

NETWORK UPDATE

A periodic report from the Japanese American Citizens League Anti-Hate Program

Issue 8, Fall 2008

JACL Chapter Liaisons

Alaska, Jonathan Lack
 Arizona, Charles Tadano
 APAN, Gary Mayeda
 Central California Dist. Council, Bob Taniguchi
 Chicago, Pat Yuzawa-Rubin
 Cincinnati, Ray Takigiku
 Cleveland, Scott Furukawa
 Clovis, Fumio Ikeda
 Contra Costa, Don Delcollo
 Dayton, Ron Katsuyama
 Detroit, Maryann Mahaffey
 Diablo Valley, Mary Kobayashi
 Eden Township, John Yamada
 Florin, Fumie Shimada
 Fremont, Alan Mikuni
 Fresno, Bob Shintaku
 Greater Los Angeles, Tom Hayashi
 Honolulu, Karen Nakasone
 Houston, Sandra Tanamachi
 Lake Washington, Corey Moriyama
 Livingston-Merced, Grace Kimoto
 Lodi, Bill Hinkle
 Marin County, Lewis Kawahara
 Marysville, Neelam Canto-Lugo
 Monterey, Larry Oda
 New Mexico, Sei Tokuda
 New York, Kari Kokka
 Olympia, Reiko Callner
 Omaha, Sharon Ishii-Jordan
 Philadelphia, Joyce Horikawa
 Portland, Marleen Wallingford
 Reno, Vincent Johnson
 Reedley, Stan Hirahara
 Riverside, Clyde Wilson
 Sacramento, Dean Okimoto
 St. Louis, Wendy Roll
 Salinas Valley, Myra Malaga
 Salt Lake City, Jeff Itami
 San Diego, David Kawamoto
 San Fernando, Brian Moriguchi
 San Francisco, Troy Yoshino
 San Gabriel, Bruce Haines
 San Jose, Jeff Kuwano
 Sanger, Ralph Kumano
 Seattle, Joy Shigaki
 Selanoco, Steve Matsubara
 Selma, Mitchell Nakashima
 Snake River Valley, Janet Komoto
 Solano County, Gene Urabe
 Sonoma County, Carol Kawase
 Southeast, Sam Wakasugi
 South Bay, Wilbur Sato
 Stockton, Mas Ishihara
 Torrance, Alayne Yonemoto
 Tulare, Larry Ishimoto
 Twin Cities, Jamie Cork
 Venice Culver, Diana Nishiura
 Ventura County, John Kataji
 Wasatch Front North, Curtis Oda
 Washington DC, Shin Inouye
 Watsonville-Santa Cruz, Paul Kaneko and Mas Hashimoto
 West Valley, Ron Watanabe

Campus Liaisons

Boise State University, Stephen Heleker
 Capital University, Andy Rogers
 Cornell University, Laura Yamasaki
 Drake University, Amy Munemoto
 Hendrix College, Julia Shimada
 Howard University, Brandon Mita
 Purdue University, Lisa Hanasono
 Seattle University, Sabrina Chen
 University of California-Berkeley, Christina Shigematsu & Jasmine Jane Cho
 University of California-Irvine, Lisa Tanaka
 University of Cincinnati, Chad Yoshikawa
 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Stephanie Nitahara
 University of Oregon, Chii-San SunOwen

"WE WEREN'T REALLY 'ASIAN AMERICANS' BEFORE VINCENT CHIN": LEGAL SCHOLAR WRITING BOOK ON INFAMOUS 1982 MURDER BY: ELAINE LOW

Over a quarter century after one of the most infamous hate crimes against Asian Americans, the community still ripples at the mention of murder of Vincent Chin, in which he was chased down on the streets of Detroit and bludgeoned with a baseball bat. Advocacy groups and college organizations still show screenings of the 1987 documentary "Who Killed Vincent Chin?", while a new film, "Vincent Who?", is currently in the works. It is no surprise then, that someone is finally writing a book about the incident which sparked outrage from the APA community and spurred it to movement.

"It's an epic story," says Frank Wu, former dean of Wayne State University Law School and author of *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. "It's astonishing that no one's written a story about it." Wu, also a Detroit native, is in the process of researching and writing a book on the 1982 murder of someone who, in many ways, was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"It was a turning point [in APA history] when people who didn't see that they had a common cause came together."

A working-class Chinese American, 27-year-old Vincent Chin was an industrial draftsman, just one of many who worked in Detroit's historic car manufacturing industry. He had no college degree and waited tables on the weekends. "Vincent Chin was an ordinary kind of guy. And the ordinary-

ness of Chin isn't something we should be embarrassed about," says Wu.

The night of June 19, 1982, Chin was celebrating his upcoming marriage with a bachelor party at a local strip club when he got into an altercation with Ronald Ebens and his stepson Michael Nitz. Calling Chin a "jap" and telling him, "It's because of you motherf---s that we're out of work,"



Frank Wu, Author

Ebens and Nitz were angry about the perceived loss of auto manufacturing jobs to Japan, projecting it onto a complete stranger. After all of them were thrown out of the club, the two men chased down Chin with a baseball bat, smashing in his skull and leaving him in a fatal coma. His last words were "It's not fair."

Ultimately, after criminal and civil suits, Ebens and Nitz were each charged less than \$4,000, though neither paid a penny or served a day in jail. At the crime scene, police had found a mixture of Chin's blood, spinal fluid and brain matter.

Wu's book intends to recount the Vincent Chin murder and the subsequent reaction it sparked from the Asian American community. Prior to that, Wu claims, the community was far less inclined to rally together cohesively.

INTERVIEW WITH FRANK WU

(Continued from page 1)

"It was a turning point [in APA history] when people who didn't see that they had a common cause came together," says Wu. "For people who didn't see themselves as Asian Americans, this was a moment when they stood up and spoke out. We weren't really 'Asian American' before Vincent Chin." Asian Americans all over the country were incensed at the lenient sentencing that Chin's murderers received. Korean Americans, Japanese Americans, Indian Americans, Chinese Americans – communities that had previously fought alone came together in the name of a common goal: to find justice for Vincent Chin.

"...the crucial difference is that Ebens and Nitz are white; Vincent Chin is Asian. If they were both white, this wouldn't have happened."

Significantly, this hateful incident served as a sharp reminder that Asian Americans were still seen as foreigners in a land they had long come to call their own. Even though Chin and Ebens and Nitz were all Detroit natives working in the auto industry, they would never be seen as the same.

"Both are blue-collar, hard-working guys who go to strip clubs and have tempers," says Wu of Chin and his killers. "But the crucial difference is that Ebens and Nitz are white; Vincent Chin is Asian. If they were both white, this wouldn't have happened." The murder reflected the harsh reality of the times; not only was Chin's ethnicity as a Chinese American blurred in being called a "jap," his life was taken as a result of his status as the perpetual foreigner.

What is most worrying, asserts Wu, is that it is impossible to tell when an act of violence and hatred, like the murder of Vincent Chin, might be lurking around the corner.

"We have a desire for clear-cut cases, like the KKK. The Chin case is more troubling," says Wu. "It's worse that Ebens and Nitz were ordinary guys, because it hints that something is always simmering just beneath the surface, and that with a drink, testosterone and temper, it all erupts. It'd be easier if we could just call them bigots from the start. [It makes you wonder] if the guy next to me might have these sentiments." •

JACL CHAPTER AND STAFF ACTIVITIES

San Francisco Chapter – July 2008: The San Francisco Chapter of the JACL responded to the marketing of the Lingo Electronic Talking Translator by Brookstone Company, Inc. , which displays the term "JAP" along with "ENG" on the screen when the owner wishes to have a word or phrase translated.

"The abbreviation for Japanese is 'JPN' as 'JAP' is an offensive or derogatory term," said San Francisco Chapter President Hiroshi Shimizu in a letter to the President and CEO of Brookstone Company, Inc. The San Francisco Chapter requested that Brookstone Company, Inc. provide the manufacturer's contact information so that JACL can notify them about the offensive nature of the term and request they change the term "JAP" to "JPN." The San Francisco Chapter also requested that Brookstone discontinue advertising the translator until that has been done.



Midwest Office – July 2008: The Terrebonne Parish school board in Louisiana is considering a proposal requiring commencement speeches to be in English only after two co-valedictorians from Ellender High School thanked their parents by incorporating and translating a few brief words of gratitude in Vietnamese.

Concerned that this policy will devalue multiculturalism in education and infringe upon students' freedom of expression, JACL Midwest Director, William Yoshino stated, "It is deeply troubling that a school would think to censor students for their bilingual abilities. Their multicultural roots should be celebrated, not punished." The school board is still considering this policy.



JACL National Youth/Student Council – July 2008: The JACL National Youth/Student Council expressed its displeasure over two recent incidents, the Terrebonne Parish School District threat to pass an English-only policy for its commencement speeches and several incidents in New York City schools where Sikh students were assaulted by having their hair forcibly cut by fellow students.

The statement read in part, "we, the JACL NY/SC, fully comprehend the ugly face of discriminatory academic policies and racist acts against Asian Pacific American students." The statement continued, "we refuse to remain silent and pledge to do our utmost to combat the many incidents of discrimination and hatred that threaten our collective heritages and cultural backgrounds."

(Continued on page 4)

HATE CRIMES AND HATE INCIDENTS

Sacramento, CA – August 2008: Update – A 22-year-old Sacramento man was sentenced to 150 days in jail for his role in a fatal fight that led to the death of Satendar Singh last July at Lake Natoma. Aleksandr Shevchenko was convicted of disturbing the peace and simple assault. Shevchenko was also charged with a hate crime; however, the jury deadlocked on the charge in June. Andrey Vusik, the man suspected of the throwing the deadly punch, has fled the country. The fight left Singh in a coma; he died four days later. The Sacramento District Attorney's office also said that they would not retry Shevchenko on the hate crime charge.



South Lake Tahoe – July 2008: Update – A judge has dismissed felony charges and instead lodged misdemeanor charges in the kicking and beating of a South Asian man who was called "Indian garbage" during the attack. Joseph and Georgia Silva were originally charged in July 2007, with felony assault and a hate crime in attacking Vishal Wadhwa. In reducing the charges, the judge agreed with Silva's attorney that a barefoot attack was not likely to produce great bodily harm and the racist words were spoken "in the heat of anger" rather than being the cause of the attack. Wadhwa suffered facial fractures and a broken orbit bone.



Princeton, N.J. – July 2008: The U.S. Department of Education has launched a federal review of Princeton University's admissions policies following a complaint filed by a well-qualified Asian immigrant applicant. The applicant, Jian Li, filed a complaint with the Department after being rejected not only by Princeton but other high-ranked schools despite scoring perfectly on the SAT exam and graduating in the top 1%

of his high school class. Officials say the complaint alleges that Princeton's admissions policy discriminates against Asian American applicants by using racial quotas, which have been declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. While Princeton denied using such quotas, the university has also declined to release admissions data broken down by race and test scores.



Kalispell, MT – July 2008: Three Marion men involved in an attack on Asian migrant workers pleaded not guilty to hate crimes. The alleged attack occurred on July 12 at a campground in Marion where the men shouted racial slurs and threw beer bottles at the migrant workers after following them from a convenience store. This attack followed a confrontation at the convenience store between the workers and one of the alleged perpetrators. Authorities believe that the man confronted the migrant workers after his sister thought she overheard them threatening to beat him up. However, a defense attorney said that the migrant workers instigated the incident when they thought the man said something disrespectful when he asked if they were waiting in line. Authorities say that the attack was racially motivated. The men, charged with malicious intimidation or harassment relating to civil or human rights, face up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine each if convicted.



New York, NY – June 2008: Nearly 200 members of the Sikh community in New York turned out for a protest march organized by the Sikh Coalition in response to a long string of hate crimes against Sikh students. The protest march was sparked by a recent incident in which a 12-year old Sikh student had at least three inches of her hair cut off by a fellow student.

While the school immediately suspended the perpetrator, the Sikh community demanded that the U.S. Department of Education take proactive steps rather than reactive steps to prevent future hate crimes against Sikh students. The Sikh Coalition is also currently meeting with the Department of Education to create diversity educational programs to be implemented at the beginning of the upcoming academic year.



New Jersey - May 2008: After a 16-year-old Sikh American teenager was assaulted and had his patka (a Sikh head covering) set on fire at Hightstown High School in central New Jersey, the 18-year-old alleged perpetrator is being charged with a hate crime, according to news reports. The accused is being charged with aggravated assault, bias intimidation, arson and criminal mischief. •

(Continued from page 5)

National - February 2008: A segment that recently aired on Anderson Cooper 360 has come under fire for portraying Asian Americans as racist and ignorant. The Feb. 8 segment, headlined "Asian American Vote," implies that voters from this community are uninformed and racially prejudiced. Half a minute into the segment reporter Gary Tuchman pokes fun at an Asian American who speaks with an accent and seems to say "Lincoln," instead of "Clinton." Two and a half minutes into the clip, he points out a woman who refers to the presidential candidate as "Clinton white lady." The majority of those interviewed appear to have been plucked from an Asian grocery store and spoke broken English. Asian American groups across the country have spoken up against the CNN segment, alleging that the piece was a "misleading portrayal." •

JACL CHAPTER AND STAFF ACTIVITIES

(Continued from page 2)

National Office – July 2008: On July 2, 2008, during a nationally televised Olympics swimming trial on USA channel courtesy of NBC, the abbreviation “JAP” appeared onscreen to indicate the country of the current world record holder in the men’s events.

In a letter to NBC Sports Vice President Richard Ebersol, JACL National Director Floyd Mori states, “As you know, this term is a racial slur and we would like you to join us in discouraging its use.” Mori also requested that NBC Sports take extra cautionary measures to ensure that the proper abbreviation for Japan – JPN – is used. NBC Sports has yet to respond.



National Office – June 2008: A release issued by the JACL in response to the recent string of hate crimes committed against the Sikh American community urges citizens to demand stricter enforcement of punishment against individuals who commit acts of hate and violence against others. This release follows a string of hate crimes concentrated in the New York City area and a report issued by the Sikh Coalition, which revealed that 40 percent of Sikh Americans in New York City experienced harassment because of their religion and 60 percent of all Sikh American students have experienced harassment because of their patkas.

“It is vital that everyone is treated with respect and dignity, regardless of religious background,” said Floyd Mori, JACL National Director.



Midwest Office - June 2008: A church van was spray painted with racial epithets in a shocking act of vandalism at Evergreen Presbyterian, a Korean church in Suwanee, Georgia. According to reports, the words

“chink mobile,” along with a slew of other racial epithets, had been painted on the church van and much of the church property. Police uncovered swastikas and anarchy symbols spray painted on Evergreen Presbyterian church, in addition to crosses hung upside down and “Jesus is dead” scrawled on the church van. Most of the graffiti was first discovered as churchgoers were making their way to morning service on Sunday.

“Hurtful racial slurs like ‘chink’ are only startling reminders that anti-Asian sentiment still exists, and can manifest in ugly and violent ways,” said JACL Midwest Director William Yoshino. “It is also a solemn reminder that, 26 years after the murder of Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, Asian Americans are still seen as one large indistinguishable, perpetually foreign people.”



Midwest Office - May 2008: A national televised Six Flags ad campaign is drawing unwanted attention after many in the Asian American community accused it of being “an outdated, debilitating stereotype only perpetuates the idea that Asians can’t speak English properly.”

The most recent Six Flags television ad features a disembodied Asian man yelling the amusement park’s tagline, “More flags! More fun! Six Flags!” in a mock Asian accent. According to those who went in for the original casting call, Six Flags casting directors were specifically looking for an Asian man who could emulate Charlie Chan or who could “talk like [his] grandfather.”

“Though we understand the commercial was made for the purpose of humor, there is nothing funny about resorting to degrading jokes that prey on others for a cheap laugh.” said JACL Midwest Director William Yoshino. “Surely, there must have

been a host of other ways to create a humorous television commercial that did not rely on offensive, outdated stereotypes.”



National Office - May 2008: Radio talk show “The Stephanie Miller Show” has been accused of mocking the Asian and Asian American community with its off-color impressions of Kim Jong Il. The recurring segment from comedian Jim Ward features impressions of numerous celebrities and icons, but the Kim Jong Il impression is the only one that relies on antiquated stereotypes of Asians to get a few laughs, according to the JACL. While many of Ward’s other impressions can be distinguished as the target celebrity, the Kim Jong Il impressions resort to mocking a Korean accent.

“Transposing ‘Ls’ and ‘Rs’ is by now an outdated joke that is undoubtedly in poor taste, and there certainly must be better ways to ridicule an isolationist dictator who has committed crimes against humanity than by making him say ‘Hirry Crinton,’” said JACL National Director Floyd Mori. The JACL is urging “The Stephanie Miller Show” to remove that particular skit from its segment.



Midwest Office – April 2008: Following a Chicago Sun-Times article on an offensive Fukudome t-shirt being sold outside Wrigley Field, the Asian American community is now calling for the Chicago Cubs to take action against the vendors of a racially offensive shirt. The shirt, which reads “Horry Kow” (a mock Asian accented version of Harry Caray’s “Holy Cow”) also features baseball player Kosuke Fukudome’s number on the back and a bear with slanty eyes and oversized glasses on the front. While some claim the shirt is meant to support the recent Cubs’ addition, Fukudome himself claims in the article that he is

offended by the shirt, and the Cubs immediately condemned the shirt hours after the Sun-Times story surfaced.

"Not only do the shirts unwelcomingly mock Fukudome, a new addition to the Chicago Cubs franchise, they demean and belittle all Asian Americans, reducing them to little more than antiquated caricatures," said JACL Midwest Director William Yoshino. "While the vendor of these shirts claims to have made them in jest, this brand of humor is clearly outdated and racist." The JACL has also contacted Moe Wampum Inc, one vendor of the shirts, to cease sale of the offensive merchandise.



National Youth/Student Council – March 2008: The JACL National Youth/Student Council also responded to the Max Karson column in the student newspaper. Speaking for the National Youth/Student Council, Kimberly Shintaku stated, "We, the JACL National Student/Youth Council found Mr. Karson's poor attempt at humor to be severely lacking in reason and intelligence...The API community is incredibly diverse in its ethnic makeup, generational differences and socio-economic status."

In a response, the university chancellor, Bud Peterson wrote, "The Advisor and Editor of the Campus Press both apologized for the article and we identified a number of steps that we anticipate taking. Among these was one in which, I as Chancellor, and the Provost will consider recommendations from the Dean of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications regarding restructuring, management and oversight of the CU Campus Press."



National Office - February 2008: A CNN segment on Asian American voters garnered an outraged response from the community for casting Asian Americans in a less than

flattering light, implying that they are ignorant and racially prejudiced. Half a minute into the Feb. 8 segment reporter Gary Tuchman pokes fun at an Asian American who speaks with an accent and seems to say "Lincoln," instead of "Clinton." Two and a half minutes into the clip, he points out a woman who refers to the presidential candidate as "Clinton white lady." The majority of those interviewed appear to have been plucked from an Asian grocery store and spoke broken English.

"This is hardly a fair representation of the Asian American population," said JACL National Director Floyd Mori, who said the segment provided "little more than a passing glimpse into the vast demographic of Asian Americans who, indeed, do not speak with thick accents or vote based on fear of change."



Midwest Office - February 2008: A Campus Press column written by a student columnist at the University of Colorado at Boulder has gained national media attention for its "satirical" stereotyping and derisive comments against Asian American students in "If It's War The Asians Want... It's War They'll Get."

In a letter to the University of Colorado newspaper, the Campus Press, JACL Midwest Director William Yoshino says, "[I]t is difficult to find the humor and commentary in what appears to be nothing more than an attention-seeking stunt carelessly laced with hate speech. [...] If satire was the intent, it fell abysmally short in its display of judgment and sensitivity. [...] While satire often provides the reader with insightful social commentary or thought-provoking questions, Mr. Karson's column is hardly tongue-in-cheek. It is just offensive."

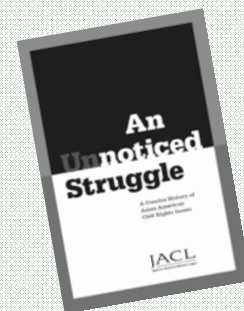
Campus Press staff have since been required to attend diversity training and CU administrators have offered an apology.



National Office - February 2008: A pair of SalesGenie.com commercials that ran during the Super Bowl have come under fire for making use of ethnic stereotyping and racial humor against Asian Americans. The more offensive of the animated television spots features two Chinese pandas, "Ching Ching" and "Ling Ling," who also spoke with mock Asian accents. In a letter to the CEO of SalesGenie.com, JACL National Director Floyd Mori says, "These television commercials are offensive because they reduce Asians to caricatures that feed into one-dimensional racial stereotypes portraying Asians as foreigners. [...] While we understand that you meant for the ads to be humorous, there are other ways to be funny without having a laugh at the expense of an entire group of people."

(Continued on page 3)

HOT OFF THE PRESS!



An Unnoticed Struggle: A Concise History of Asian American Civil Rights Issues is a new publication available to chapters. This comprehensive booklet, composed by former Ford Fund Fellow Elaine Low, highlights milestones in Asian American civil rights history, covering a number of iconic figures and struggles, such as anti-Asian legislation which affected groups of people and personal struggles endured by individuals that helped open doors for the community. A look at continuing issues and future obstacles along with a list of additional reading for the avid learner is also available. •

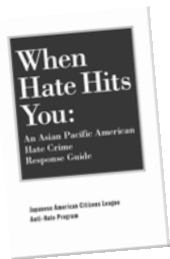
JACL Anti-Hate Material Available to Chapters

Words Can Kill the Spirit—a brochure about the use of racial slurs directed against Asian American. This brochure is intended to inform the public that the use of slurs and other forms of defamation must not be tolerated.

Anti-Asian Sentiment on Campus—a brochure that highlights the increase in anti-Asian sentiment on our college and university campuses. The brochure provides exam-

ples of actual incidents and steps to take if similar incidents occur.

When Hate Hits You—a comprehensive handbook that provides a historical look at anti-Asian sentiment in our country, along with recent examples of anti-Asian violence and a section on how you and your community can respond to hate incidents.



to com-

These materials can be ordered free of charge to JACL chapters. Contact the nearest JACL office and please give at least two weeks notice. •

JACL Offices

National Headquarters
1765 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
415.921.5225
jacl@jacl.org

Midwest Office
5415 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60640
773.728.7170
midwest@jacl.org

North California—Western
Nevada—Pacific office
1255 Post Street, Suite 805
San Francisco, CA 94109
415.345.1075
ncwnp@jacl.org

Pacific Northwest Office
671 South Jackson Street, Suite 206
Seattle, WA 98104
206.623.5088
pnw@jacl.org

Pacific Southwest Office
244 South San Pedro Street,
Room 406
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213.626.4471
psw@jacl.org

Washington, DC Office
1828 L Street, N.W. Suite 802
Washington, DC 20036
202.223.1240
policy@jacl.org

JACL Anti-Hate Program Staff:

William Yoshino
Patty Wada
Jacqueline Mac

The JACL Diversity Program is made possible through a grant from



Ford Motor Company

JACL

NETWORK UPDATE

A periodic report from the Japanese American Citizens League Anti-Hate Program



Japanese American Citizens League
1765 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94115