- To be assertive. "Go get what you need. It won't fall in your lap."

- To understand the realities of power: how to gain and use it, how to get close to those who have it
- To understand what you have to do to overcome the tendency of (mostly white) managers to promote people like themselves
- To get someone higher up to think of you for a promotion before there's an opening
- To understand why decisions are made and how they will affect people, including yourself.

The ELP graduates at the paper have an informal network that serves as a support and discussion group. There also is an ELP message board that forms an online network across the country. ELP alumni serve as talent scouts, recruiting other Asian Americans to the paper.

The Mercury News also has its own new leadership program for editors and aspiring editors, to teach them how the top people really think and what they want and expect.

Further, an open-door policy allows staffers to have lunch with top editors and get to know them. The paper also gives staffers time off to get involved in AAJA, in leadership roles, employees said.

"On balance, the Mercury News does all the things that need to be done – the programs and the numbers," one manager said.

A company goal is to increase the pipeline of diverse leaders, said another. "They send people to Knight Ridder programs. It's part of the value system here."

### **What newspapers can do**

What more can newspaper companies do to help Asian Americans move up the newsroom ladder? Those interviewed at the Mercury News had this to say:

- Show by example. Role models are a great inspiration.
- Combine more training with more opportunities to try out for jobs.
- Hire more Asians so there's a bigger pool to draw from.
- Promote some Asians so that others may follow. "There needs to be some mix before there can be more mix," said one employee, explaining that if there is an Asian in a high position who understands the subtle cultural issues and influences, that person can explain them to others in power. "If everyone's white, with similar upbringing and experiences, it's easy to just pick people you're comfortable with. It's about how we think. We were raised differently."

The Mercury News and its owner, Knight Ridder, are aware it's good to have management that reflects the readership, said one manager. "It's really helpful for an organization. It would be good if more papers would adopt that way of thinking."

## **Impact on coverage**

Having Asian Americans in decision-making positions in the newsroom affects coverage, many who were interviewed said. They're more sensitive to covering all minorities, and bring a different perspective to the table, about projects, photos, illustrations, story ideas and placement. And having many Asian reporters isn't necessarily the answer, one said. There need to be decision-makers.

They gave several examples where having an Asian in management made a difference:

- San Jose State announced all-white finalists for the president's post. The newspaper took the search committee to task and as a result they changed the process and came up with new finalists, including one Asian American who ended up getting the job.
- More sensitivity and balance in reporting on outsourcing of jobs to India and the H-1B visas for immigrants in the tech industry.
- Coverage of entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley with ties to Asia.
- More Asian American obituaries.

## **Glass ceiling**

Given the number of Asians in the Mercury News' newsroom and the fact that more than a dozen have made it into management, do employees at the paper believe there is still a glass ceiling above which they cannot rise?

"The last part of the road is a lot harder," one manager said. "Cultural fit is more important."

"We have a model for how to get [into middle management]," said another, "but there is none for going higher. It remains to be seen what will happen at the highest level." The power structure is still overwhelmingly white male, several noted.

"I could become an AME here," said one employee. "I don't know about managing editor or executive editor. I'm not sure how that happens. Corporate gets involved —though corporate generally is encouraging and tries to attract and retain people of color."

"They've had a hard time retaining [minority] people at top levels," one employee said. "It's a matter of comfort zone. Style is an issue. They favor a hard-charging management style here. Many Asian Americans don't have that style."

"I've talked with colleagues elsewhere," another said. "The Mercury News does a better job than most encouraging and promoting, but [the industry] has much further to go. There aren't enough people far enough in their careers, but they're moving up the pipeline."

## Los Angeles Times

The Los Angeles Times, a large and complex operation, did not report the overall number of newsroom management slots. The Times did, however, say it had 24 managers of Asian American descent: 1 assistant managing editor, 2 senior editors, 7 deputy department editors, 4 bureau chiefs and 10 assistant editors.

The newsroom as a whole is 7 % Asian American, the Times said.

### Recruitment

Recruiting of Asian Americans to the Times is both formal and informal. Many Asians there are involved in AAJA and as such have a large informal network. Most have worked other places and know where good job candidates are. "There's a critical mass here and we're a destination institution," one employee said. Another noted that often Asians working elsewhere have family in California, which adds to the allure of a job in LA.

Also, "When you promote Asians into positions of real power it attracts others," one manager said. Or, as another put it, "A good track record breeds a better track record."

### Advancement

While there is no formal mentoring program, older, more experienced Asian Americans take younger ones under their wing. "The place is remarkable for collegiality," said one employee. "Great colleagues come and say 'How can I help you?'" Another agreed. "Asian American colleagues are like family. It's important, because the place is so big."

The Times has a record of promoting people into jobs where they can lead, one manager said. But there was some disagreement among employees about how well the paper does on developing leaders. One saw little in the way of programs to develop minorities. But another said, "There are a number of courses here. We try to identify people in the newsroom and send them to API, Poynter or a writing coach."

Two editors noted that it's not easy to find good middle managers. "The older group may have settled in somewhere and not be willing to move," said one, "and young people want to be reporters, so they often shy away from the management track."

The Times does try to send someone to the Executive Leadership Program each session. One alum said the name is a misnomer. "It's really newsroom awareness and cultural skills."

Times ELP graduates saw the same value in the program as Mercury News employees. "It helps people define career goals and learn how to be promoted," one said.

"It helps break down cultural barriers," said another.

### **AAJA**

Most Asian Americans in the newsroom are members of AAJA. A smaller number is actively involved, but there always are some who have leadership roles, several said.

"The organization provides leadership opportunities: experience in building and managing an organization, advancing goals and motivating people," one pointed out.

### **Glass ceiling**

"The Times has made huge strides," one employee said. "There's an Asian American on the masthead. In 1988 the highest title was assistant. We've made breakthroughs."

At one point, when the Times had several managing editors, one was Asian American, but she left, several said.

Some Asian American employees said there is no glass ceiling at the Times, but others weren't so sure. And one who said there was none under Times-Mirror ownership is withholding judgment about the relatively new owner, Tribune Co.

Two agreed that while promotion to senior positions is possible, it comes slowly. One said cultural attributes work against Asian Americans being promoted as fast as whites. "The quiet Asian American who performs well but doesn't speak up or push opinions at a meeting ... doesn't project a leadership persona." The other noted advancement has been slow for other minorities as well, though that might be changing for Latinos because of the burgeoning population.

Speaking about the newspaper industry, one said, "If there are not many [Asians] in middle management, there are even fewer in the top echelon. There are strong barriers higher up. The barriers seem to be almost insurmountable. Only one or two [Asians] are at the very top in newspapers."

"The world has to change for us, not just vice versa," one Asian American employee said. "The very senior people have to get comfortable with Asian Americans."

### **Impact on coverage**

One pointed out that a number of Asian Americans at the Times have played an important role in several Pulitzer Prizes, either as reporters or editors. Others noted that bilingual reporters give the paper greater access to Asian communities.

“When we do stories about race, they have complexity,” one noted. Others said there is greater fairness in stories involving Asians as well as a greater representation of Asian cultures.

### **Aspirations**

“I could probably be in a higher position at a smaller paper,” one employee said, “but I’d rather be a lesser player in a fabulous shop. Asian Americans value getting into a good place and doing good work – it’s just like they’d rather be a middle student at a top school.”

“If you look at the masthead, the diversity is pretty impressive,” another said. “Historically, there’s been an emphasis on diversity. But the LA Times could use more Asian Americans in middle management and above. It would be great to see some as editor or executive editor – even as line editors, making decisions. The lack of Asians on the city desk adversely affects coverage of Asian American communities.”

Another said, “The Times does better [than most newspapers] because they have a pretty large Asian American population here.” The percentage of Asians in the Times market is about 9%, double the national average.

## **TWO VIEWS FROM THE TOP: Television**

**Maria Barrs and Janice Gin**

Two Asian American women in the study have risen to the top ranks of managers in Dallas and San Francisco. Maria Barrs is the news director at KDFW, the Fox affiliate in Dallas, Texas. Janice Gin is the associate news director at KTVU in Oakland, Calif., another Fox affiliate.

Barrs said there are fewer Asian Americans in broadcast news management because there are fewer Asian Americans in the broadcast industry overall, and so few have risen to the top. Gin echoed a sentiment of many managers in the study that there are not many Asian Americans in the management pipeline. Many of the younger Asian American broadcast journalists, she said, want to be on the air.

Both KDFW and KTVU make an "active effort to recruit qualified candidates of all ethnicities and backgrounds," to use Barrs' term. Gin said KTVU is conscious of its audience demographics and so that impacts its staffing. Because of the station's location, she said, they get a lot of applicants who are Asian American.

### **Career path**

Both women have worked in small and large markets. Gin held several lower-level management positions at another Bay-area stations but had to move to Greensborough, N.C., to become an executive producer. She moved back to the Bay area and has been in her current position for the past 4\_ years.

When Gin finished graduate school she wanted to be a producer, she said, but did not have aspirations to move into management. Her father didn't want her to go into news; he wanted her to be a pharmacist. Because news is "not a career with cash," Gin thinks other Asian American students also are pressured by their families not to go into journalism. "Being a journalist is not the same as being a doctor, pharmacist or engineer," she said.

Another part of Gin's background is similar to that of other young Asians. When growing up, she was not raised to move up on stage and into the spotlight.

Barrs also worked her way up via small markets in California, had a stint as an assignment editor at a station in St. Louis, came back to California as a small-market news director, and then climbed the ladder at KDFW to the news directorship, a position she has held for six years.

### **The role of culture**

When asked if she thought cultural stereotypes, like not being assertive enough, may play a role in keeping down the number of Asian managers, Barrs said she thought the image of the non-assertive Asian was ridiculous. As to whether it plays a role in limiting the number of

Asian American news managers, she said, "Since there are fewer [Asian Americans] than other minorities in our business overall, it is my belief that it's just a matter of time before that improves."

She added, "Every day that an Asian American in our business behaves in a strong and decisive manner it helps break down the stereotype of the shy, submissive Asian. It is also important that we in the business find opportunities to portray Asians in strong roles."

Journalism is not a traditional form of employment in the Asian community, Barrs said. "There is a strong cultural emphasis on owning one's own business, as opposed to working for someone else, that may cause some qualified individuals to seek opportunities outside of broadcast."

### **Lack of interest in management**

She also lamented the lack of Asian American applicants for management positions like assignment editor or producer, "Whenever I am hiring for those positions, at most 1% (if that) of the candidates identify themselves as such [Asian Americans]. When I'm hiring anchors and reporters, jobs much less likely to lead to management, the percentage of Asian American candidates is much higher."

To help correct this situation Barrs said, organizations like AAJA should conduct workshops and training to encourage job seekers to look beyond on-air positions.

Gin cited mentoring as another positive step for increasing the ranks of Asian American managers. She suggested that managers in stations should look for promising Asian American staffers and then make that employee a team leader for implementing some management changes. Give those younger or promising staffers the responsibility and coaching they need to succeed, she said.

Gin takes her role as an Asian American mentor seriously, "You cannot be who you are without being a mentor." Both women said they are happy with their current jobs and do not see a glass ceiling keeping them from climbing higher if that is what they decide they want to do.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Asian Americans are still very scarce in newsroom management, especially at the highest levels. And there are practically none in smaller markets.

No Asian Americans had reached the top three jobs in the 34 newspapers in this study, while the television stations showed only a slightly better record, with 1 news director and 1 assistant news director, both in large markets.

A small number were in senior-level positions – 7 in the 34 newspapers and 7 in the 58 TV newsrooms.

The larger number in middle management, often seen as “pipeline” jobs, may show some promise: 57 at the newspapers and 32 at the TV stations. The big question for the future is whether this really represents a pipeline to the top or whether it is the result of a glass ceiling that keeps Asian Americans in mid-level jobs.

The overwhelming majority of Asian newsroom managers in both media were found in the largest markets studied: 73% in TV and 98% in newspapers.

The largest number was in California – 61% of all the newspaper managers found and 34% of the TV managers. The state with the next highest number of Asian American TV managers was neighboring Nevada, with 12%.

In the middle markets, a larger proportion was found in television (10% of TV managers) than in newspapers (2%). In smaller markets, there were practically none – just 1% in TV management and zero at newspapers.

The positions with the largest number of Asian Americans were newscast producer in TV and assistant editor at newspapers.

Looking at the total newsroom workforce, newspapers averaged 7.4%, 1.7% and 1.8% Asian American, respectively, for large, medium and small markets. In TV stations, the percentages were slightly higher, at 8.9% 2.2% and 3.1%.

Major reasons given for the scarcity of Asian Americans in management were the same for both media: there are few in the market and few in the hiring pool. Least important of the reasons listed in the questionnaire were again similar for both media: cultural differences and that Asians are not assertive enough to lead.

Yet suggestions for how these media can improve the number of Asian Americans in management seemed to belie editors’ and news directors’ assertions about the unimportance of culture and assertiveness. Many gave a high ranking to more training in managing people and leadership skills, including assertiveness. That generally ranked third after encouraging Asians to seek management jobs and providing mentors, the top two recommendations in both media.

Also mentioned often was giving Asian Americans more production responsibilities in TV, and more important beats at newspapers.

In television, managers said one of the major problems to be addressed is that too few Asian Americans want to be in production; they prefer to be on-air. Therefore they don't get onto the track that leads to promotions into senior jobs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It all starts with awareness, and then recruiting. In order to improve the ratio of Asian Americans in the ranks of newsroom management, media executives need to face the issue that they're under-represented, then make a concerted effort to recruit. The AAJA Convention and journalism schools with large numbers of Asians are a good place to start.

Once Asian staffers are onboard, there are several steps companies can take to make sure they aren't stifled at lower levels:

- Provide mentors to junior-level staffers, to help them navigate the company.
- Offer promising employees more training in managing people, including leadership and assertiveness skills.
- Give more opportunities to try out for jobs by filing in while supervisors are away or when openings occur.
- Sponsor print and broadcast staffers with management potential so they can attend the Executive Leadership Program (ELP).
- Encourage promising Asian Americans to seek positions of authority and coach them if they get the job.
- Give Asian American newspaper reporters a fair shot at important beats.
- Give TV staffers more production/management opportunities and the responsibility to implement changes in the organization.
- Be more sensitive to cultural differences in leadership styles and re-examine the corporate culture of many newsrooms that only reward 'hard-charging' staffers with promotions.
- Promote some Asian Americans to high-profile, responsible jobs, as role models and a message to others that the path is open for all who are qualified.
- Make sure there is a minority candidate in each selection process for management jobs. Include Asian Americans in that mix.

There also are steps Asian Americans staffers can take:

- Make it known if you are interested in advancement into management. Just doing a good job at what you're doing isn't enough. Offer to fill in when a supervisor is on vacation. Apply for more challenging beats or jobs when they are available. Other people do, and if you don't they'll assume you aren't interested.
- Manage your bosses to the extent that if they don't offer it, ask them for a mentor, more training or a trip to ELP. If you think they are overlooking you because of stereotyping your leadership ability, raise the issue and let them know you can do the job.

And finally, there are steps AAJA can take:

- Create programs and workshops to encourage Asian Americans job seekers to look beyond on-air positions in broadcasting.
- Develop job banks specifically for management/producing positions in TV and for management slots in newspapers, so that companies can post openings there.
- Create a DVD for TV production/management similar to the one for reporters.

## **APPENDIX I – TV TABLES**

**Q1. How many employees in the following management or supervisory positions on your staff are Asian American?**

*n=number of respondents; **shaded** = most frequent answer per category*

	----- Market Size -----			Overall (n=58)
	1-10 (n=19)	51-60 (n=21)	101-110 (n=18)	
General Manager	-	-	-	-
News Director	1	-	-	1 (2.5%)
Asst. News Director	1	-	-	1 (2.5%)
Managing Editor	-	-	-	-
Executive Producer	5	<b>2</b>	-	7 (17%)
Newscast Producer	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13(32%)</b>
Senior Producer	-	-	-	-
Associate Producer	5	1	-	6 (15%)
Field Producer	1	1	-	2 (5%)
Assignment Manager	3	1	-	4 (10%)
Sports Director	-	1	-	1 (2.5%)
Public Affairs Director	3	-	-	3 (7.5%)
Bureau Chief	-	1	-	1 (2.5%)
<i>Other (volunteered):</i>				
Health Producer	1	-	-	1 (2.5%)
Creative Services Prod.	-	1	-	1 (2.5%)
=====				
=====				
Totals by market group	30 (73%)	10 (24.5%)	1 (2.5%)	41(100%)

**Q2. What percentage of your newsroom, overall, would you estimate is Asian American?**

<i>n=number of respondents</i>	<i>Market Size</i>		
	<i>1-10 (n=12)</i>	<i>51-60 (n=21)</i>	<i>101-110 (n=18)</i>
Average estimate	8.9 %	2.2 %	3.1 %
Median estimate	2.9 %	2 %	3 %
Minimum estimate	0 %	0 %	0 %
Maximum estimate	50 %	6 %	10 %

**Q3. What percentage of your market would you estimate is Asian American?**

<i>n=number of respondents</i>	<i>Market Size</i>		
	<i>1-10 (n=8)</i>	<i>51-60 (n=17)</i>	<i>101-110 (n=11)</i>
Average estimate	9.3 %	5.0 %	2.3 %
Median estimate	5.5 %	4.8 %	1 %
Minimum estimate	2 %	1 %	0.5 %
Maximum estimate	30 %	17 %	7.5 %

**Q4. Other research has shown there are very few Asian Americans in management positions in TV news. Which of the following reasons do you think may help explain this?**

*n=number of respondents; **shaded** = most frequent answer per category*

	----- Market Size -----			
	1-10 (n=19)	51-60 (n=21)	101-110 (n=18)	Overall (n=58)
Not enough qualified Asian Americans in the job pool	<b>7 (37%)</b>	<b>16 (76%)</b>	6 (33%)	29 (50%)
Cultural differences get in the way	1 (5%)	-	-	1 (2%)
Asian Americans are not assertive enough to lead	1 (5%)	-	-	1 (2%)
Few Asian Americans live in the market	4 (21%)	12 (57%)	<b>14 (78%)</b>	<b>30 (52%)</b>
Asian Americans who are hired tend not to stay	2 (10.5%)	5 (24%)	2 (11%)	9 (15.5%)
Asian Americans show little interest in moving into management	1 (5%)	6 (29%)	1 (6%)	8 (14%)
Other minorities have larger numbers and need representation also	3 (16%)	6 (29%)	6(33%)	15 (26%)
Asian Americans are not part of the existing informal "network"	1 (5%)	6 (29%)	3 (17%)	10 (17%)
<i>Other (volunteered):</i>				
We do not consider race in hiring	4 (21 %)	-	2 (11 %)	6 (10%)
Not enough jobs	1 (5 %)	-	-	1 (2 %)
No Asian Americans applied	-	-	1 (6%)	1 (2%)

**Q5. Which of the following recommendations do you think could or should be done to help improve the number of Asian Americans in TV news management?**

*n=number of respondents; shaded = most frequent answer per category*

	----- Market Size -----			
	1-10 (n=19)	51-60 (n=21)	101-110 (n=18)	Overall (n=58)
Give Asian Americans more training managing budgets	7 (37%)	14 (67%)	10 (56%)	31(53.5%)
Give Asian Americans more training in managing people, especially assertiveness and leadership skills	8 (42%)	13 (62%)	<b>14 (78%)</b>	35(60%)
Provide mentors for junior Asian American staffers	<b>9 (47%)</b>	14 (67%)	13(72%)	36(62%)
Recognize differences in leadership style and life backgrounds	7 (37%)	9 (43%)	3 (17%)	19(33%)
Seek more opinions from Asian Americans in the newsroom	8 (42%)	11 (52%)	9 (50%)	28(48%)
Encourage Asian Americans to seek positions of authority	<b>9 (47%)</b>	<b>18 (86%)</b>	11(61%)	<b>38(65.5%)</b>
Give Asian Americans important production responsibilities that can lead to advancement	8 (42%)	15 (71%)	11 (61%)	34(59%)
<i>Other (volunteered):</i>				
Better recruiting efforts	1 (5%)	-	-	1 (2%)
More need to apply	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	-	2 (3.5%)
Encourage people to produce, as opposed to going on-air	-	1 (5%)	-	1 (2%)
Better outreach at the college level	-	-	1 (6%)	1 (2%)

**Q6. How would you rank these recommendations? (1=Most beneficial; 7=Least beneficial. Average rankings shown.)**

**shaded** = "most beneficial" recommendation(s) per category

	----- Market Size -----		
	1-10	51-60	101-110
Give Asian Americans more training in managing budgets	-	3.5	3
Give Asian Americans more training in managing people, especially in assertiveness and leadership skills	1.5	2.5	1.7
Provide mentors for junior Asian American staffers	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	2.4
Recognize differences in leadership styles and life backgrounds	-	4.8	3
Seek more opinions from Asian Americans in the newsroom	2	3.4	<b>1</b>
Encourage Asian Americans to seek positions of authority	2	<b>2</b>	2.7
Give Asian Americans important production responsibilities that can lead to advancement	1.5	2.7	2.8

**APPENDIX II - NEWSPAPER TABLES**

**Q1. How many employees in the following management or supervisory positions on your staff are Asian American?**

*n=number of respondents; **shaded** = most frequent answer per category*

	----- Market Size -----			Overall (n=34)
	1-10 (n=14)	51-60 (n=10)	101-110 (n=10)	
Editor/Editor in Chief	-	-	-	0
Executive Editor	-	-	-	0
Managing Editor	-	-	-	0
Senior Editor	3	-	-	3 (5%)
Deputy ME	1	-	-	1 (2%)
Assistant ME	3	-	-	3 (5%)
City Editor	3	-	-	3 (5%)
Night Editor	-	-	-	0
Bureau Chief	9	-	-	9 (14%)
Department head	7	-	-	7 (11%)
<i>Other (volunteered):</i>				
Deputy AME	1	-	-	1 (2%)
Asst. Ed.	<b>13</b>	-	-	<b>13(20%)</b>
Copy Desk Chief	1	-	-	1 (2%)
Dept. Deputy Ed.	7	-	-	7 (11%)
Assigning Ed.	8	-	-	8 (13%)
Graphics/Photo/News	4	-	-	4 (6%)
Team Leaders	2	-	-	2 (3%)
World	1	-	-	1 (2%)
Supervisor	-	1	-	1 (2%)
=====				
Totals by market grouping	63 (98%)	1 (2%)	0	64 (100%)

**Q2. What percentage of your newsroom, overall, would you estimate is Asian American?**

<i>n=number of respondents</i>	<i>Market Size</i>		
	<i>1-10 (n=14)</i>	<i>51-60 (n=10)</i>	<i>101-110 (n=10)</i>
Average estimate	5.3 %	1.2 %	0.3 %
Median estimate	4.4 %	2 %	0 %
Minimum estimate	1.3 %	0 %	0 %
Maximum estimate	17 %	4 %	1.5 %

**Q3. What percentage of your market would you estimate is Asian American?**

<i>n=number of respondents</i>	<i>Market Size</i>		
	<i>1-10 (n=13)</i>	<i>51-60 (n=8)</i>	<i>101-110 (n=8)</i>
Average estimate	7.4%	1.7%	1.8%
Median estimate	4.7%	2%	1.5%
Minimum estimate	3%	0.1%	0%
Maximum estimate	26%	4%	>5%

\* Five newspapers said they didn't know

**Q4. Other research has shown there are very few Asian Americans in management positions in newsrooms at newspapers. Which of the following reasons do you think may help explain this?**

*n=number of respondents; **shaded** = most frequent answer per category*

	----- Market Size -----			Overall (n=34)
	1-10 (n=14)	51-60 (n=10)	101-110 (n=10)	
Not enough qualified Asian Americans in the job pool	<b>7 (50%)</b>	<b>7 (50%)</b>	3 (30%)	<b>17 (50%)</b>
Cultural differences get in the way	1 (7%)	-	-	1 (3%)
Asian Americans are not assertive enough to lead	-	-	-	0
Few Asian Americans live in the market	5(36%)	6(60%)	<b>6 (60%)</b>	<b>17 (50%)</b>
Asian Americans who are hired tend not to stay	-	-	2 (20%)	2 (20%)
Asian Americans show little interest in moving into management	1 (7%)	-	-	1 (7%)
Other minorities have larger numbers and need representation also	2 (14%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)
Asian Americans are not part of the existing informal "network"	4 (5 %)	2 (29 %)	-	6 (18%)
<i>Other (volunteered):</i>				
Newsroom culture is white male-dominated	1 (10%)	-	-	1 (10 %)
Few Asian mgrs. available	1 (10%)	-	-	1 (10%)
Very few applicants	-	-	1(10%)	1 (10%)
Never any applicants	-	-	2(20%)	2 (10%)

**Q5. Which of the following recommendations do you think could or should be done to help improve the number of Asian Americans in newspaper management?**

*n=number of respondents; **shaded** = most frequent answer per category*

	----- Market Size -----			Overall (n=25)
	1-10 (n=13)	51-60 (n=5)	101-110 (n=7)	
Give Asian Americans more training in managing budgets	4 (31%)	1 (20%)	1 (14%)	6 (24%)
Give Asian Americans more training in managing people, especially in assertiveness and leadership skills	6 (46%)	2 (40%)	2 (29%)	10 (40%)
Provide mentors for junior Asian American staffers	<b>10 (77%)</b>	4 (80%)	<b>4 (57%)</b>	<b>18 (72%)</b>
Recognize differences in leadership styles and life backgrounds	9 (69%)	1 (20%)	3 (43%)	13 (52%)
Seek more opinions from Asian Americans in the newsroom	8 (62%)	2 (40%)	2 (29%)	12(48%)
Encourage Asian Americans to seek positions of authority	<b>10 (77%)</b>	<b>5 (100%)</b>	3 (43%)	<b>18 (72%)</b>
Give Asian Americans important beats that can lead to advancement	7 (54%)	3 (71 %)	3 (43%)	13 (52%)
<i>Other (volunteered):</i>				
Get more interested in working at newspapers	-	-	1 (14%)	1 (4%)
Target promising students	-	-	1 (14%)	1 (4%)
Recruit more	-	-	2 (29%)	2 (8%)
Hire, prepare, promote	1 (8%)	-	-	1 (4%)



