



**SPOTLIGHT ON THE ELECTION**  
BARACK OBAMA'S HISTORIC PRESIDENTIAL  
BID A HOT TOPIC AT UNITY ... PAGE 20

# SPECIAL SECTION

# Newspro

THE STATE OF TV NEWS



# COLOR IT UNITY

## Ebony's Monroe Explains the Plan as 10,000 Journalists of Color Gather in Chicago

**Q&A** Once every four years the four biggest associations for journalists of color join forces for a major conference, billed as the largest gathering of journalists in the nation. Nearly 10,000 participants are expected this week for Unity '08, taking place July 23-27 at McCormick Place West in Chicago.

The conference promises to be an important media event, with the two major political parties' presumptive presidential nominees—Sen. John McCain and Sen. Barack Obama—tentatively set to meet the press and answer their questions.

To get the best angle on Unity '08, *TelevisionWeek* correspondent Allison J. Waldman spoke with Bryan Monroe, editor of *Ebony* magazine, president of the National Association of Black Journalists and Unity '08 board member.

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## UNITY '08

**What:** Joint conference of the four major associations representing journalists of color, held every four years

**Where:** McCormick Place West, Chicago

**When:** July 23-27

**Who:** Presented by Unity: Journalists of Color, a coalition of the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Journalists Association

**Details:** 2008unity.org



Bryan Monroe



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# KEEPING PACE WITH THE CANDIDATES

## Field's Diversity Not Matched by Journalists Covering Presidential Campaign

By Debra Kaufman

Special to TelevisionWeek

The battle between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the Democratic presidential nomination made this a historic election season.

At Unity '08, however, journalists are taking a hard look at what hasn't changed with the times.

"The historic nature of this year's presidential race underscores the lack of minority journalists covering

it," said Barbara Ciara, president of the National Association of Black Journalists. "If we are going to look at race as an issue and then say we're having a 'kumbaya' moment because we potentially have a black nominee,

look at the people covering it."

Ms. Ciara is not alone in her assessment of a presidential race that reveals troubling indications of racial disparity in U.S. newsrooms. Pamela Gentry, BET senior political producer in the Washington bureau, was concerned enough to propose a panel on the topic at the Unity '08 conference.

"This particular campaign, there has been so much talk about the diversity of the candidates, that it was historic, and that in the Democratic nomination race, we had an African American, a woman and a Hispanic running,"

said Ms. Gentry. "But when I looked at the White House beat, it's still being covered by white males. The candidates were more diverse than the press corps. How did this happen? And why?"

That's the topic of "Making News: Patriotism, Pandering and That Preacher Man: Minority Journalists and the Unpredictable, Unprecedented Presidential Campaign," scheduled for Friday at 3 p.m. Among the evidence to be examined is a study commissioned by Unity '04 that revealed "journalists of color represented one in 10 writers, editors and bureau chiefs in the Washington press corps."

In addition to Ms. Gentry, Headline News anchor Richard Lui, NBC News Senior VP Mark Whitaker, Telemundo Washington bureau chief Lori Montenegro and Washington Times journalist Brian DeBose will attempt to shed light on the state of affairs.

"I think it is a complex situation and there might be different aspects to it," said Ms. Montenegro.

"The most obvious is that [minority journalists] are simply not hired. I don't think that has to do with people not applying, but who's actually doing the hiring."

Tightening budgets in broadcast and print newsrooms also are leading to layoffs that affect minority journalists. "We're not getting support from the networks and the papers," said NABJ Executive Director Karen Wynn Freeman. "They're downsizing like crazy. Often, people of color are the last to come in, so they're the first to leave. The sensitivity to making sure representation is there ... from what we're seeing, that's just not happen-

ing. That's why we're here, to try to raise the awareness that stories need a diversity of voice."

Other Unity '08 attendees stress the gains that have been made. Telemundo President Don Browne noted, "Market by market, we've made a lot of progress recently.

"I've been a journalist most of my life and I've been watching a lot of television," he said. "The composition of the pundits has changed a good bit. If you look at Fox, CNN, MSNBC, you're seeing more diversity this year than you've seen in many years."

"You're going to see a lot more pundits, inclusive of myself, to talk about the campaign, not just about Obama but this presidential race," said Ms. Gentry. "You're seeing more women being asked to step forward at the networks in the political coverage. If you go in the gallery of the White House, you won't see a huge change, but I think that change will filter up."

Ms. Montenegro said she's seeing more African American pundits on television, but has yet to see growth in the ranks of Hispanic journalists. "As we get closer to the election, I personally hope to see that there are more Hispanics in that role," she said. "And when I say Hispanics, I want to see political analysts. You always see a lot of Hispanics who support one candidate or the other. But where are the strategists? It's important that we have

Hispanics who can be free to criticize [a candidate]."

Mr. Lui said CNN Headline News' pundits include Amy Holmes, Gloria Borger, Joe Johns, Suzanne Malveaux, Rick Sanchez, Donna Brazile and Roland Martin, who come from diverse backgrounds. "It's not just white pundits," he said. "And that within itself is

quite dynamic compared to any election before."

Mr. Lui also notes the need for diversity behind the scenes. "Off-air or behind-the-scenes team members absolutely should be put in this conversation, too," he said. "They are the executive producers, writers, editors and news directors that make the key decisions on coverage and craft the great stories we tell every day. Diverse perspectives in this group impact coverage in a big way, but these are often the faces you don't see on TV."



DON BROWNE  
Telemundo



LORI MONTENEGRO  
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**BIG DRAW** Sen. Barack Obama is expected to speak at Unity '08, as is Sen. John McCain.

## RTNDA LAUDS COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

The Radio-Television News Directors Association will co-present the ninth annual RTNDA/Unity Awards during Wednesday's gala opening of the Unity Conference in Chicago.

The awards recognize news organizations that have shown a commitment to reporting on cultural diversity in their communities.

Among the TV winners announced earlier this

month is CNN, for its report "Special Investigations Unit: Children of the Storm" in the network TV category. WTLV-TV, Jacksonville, Fla., will receive the award in the large market category for "Dropping Out." WHA-TV, Madison, Wis. gets honors for "Way of the Warrior" in the small market category.

In the radio categories, PRI's The World in Boston wins in the network category for its "PRI's The World:

Global Resource Service." WNYC-FM, New York's report "WNYC's Radio Rookies: NYC Immigrant Teens" and South Dakota Public Broadcasting, Vermillion, S.D.'s "SDPB Radio" are being recognized in the large market and small market categories, respectively.

This year's winners also will be honored Oct. 13 at the RTNDA Awards Dinner in New York. ■

—SERGIO IBARRA

Mr. Lui also finds evolution in how the candidates view diversity among voters. "You can see that in the way they're mobilizing groups in, for example, small geographic elements," he said. "They're learning to treat voters as a body of one, and that's a dynamic I find interesting."

Those who believe that the election is creating an opportunity for journalists of color wonder whether those gains will be permanent or will disappear

after the ballots are counted. "Unfortunately, it's probably true that blacks are only covering [the election] because it's an African



**PAMELA GENTRY**  
BET

American candidate," said Ms. Gentry. "That does not say that after this election, when they choose the White House correspondents for the top networks and newspapers, that any of them will be in the selection pool. I'm not sure that minority journalists [will get that

**"Off-air or behind-the-scenes team members absolutely should be put in this conversation."**

Richard Lui, *Headline News* anchor, on diversity of post-election coverage teams

chance]. We have nothing to compare it to. But I think it'll be a great conversation."

That's a conversation the panelists believe and hope will continue when Unity '08 is over, in the newsrooms of local and network TV outlets and newspapers.

"I think it's an important time in U.S. history, where this country has a great opportunity to embrace the possibility of something that many of us have thought about but never thought we'd see," said Ms. Montenegro. "We will play a part in reporting everything historic about that, and I think we'll walk away with new ideas and new perspectives on what our role in society is." ■

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# LAYOFFS CALL NABJ TO ACTION

## Black Journalists Group Helps Members Face Industry's Challenges

By Debra Kaufman  
Special to TelevisionWeek

The National Association of Black Journalists has never been healthier. The organization, which is the largest of the four groups putting on the Unity Conference, numbers 4,000 members. "We're holding on to our members and improving from last year, so we're growing," said NABJ Executive Director Karen Wynn Freeman.

This election year is historic for the strong showing by an African American and a woman candidate for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, but the NABJ is

not celebrating. Instead, it's hunkering down.

"It's a particularly challenging time for our organization and many others," said NABJ President Barbara Ciara. "If there's an ongoing theme, it is survival on many levels—whether you're young and trying to break in or you're in and trying to stay afloat."

Extraordinary assistance for NABJ's membership this year includes scholarships, not just for students but for professional members who have been laid off. "Seeing those layoffs, we provided scholarships to help those members defray the cost of registration for the whole

convention," said Ms. Ciara.

NABJ has issued an open letter to the industry as a whole to stress its concerns at the number of layoffs affecting its membership.

"When there are layoffs, the last hired are often the first let go," she said. "We're reminding employers in print and broadcast to not let diversity be a fad. When they're forced to make reductions, we're insisting they keep diversity in mind."

With those layoffs in mind, NABJ's focus at

Unity '08 is on providing career development programming and other tools to make its membership more valuable in existing positions



BARBARA CIARA  
NABJ President



and more likely to be sought out for available jobs. "We're trying to gear our programming and any member benefits for those recently laid off and seeking employment," Ms. Ciara said. "It's a new and different time for NABJ. The traditional print publications are reducing numbers at an alarming rate, and many of our members are suffering."

NABJ's programs include workshops on how to utilize digital technology and how to create a freelance career. NABJ also is rolling

out a schedule of media institutes for professional development every month of the year, in different regions. "We're serious when we say we're tackling professional development as the No. 1 component to help our members survive," Ms. Ciara said.

### Power Positions

Conversations at Unity '08 also will focus on increasing the number of minority managers, said Ms. Ciara. "We think if we get



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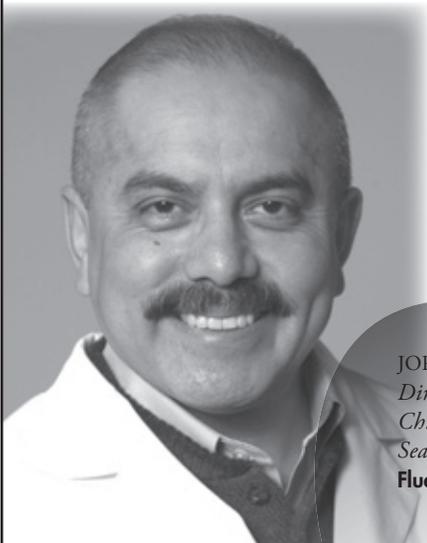


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Children's Hospital of Michigan  
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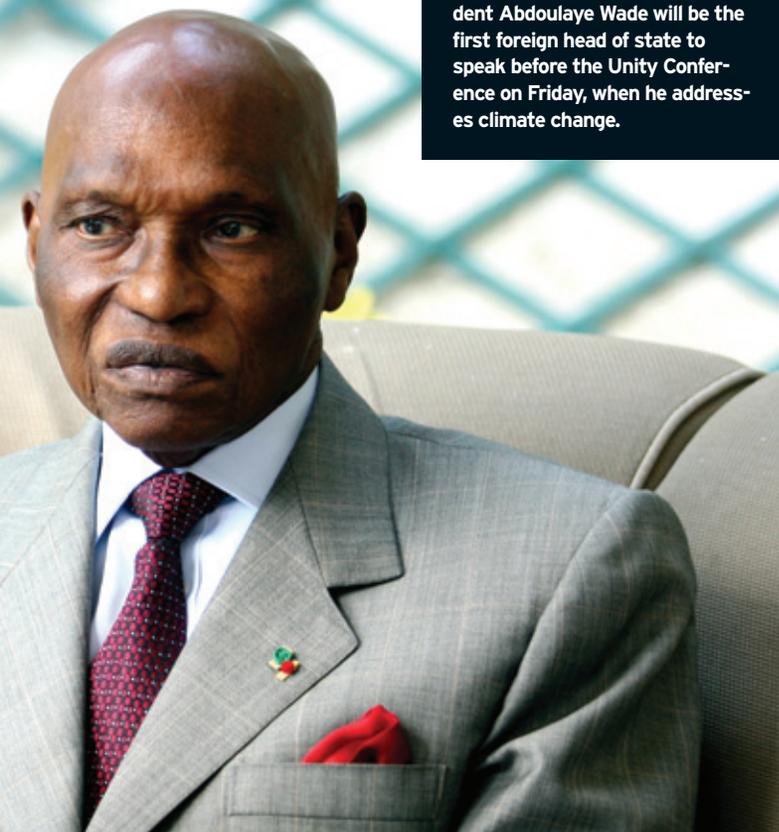
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**UNITY FIRST** Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade will be the first foreign head of state to speak before the Unity Conference on Friday, when he addresses climate change.



more minorities in positions of power and decision-making that perhaps the problem will correct itself," she said. "NABJ is rolling out our own survey of network-owned TV stations, and the actual numbers of African Americans at TV stations [vis-à-vis the population] will be very surprising—not to our members, but to the public."

NABJ is hosting a landmark event at Unity '08. On a trip to Senegal, Ms. Ciara met President

Abdoulaye Wade and learned about his country's efforts to fight the impact of global warming, in particular the encroaching Sahara desert. Accepting Ms. Ciara's invitation, President Wade will be the first foreign head of state to speak before a Unity conference. The plenary session, "Confronting Climate Change: An African Perspective," is sponsored by NABJ and will be moderated by John Yearwood, world editor of the Miami Herald.



**HONOREE**  
Miami Herald columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. has been named NABJ's Journalist of the Year.

perspective of those who were there then and are still active

Ms. Ciara is excited about the historic nature of President Wade's appearance at Unity '08, but she also pointed out practical benefits of his appearance for the NABJ membership.

#### Specialization Urged

"What President Wade is doing to turn around global warming is incredible," she said. "We're encouraging our members to do specialized reporting like environmental or health, so they have more opportunities. Everything we're doing is about member benefit. It's critical for our members to survive the journalism industry."

Another plenary session will focus on the decades between 1968, the date of the Kerner Commission report on civil disorder in the U.S., and 2008 and beyond. Panelists will represent all four of Unity's partnership organizations. "I think it's going to be interesting to hear the

now in the world of journalism," said Ms. Ciara. "To hear them speak about the passion and the sense of purpose that journalists had then, and what they're faced with now, is a perspective that will help us figure out where we go from here."

NABJ also is sponsoring a panel on "Jeremiah Wright and Jena: Who Covered It and Who Got It Right?" Moderated by radio personality Tom Joyner, the panelists will discuss how nontraditional media such as the Internet can magnify and even transform a small-town event or obscure video into worldwide news.

The upcoming presidential election will loom large at Unity '08, with a prime-time discussion set for Thursday between the presumptive

Democratic and Republican candidates, both of whom will face questions from the four alliance partners. "We're definitely looking forward to this and to the presidential election," said Ms. Freeman. "At the NABJ convention in 2007, we had both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. The Republicans had a conflict in their schedule. It was a packed house with over 2,000 attendees. We're looking for more of the same. We're clearly hoping to see history with Obama and McCain on stage."

Even so, Ms. Ciara said, "The historic nature of this year's presidential race underscores the lack of minority numbers covering the presidential race."

NABJ will salute excellence at its July 26 gala. Miami Herald columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. has been named Journalist of the Year, and Harry Porterfield, a reporter at ABC affiliate WLS-TV in Chicago, will be honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

"People will hear stories of life and death, honor good journalism and learn to be better journalists," said Ms. Ciara. "We'll wrestle with our demons in surviving this industry, but we'll also have a little fun. Sometimes, it's like a family reunion." ■



**KAREN FREEMAN**  
NABJ Executive Director

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**HIGH VOLTAGE** The hot-button issue of immigration is of major concern to Hispanic journalists and will be addressed at Unity '08 in Chicago this week.

Sandy Huffaker / Getty Images

of view," said Iván Román, the executive director of NAHJ. "They are put in the position of having to reassure people all the time that they are being fair journalists. At the same time, they bring a certain perspective that is valuable, yet can still be fair."

Mr. Román said much of the mainstream media present a skewed and incomplete view of immigration reform in the United States that is colored by right-wing rhetoric. Even the language used is politically charged. His organization objects strenuously to the term "illegal aliens" and also to the term "illegals."

"Driven by a combination of government action, fear of another 9/11 and political expediency, the immigrants themselves are left without a voice. Most stories are done without really talking to the immigrants, losing the voice and the perspective of the immigrant out there," he said.

#### Saturday Session

These issues will be addressed in a NAHJ-sponsored Saturday conference session called "Beyond 'Illegal Alien': What's Fair, Legal and Ethical When Covering Immigration." Panelists include immigration reporters from the Boston Globe, the Arizona Republic and the Houston Chronicle.

"Pro-immigration or advocacy groups or the ACLU don't get nearly as much airtime as anti-immigrant groups, who get disproportionate exposure based on faulty facts," said Mr. Román. "It is a myth that there are two sides to every story. There are more than two, and not all sides have the same weight. You have to look at credibility. There is too much rhetoric not based on fact, and journalists face the challenge of having to sort through it all to do good, balanced, fair coverage."

The organization's other panels include "Point of Origin: How to Achieve Three-Dimensional Coverage of Ethnic Communities" and "Covering Cuba: Sin Pelos en la Lengua," which loosely translates to "Not to Mince Words."

Another touchy topic that will be



Juan Gonzalez

taken up at the convention is black-brown relations, especially important during this election cycle. "The discussion is important in society, and it keeps rearing its head because people are afraid, and there may be rivalry, because Latinos now surpass blacks [in population numbers]. There is a tendency for power struggles as opposed to joining together," Mr. Román said. "We've espoused with Unity to come together and to not compete with pathetically low numbers but to fight together to raise that proportion. It's important for more of us to be there to bring a perspective that's more prevalent than the media reflects."

**"It's important for ... us to be there to bring a perspective that's more prevalent than media reflects."**

Iván Román, NAHJ

To that end, the organization's Parity Project seeks to increase the number of Latino journalists working in U.S. media and has made great strides since its launch in 2002 by Juan Gonzalez, co-founder and former president of NAHJ. The project partners with media outlets in 25 markets with large Hispanic populations and has counted 182 hires to date. While Hispanics make up about 15% of the U.S. population, they represent only 4% to 6% of journalists working in print and broadcast newsrooms.

Another key part of the Parity Project is community involvement, with town hall and community meetings and two-way dialogues between media outlets and members of the community.

"Many people felt the media was

# LATINO JOURNALISTS FACE TOUCHY TOPICS

## Immigration, Black-Brown Relations on Agenda in Chicago

By Hillary Atkin

Special to TelevisionWeek

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists is heading into its fourth Unity Conference with the hot-button issue of immigration reform and how it is covered by the media at the top of its list of concerns.

The organization expects up to 1,200 attendees at Unity '08, and is sponsoring four panels as well as its Hall of Fame gala awards dinner and ceremony on Friday night at

Chicago's McCormick Place West.

NAHJ was established in 1984, and like its sister organization, the Native American Journalists Association, it will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year.

NAHJ is governed by an 18-member board of directors made up of executive officers and regional directors for various geographic areas across the United States and the Caribbean. The organization is headquartered in Washington and has about 2,300 members.

Its mission is to enhance the recognition and professional advancement of Hispanics in the news business, a road fraught with obstacles—made even greater by consolidation in the media industry and the handling of politically sensitive issues such as immigration.

"Latino journalists have the challenge of dealing with pressures of people in the newsroom who might be wary of a particular agenda or fear they might approach it from an advocacy point



IVÁN ROMÁN  
NAHJ Executive Director

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untouchable, and now they feel empowered, that the local media is concerned about views of Hispanics and concerned about fair and accurate portrayals," said Kevin Olivas, director of the Parity Project. "In the past, many of the stories tended to be negative, about people on welfare or drugs. In reality, there are many teachers, tradespeople and businesspeople contributing to the good of the community. We

were able to get access and inclusion. We view that as a good thing." The Parity Project will continue indefinitely. It is funded by grants, but the organization is looking for ways to make it more self-sustaining.

"We are concerned about media consolidation, and journalists leaving the business because of layoffs, buyouts or the fact that they're frustrated by not having a voice in the news decision-making process or feeling they had no chance for advancement," Mr. Olivas said. "We also want to establish a pipeline to new talent by sending established journalists out to speak at high schools and colleges, to help them develop the next generation of great storytellers."

**'Renewed' Purpose**

NAHJ member Marty Guerrero is a television news writer at KCBS-TV in Los Angeles who will be attending her third Unity conference. "Each time I come back with a renewed sense of purpose and of community with all people of color. There are very few of us," said Ms. Guerrero. Twenty years ago, she said, she was the only Latina line producer at CNN in Atlanta, and she is still concerned about the lack of minority voices in the newsroom. While at CNN, she fought institutionalized racism by doing away with using the same file footage of minorities to illustrate stories about poor people.

At NAHJ's formal gala at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers, three people will be inducted into the organization's Hall of Fame. The honorees are Mr. Gonzalez, NAHJ founder, former NAHJ president and founder of the NAHJ Parity Project, Unity founder, columnist at the New York Daily News and co-host of Democracy Now!; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, associate professor of journalism, University of Texas at Austin, and director of the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project; and 19th-century journalism pioneer Francisco P. Ramirez, editor of El Clamor Público in California, an influential newspaper established in the 1850s when the territory first became a state.

The President's Award will go to Augie Nieto, a fitness company executive who leads a major fund-raising drive to find a cure for ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. ■



# ARAB AMERICAN JOURNALISTS GET THE FLOOR

*Unity Panel to Discuss the Unique Hurdles for Middle Easterners*

**By Jarre Fees**  
*Special to TelevisionWeek*

"After Sept. 11, people told me I could write my own ticket," Arab American reporter and AAJA member Natasha Ghoneim said, "but in my career, being an Egyptian has never helped me.

"So many broadcasters think, 'We need a certain cast of characters' that are supposed to be indicative of our community. But because of the political climate—or maybe because of our inability to navigate the political waters—we don't have much of a voice."

Ms. Ghoneim will take part in the panel "From Iraq to Iowa: Covering Arab Americans—How to Get It Right on Deadline," scheduled for Friday at the Unity '08 Conference. Sponsored by the Asian American Journalists Association, the panel aims to raise awareness for reporters who cover Arab American issues.

In addition to Ms. Ghoneim, the panel will showcase reporter Tammy Audi of the Wall Street Journal's Los Angeles bureau; Jeffrey Ghannam, an attorney and former reporter at the Detroit Free Press; Lara Setrakian, digital reporter in ABC News' Dubai bureau; freelance journalist Sally Farhat Kassab (In Style, Parents, Natural Health); and reporter Tamer El-Ghobashy of the New York Daily News.

One goal of the panel is to give journalists insight into researching information about the Arab American community. Panelists also will

address ways to find Arab American experts, improve accuracy in reporting and even attract a broader audience.

Finding an audience has always been a problem for Arab American journalists, Ms. Ghoneim said, because they also face biases from employers who feel they can only cover certain issues. "In Chicago," she said, "a news director told my agent, 'We don't have many Middle Eastern people in Chicago, so we don't need a Middle Eastern reporter.'

**PANELIST** Reporter **Natasha Ghoneim** will participate in Friday's panel about how to cover the Arab American community.

My agent said, 'What about just needing a good reporter?'"

Ms. Ghoneim, who was born in the U.S., also holds Egyptian citizenship. She previously worked at the NBC affiliate WDIV-TV in Detroit, the city with the largest population of Arab Americans in the country.

Ms. Ghoneim said she felt "lucky to be there," even though she found she had to "face some problems with colleagues" who felt she had been hired simply because she was of Middle Eastern descent. After a period of proving herself as a reporter, that burden eased somewhat—only to be replaced with another problem, this time from the very community she tried to serve.

"Culturally," she said, "[television journalism] is not considered an appropriate profession for a woman to go into. My father will pay, right now, for me to go to law school instead.

"There are so many misconceptions about who Arab Americans are in this country. The onus is on journalists to dig below the surface. When I talk to American Arabs and people at Muslim organizations, they are very dissatisfied with how they're portrayed in the media."

Ms. Ghoneim said she believes both the media and the Arab American community could be better served if they took time to work with each other.

For members of the communi-

ty, she said, "Part of the responsibility is to engage with the media, if they want to see better coverage." And for journalists, she suggests "reaching out before you need someone on deadline—and not just going back to the same sources."

Many of the sources journalists use again and again "tend to be Muslim men," she said, noting that the idea of Muslim women in this country not being interested in talking to the press is part of a "barage of stereotypes" that face Arab Americans.

There are several organizations, she pointed out, such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council, that will work with the entertainment and communications industries in an effort to ensure Arab Americans are accurately portrayed in film and television.

And although Arab Americans made headlines on Sept. 11, Ms. Ghoneim said the feeling among many Americans that "all Arabs are terrorists" is not a new problem. "It's a longstanding feeling about the Arab American community dating back to the '70s. It was hijackers then," she said. "But after Sept. 11, there are more hate crimes and many more reports of people being harassed.

"One of the things to understand about Arab American communities," she said, "is that not all Arab Americans are Muslims. And not all Muslims feel it's necessary to wear an abaya to be good. There are Arab Jews. There are even Arabs who have blond hair and green eyes." ■

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REPORTED BY SOLEDAD O'BRIEN

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Fa Zhi / Corbis/ChinaPhoto

# OLYMPICS PUT FOCUS ON CHINA

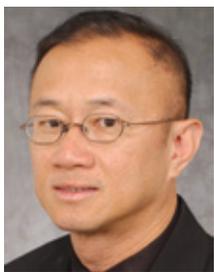
## Asian American Journalists Bring Unique Perspective

By Jarre Fees

Special to TelevisionWeek

The Asian American Journalists Association uses the term "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders" to describe all Americans "who self-identify with one or more of the three dozen nationalities and ethnic groups in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific Islands."

That's a pretty broad spectrum from which to cull journalists, and a fair number of those journalists (AAJA has about 2,300 members) will take



**RENE ASTUDILLO**  
AAJA Executive Director

part in the Unity Conference in Chicago this week.

"It's always been the goal [of AAJA] to promote fair and accurate coverage of the Asian community," said Executive Director Rene Astudillo, who has led the organization since 1999. "On the international level, more and more we're seeing the onset of globalization in terms of news coverage. In the headlines, we've seen not just what's happening here, but what's happening everywhere."

The Beijing Olympics should be an important opportunity for Asian American journalists, he said: "Other people will be covering the sports, but the issues in China—like human rights and freedom of the

press—there are Asian American journalists who are familiar with those situations, who are motivated to look beyond the usual suspects."

One such journalist is veteran Mei Ling Sze, a Chinese-speaking anchor and managing editor for KTSF-TV Chinese News in San Francisco, who started her career in Hong Kong. KTSF "already has a presence in Beijing" for the Summer Olympics and will be sending six journalists to cover the Games, Ms. Sze said, adding that the station has been closely monitoring human rights issues in China for 20 years. "That's the kind of thing we follow constantly," she said.

Although the KTSF newsroom is staffed primarily by Asian American journalists and serves a large Asian community, its numbers are the exception and not the rule. Accord-

Continued on Page 30

# AWARDS HONOR COMMITMENT

## Pran, Li, Maynard Show Courage, Principle

By Jarre Fees

Special to TelevisionWeek

The Asian American Journalists Association will host its annual awards banquet Friday at Chicago's Hyatt Regency as part of Unity '08. Keynote speaker for the gala event will be Martin Bashir, co-anchor of ABC's "Nightline" and correspondent for "20/20."

"The [Unity Conference] is a very important gathering for journalists," Mr. Bashir said, noting that what affects one affects all. "As journalists, we often regard ourselves as outsiders, and then over the period of our careers we become insiders.

"What's critical is that neither one of those descriptions is accurate," he said. "We are who we are, and being a journalist is just part of that."

In addition to announcing its annual scholarship and journalism award winners, the AAJA will present its Lifetime Achievement and Special Recognition awards at the event. The Lifetime Achievement Award "recognizes an individual who has demonstrated courage and commitment to the principles of journalism over the course of a life's work, as well as dedication to issues important to the Asian American and Pacific Islander

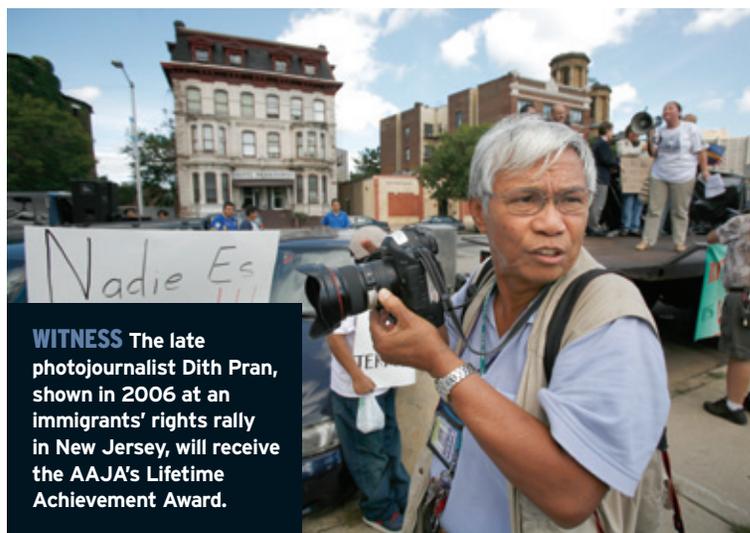


Martin Bashir

community," according to the AAJA Web site. This year's award will be presented posthumously to photojournalist Dith Pran.

Mr. Pran's work in Cambodia as an interpreter for foreign journalists and a translator for the U.S. military, his four-year exile to forced labor camps where he endured brutality and near-starvation, and his subsequent escape from the Khmer Rouge were documented in the film "The Killing Fields," based on a New York Times magazine cover story by his longtime friend, Pulitzer Prize-winning journal-

Continued on Page 30



**WITNESS** The late photojournalist Dith Pran, shown in 2006 at an immigrants' rights rally in New Jersey, will receive the AAJA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Michael Nagle / Getty Images



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**ASKING THE TOUGH QUESTIONS** Mei Ling Sze of KTSF-TV San Francisco has covered human-rights issues in China and elsewhere.

# QUAKE, GAMES OFFER OPPORTUNITY IN CHINA

## KTSF-TV Has Experience to Share

**By Jarre Fees**

*Special to TelevisionWeek*

When early reports trickled in of a 7.9 magnitude earthquake in the Sichuan province of China on May 12, many U.S. TV stations scrambled for overseas talent to cover it.

At San Francisco's KTSF-TV, Asian American journalist, Hong Kong native and veteran anchor Mei Ling Sze simply looked around the newsroom.

KTSF, which has served the Bay Area's Asian American population for 32 years, first broadcast a live Chinese newscast in 1988 and now broadcasts in 10 Asian languages.

As it turns out, the unlikely combination of the Sichuan earthquake and the 2008 Beijing Olympics might give the world a new window into China. "Lately [the Chinese government] has been looking at how much they're going to be able to control the media," Ms. Sze said. "As part of the agreement with the IOC, they've had to allow reporters to roam the country, except in Tibet. In the last 20 months we've been to China five or six times."

"You're not really allowed to talk to people, but we're still able to use a lot of the images," she added. "And we're finding there are more people who are willing to talk than there were 20 years ago."

Ms. Sze told the story of a young girl whose body was found recently in a river in China. After several boys were questioned and released, the official government explanation of the girl's death was suicide, she said, but villagers were not convinced.

"The villagers believed the young men were related to the government officials," she said, "and thousands of villagers stormed the

government buildings."

That provincial act attracted the attention of the central Chinese government, which reopened the case and even allowed the dead girl's family to be present for the autopsy—another thing that would have been unheard of 20 years ago, Ms. Sze said.

"We spoke to some officials in Beijing two months ago," she added, "and they said privately they felt the government was more open now to letting the world know what's going on in China."

"The [government] had been saying they would clamp back

**The [government] had been saying they would clamp back down after the Olympics, but it seems like they can't turn back."**

Mei Ling Sze, KTSF-TV San Francisco

down after the Olympics, but it seems like they can't turn back."

Ms. Sze said she and her staff "have talked to officials about how China was perceived by the rest of the world, and they were intrigued. They were so upset by the coverage they had been given [for the upcoming Olympics]—but then the earthquake happened and they knew they would have to let the whole world cover it."

"Officials understood they would have to get open-minded enough to let people come in, and now they can see how things outside of a controlled society work."

Ms. Sze also contributes to KTSF's monthly news program "Under the Same Sky," which airs documentaries and features that are of interest to Chinese people

in the U.S. and elsewhere. She has a strong background of covering human rights.

Her questions on that topic, directed to Presidents Clinton and Jiang Zemin at a press conference broadcast live worldwide, were featured on ABC's "Nightline" and led to a televised human-rights debate between the two world leaders.

The station "already has a presence in Beijing for the

**Continued on Page 30**

# GOING BEFORE CAMERAS

## Panel Seeks to Smooth Transition From Print

**By Jarre Fees**

*Special to TelevisionWeek*

To a lot of sportswriters, it might look as though ESPN anchor Michael Kim arrived early at sports-fan heaven. Mr. Kim, who on Thursday will moderate a Unity '08 sports keynote breakfast sponsored by ESPN, in association with the National Association of Black Journalists, probably would agree with that assessment.

"I've been fortunate in my career," he said, adding that he feels being an Asian American has not hindered his career as a sports anchor, particularly since his arrival at ESPN in late 1996.

The Unity panel, designed to help print journalists make the transition to electronic media, will include ESPN stalwarts such as senior writer Chris Broussard, "a basketball guy who does a lot of TV"; senior news editor Dwayne Bray; bureau reporter Pedro Gomez, formerly of the Arizona Republic and "the designated Barry Bonds guy"; Rob King, editor in chief at ESPN.com.; and reporter Jemele Hill.

ESPN suspended Ms. Hill on June 17 "for a period of time,"

according to press releases, after she likened cheering for the Boston Celtics to nuclear war and Adolf Hitler, an issue that may or may not come up at the panel discussion.

Mr. Kim earned a master's degree in journalism at the University of Missouri, where grad and undergrad students operate an actual NBC affiliate, KOMU-TV, that competes in the market with the local CBS and ABC stations.

After graduating, he applied for jobs at television stations in Peoria, Ill., Lynchburg, Va., and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but he noticed that "[non-Asian] people I went to school with were getting callbacks and I wasn't. Finally someone told me there was some concern that I wouldn't 'connect with the demographics.'"

Then News Channel 8 in Springfield, Va., which serves the Washington area, took a chance on the fledgling sportscaster. In 1993 that risk paid off when Mr. Kim won an Emmy for sports reporting for his series "Local Heroes," which also was named best sports series by the Society of Professional Journalists.

Mr. Kim said he's glad to have had the working experience in grad school at Missouri's TV station, noting "a few of the transitions from

**Continued on Page 30**

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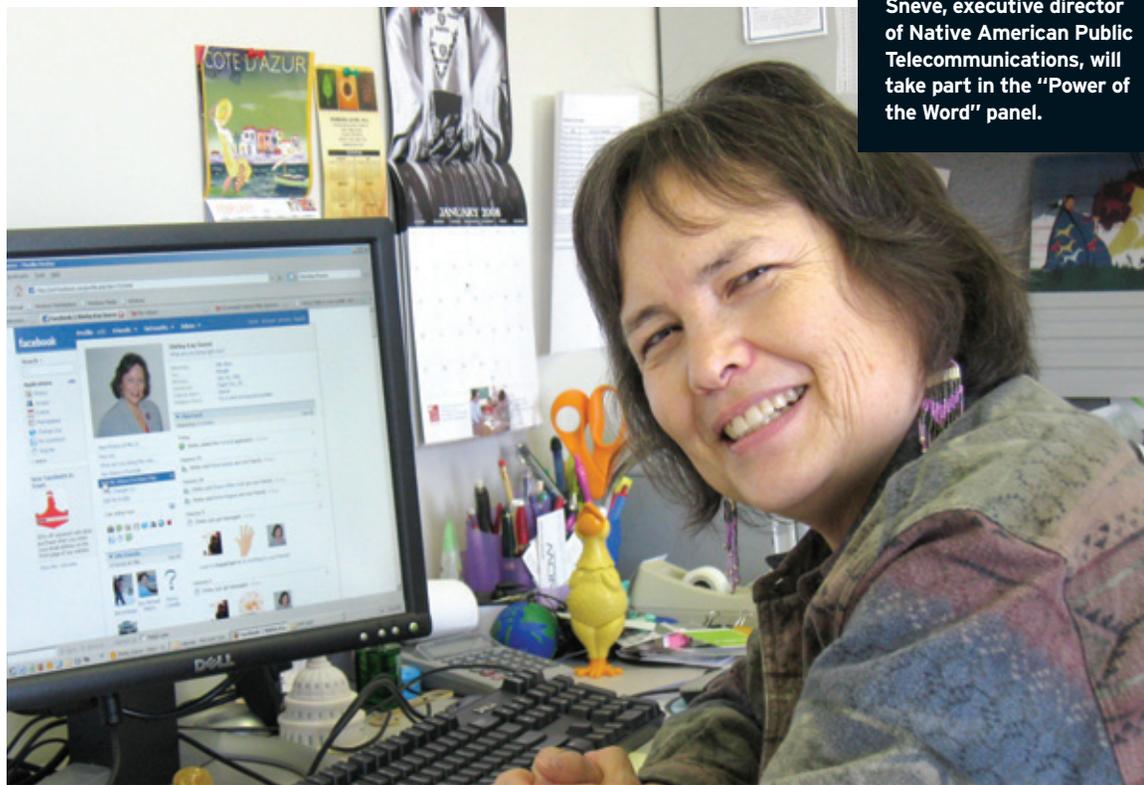
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**WORD POWER** NAJA board member Shirley Sneve, executive director of Native American Public Telecommunications, will take part in the "Power of the Word" panel.



# EXPANDING THE NATIVE TALENT POOL

## Native American Group Promotes Awareness, Training

**By Hillary Atkin**  
*Special to TelevisionWeek*

The Native American Journalists Association may be the smallest of the four groups involved in the Unity Conference, but its strength lies in the dedication of its members and its leadership.

The organization expects nearly 200 attendees, including about 30 students taking part in weeklong workshops to define convergence media models. NAJA is sponsoring four panels and an awards banquet and ceremony during the Chicago confab.

NAJA will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year. The organization was born in 1984 when a group of 30 Native American journalists met at Penn State University to ascertain the state of Native media, and to find ways to nurture and develop Native American communications.

The conferees decided a national organization was necessary to reinvigorate Native media and to address pervasive barriers and challenges facing Native American journalists. They created a constitution and bylaws establishing the foundation for a national organization, originally called the Native American Press Association. The name was changed in 1990 to better reflect the organization's broader goals and the inclusion of radio and television professionals among its membership.

Within the context of recognizing that Native Americans are distinct peoples based on their traditions and

culture, NAJA provides its membership with programs that promote diversity, and it defends against challenges to a free press, free speech and free expression.

The organization is committed to increasing the representation of Native journalists in mainstream media, while encouraging the highest standards of professionalism, ethics and responsibility across the board.

"My goal is to see membership increase by promoting new, fresh ideas," said Jeff Harjo, executive director of the Native American Journalists Association, which moved last summer from South Dakota to its new home at the Uni-

**"We want to get Native issues into the mainstream media."**

**Jeffrey Palmer, education director, NAJA**

versity of Oklahoma in Norman. "We're nurturing young ones to keep the organization moving forward. We want to promote journalism, and help as many students as we can. We have a mentoring program every summer, and a lot of former students returning to mentor, so it's an ongoing circle."

Even with all of the organization's efforts, Native Americans remain a tiny percentage of working media in the United States. Of those, most work in print.

"We are very unrepresented in journalism," said Jeffrey Palmer, NAJA's education director. "We're behind the curve in broadcast, where most of the mainstream public gets

its information, and we see a lot of misrepresentation. The major issue that we're trying to deal with this year is focusing on the fact we want to get Native issues into the mainstream media.

"A good portion of [Native American] students are in school districts that don't teach journalism, and our representation of people is low, just 1% of the national population," Mr. Palmer said. "I don't think we're ever going to have numbers that compete with other groups. But if we can raise the numbers and awareness and bring it to a level just comparable with the population, I think we'll be able to do more things."

One barrier is that the issues of concern to Native American communities across the country are complex, and not easily told in 90-second reports. They range from fishing, hunting and water rights to the digital divide to alternative energy sources, economic development, gaming issues and tribal politics and leadership.

Many Americans do not realize that each Indian tribe—including the Navajo and Cherokee Nations, which are the largest in the United States—has its own sovereignty agreement with individual states and with the federal government that can further complicate issues.

Another hot-button topic is the question of exactly who is an Indian, which will be addressed in a Friday Unity Conference session. Sponsored by NAJA, panelists for "Who Is an Indian: Your Guide to Covering Native Americans" include Kara Briggs, president of Red Hummingbird

**Continued on Page 31**

# TELLING STORY OF ALL AMERICANS

## Oklahoma City's Ballard Puts Her Talents to Good Use

**By Hillary Atkin**  
*Special to TelevisionWeek*

It was April 19, 1995, and KOCO-TV reporter Cherokee Ballard thought she would get a manicure before heading to work at the ABC affiliate in Oklahoma City. She saw black smoke rising from the downtown area, and her phone began ringing. Without even looking to see who it was, she answered, "I'll be right there."

As the shocking news broke of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people, Ms. Ballard got on the air and stayed on for the next 22 hours, the beginning of a week of nonstop, commercial-free coverage for most of the stations in Oklahoma City.

Six years later, convicted bomber Timothy McVeigh was executed by lethal injection at a federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Ind., and Ms. Ballard was there to cover the story. She has been witness to eight executions, the most recent just last month. The inmate had specifically requested she interview him four days before his death sentence was carried out for the murder of a young student in a bombing.

With more than 25 years of broadcast journalism experience and a shelf full of awards, Ms. Ballard, a member of the Cherokee Nation, is a fixture in Oklahoma City TV and one of the few Native American anchor/reporters in the U.S.—a number she estimates at fewer than a dozen.

"Native Americans are storytellers, and I've always liked to write and dig for the truth and tell people stories," said Ms. Ballard, a former board member and mentor with the Native American Journalists Association.

"Journalism sent me in that direction."

She graduated from the University of Oklahoma in Norman as a radio, television and film major in the journalism department, and got an internship in the consumer unit of KFOR-TV, the NBC affiliate, where she later got a paying job, starting at the minimum rate of \$3.35 an hour. After several years as an associate producer of "In Your Corner," she began a brief reporting stint at a station in the small town of Ada, Okla., while also reporting on weekends at ABC affiliate KOCO-TV, Channel 5, where she was based for the next 16 years.

Nine years ago, Ms. Ballard was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. While undergoing successful treatment, she did a weekly series of reports on cancer, which aired every Wednesday night for nine months. "I took viewers through what people go through, from surgeries to chemo, and what it felt like on my 34th birthday to have my hair falling out, and to be shaved," she said. "For a Native American woman, to be bald is traumatic. Hair is so much part of your identity. You feel so vulnerable, so naked."

She is active in charity fundraising, and in March was named woman of the year by the Oklahoma Leukemia & Lymphoma Society after raising nearly \$25,000 for the group. This month Ms. Ballard, a dancer since age 3 who was on ballroom dance teams in junior high and high school, took part in a celebrity dance contest to raise money for Children's Miracle Network to benefit hospitalized kids in Oklahoma.

In 2005 she returned to KFOR. Since its inception last year she has co-anchored the 9 p.m. newscast with Ernie Paulson at its sister station, KAUT-TV, Channel 43, in addition to reporting for the early newscasts and the 10 p.m. broadcast on

**Continued on Page 30**



**STORYTELLER** Cherokee Ballard estimates she was one of fewer than a dozen Native American TV anchors/reporters in the U.S.

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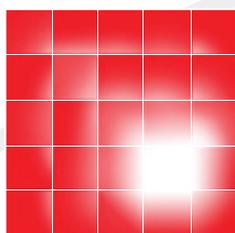
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**GOOD SPORTS** ESPN's Michael Kim has found the world of sports to be a fairly neutral playing ground as far as race is concerned.

## OLYMPICS

Continued from Page 26

ing to the American Society of Newspaper Editors' annual census, Asian Americans make up just 3.22% of newsroom employees, Mr. Astudillo noted.

"We have a long way to go in achieving parity in the newsroom," he said. "We're hoping that the per-

**"We're hoping that the percentage of working Asian American journalists would come closer to the actual [U.S.] Census numbers, which show that 5% of the total population is Asian American."**

Rene Astudillo, executive director, AAJA

centage of working Asian American journalists would come closer to the actual [U.S.] Census numbers, which show that 5% of the total population is Asian American.

"An important step in ensuring there's more representation is to make sure people in the newsroom are aware of, and support, executive

leadership programs that provide Asian American journalists the skills to break the glass ceiling. We have certain issues we strive for, including more representation in the decision-making process."

At Unity '08, AAJA will offer a two-day advanced session for graduates of its Executive Leadership Program, designed to help journalists become newsroom leaders, as well as an executive networking

lunch and a mentoring program for one-on-one professional guidance.

Mr. Astudillo was quick to note that there are some problems that transcend ethnicity. "We're all journalists, and what's happening in the media right now affects all journalists in general—companies laying off employees, newspapers being

company line," he said, "but I can honestly say without hesitation that ESPN, especially in the last few years, has made real progress. They stress diversity.

"We even have a diversity council to make sure everyone understands that diversity is our strength, and to make sure we address it and keep tabs on it. "[ESPN's] progress," he said, "is noticeable and important and good business. It's simply good business to represent and reflect your audience."

Although Mr. Kim said he feels being Korean American has not hurt him in the newsroom, he also said he would never downplay the battles others have fought to make that area safe.

"Everybody knows Jackie Robinson did so much on and off the field," he said, "and turned so many things around. Sports, for the most part, is a step or two ahead of society in that regard." ■

Whatever is affecting journalists affects us as well."

But some journalists under the AAJA umbrella do face difficulties stemming from ethnic bias. Egyptian American Natasha Ghoneim, a freelance reporter for KNBC-TV in Los Angeles, admitted that apart from the problems she has encountered with management and fellow journalists, within the Muslim community itself television journalism "is not considered an appropriate profession for a woman to go into."

Ms. Ghoneim, a panelist for the AAJA session "From Iraq to Iowa: Covering Arab Americans—How to Get It Right on Deadline," scheduled for Friday, believes that Arab Americans in the newsroom "don't have much of a voice."

At the other end of the spectrum is Korean American sports anchor Michael Kim of ESPN, who will moderate a panel at the Unity convention that's designed to help sportswriters make the leap from print to broadcast or other electronic journalism. Mr. Kim said he feels fortunate that the meshing of sports and journalism has placed him in something of a neutral zone.

"You're a sports fan first, so you see [fewer problems] than in any other field," he said, "unless there are guys at ESPN secretly sitting in a room saying, 'Let's stick Michael with that story.'"

The AAJA, which was founded in 1981, now boasts 19 chapters nationwide, with one chapter in Asia. Mr. Astudillo, who emigrated from the Philippines, is an ex-officio member of the board of directors of Unity and has been a columnist and contributing editor for the Filipino Guardian.

He also served as executive director of the Filipino Task Force on AIDS and education director of the Life Foundation, a nonprofit AIDS organization based in Honolulu. He emphasizes that all Asian Americans should have a voice with which to tell their stories.

"Most of the coverage of Asian American communities we've seen in the U.S. has been about cultural activities," Mr. Astudillo said, "but there's more to Asian life than the celebration of Chinese New Year." ■

## CHINA

Continued from Page 27

upcoming Olympics," she said, and will be sending six reporters to cover the Games. "We started our coverage in May. We followed the torch on its progress, and when there were Chinese Americans in the trials we featured them. We'll continue our coverage there through Aug. 24."

Although Ms. Sze is now an American citizen, "I see myself as Chinese," she said. Starting her bilingual career in Hong Kong, she added, gave her an edge as well as insight into Asian news.

"I'm very fortunate. I feel we're in a different league here. There's so much talk about downsizing and

corporations taking over the bottom-line issues in newsrooms, but we've never encountered it," said Ms. Sze, a longtime AAJA member who has been with the station for 20 years.

The KTSF audience is made up of "a population from all over," she said. "Whether they're from Singapore or Taiwan or mainland China, they give us a good sense of whether we've been doing it right." It helps, too, she said, that the newsroom staff is composed of the same ethnicity as the audience it serves.

"There have been other [Bay Area] Chinese-language stations to come and go," Ms. Sze said, "with Mandarin and Cantonese newscasts, but they've never been able to be viable." ■

## AWARDS

Continued from Page 26

ist Sydney H. Schanberg.

After his escape, Mr. Pran moved to New York City and worked as a staff photographer for the New York Times until his death earlier this year.

Mr. Bashir, who knew Mr. Pran only by reputation, paid tribute to the late photojournalist, noting that attention to a sort of moral compass seems to have guided Mr. Pran's actions throughout his career. "One of the most remarkable things about Dith Pran is that he had an excessive public-service commitment," Mr. Bashir said. "For him to live in such danger even when he was [working as an interpreter] speaks of his magnificent character."

AAJA's Special Recognition Award will be presented to former Los Angeles Times Assistant Managing Editor Simon Li. Mr. Li, who was born in London and began his career as a reporter at the Hong Kong Standard, also was foreign editor at the paper from 1995-2002 and, according to his

AAJA bio, "was known in the Times newsroom for his championship of international coverage and was notorious for his blunt public questioning of top management."

Dori Maynard, president and CEO of the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, will receive the 2008 Leadership in Diversity Award. Ms. Maynard continues the work started by her father, Robert Maynard, including teaching journalists to recognize what Mr. Maynard dubbed the "fault lines" that divide human beings: race, class, gender, generation and geography. The Robert C. Maynard Institute also sponsors management programs to help create diversity in the ranks of managers and executives.

Four-time Emmy Award winner Ti-Hua Chang, who recently joined MyNetworkTV affiliate WWOR-TV, which serves the New York metropolitan area, will emcee the event along with JuJu Chang, Emmy Award-winning correspondent for ABC's "20/20," "Good Morning America" and "Nightline." ■

## CHEROKEE

Continued from Page 28

KFOR, NewsChannel 4.

"Cherokee is a tremendous example of the true Oklahoma spirit—courageous, hard-working and honest," said Mary Ann Eckstein, senior VP and news director of KFOR-TV.

"I always thought I would end up there," Ms. Ballard said of KFOR. "This is my TV home. This is where I'm supposed to be. It's been a great experience."

"There's a Dakota saying, 'We will be known forever by the tracks we leave.' Cherokee's tracks are very strong and deep, and what a variety," Ms. Eckstein said. "Not only is she a reputable anchor and reporter, she's a great newsroom resource and leader. Cherokee is deeply committed to quality journalism and does her best to mentor our student interns and new employees."

Ms. Ballard was honored by the Associated Press, the Society of Professional Journalists and the Oklahoma Association of Broadcasters for

her stories on 2½-year-old Kelsey Briggs, who was beaten to death. The girl's mother and stepfather were imprisoned on child-abuse charges, and the case motivated the passage of "Kelsey's Law," which changed the way judges are held accountable in child-abuse cases and gave the state the ability to hire more caseworkers.

Ms. Ballard is writing a book about the case.

And she'll soon be bidding adieu to her TV colleagues and audience, but they will still see her on the air in her new job, as public information officer and legislative liaison for the Oklahoma state medical examiner's office.

"As a journalist, I'll be able to get the full story, and can help bridge a gap between a press release and coverage, bring a better understanding, and be a voice for the dead. I can provide insight into different crimes that the media are interested in."

So while the Oklahoma City market will lose a highly regarded broadcast journalist in the anchor chair, the state will gain someone with a wealth of experience who is excited to begin a new chapter in her career. ■

## SPORTS

Continued from Page 27

newspaper to television" at ESPN "has been rough. But when they get it, it's excellent."

Consultants come in to work with newcomers and pros alike, he said, to make sure anchors and reporters look and sound good on television. "And some personalities just naturally take to the camera," he noted, citing sometime NHL coach and versatile ESPN analyst Barry Melrose.

"ESPN utilizes a lot of newspaper people," Mr. Kim said, "and newspaper people seem to recognize that good journalism is a cornerstone" for the network's operation.

He's particularly proud of ESPN's commitment to diversity.

"We've all been in situations where someone is just spouting the

# NATIVE

Continued from Page 28

Media Corp.; Oklahoma State Representative T.W. Shannon; Chad Smith, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation; Suzanne Jasper, director of the First People's Human Rights Coalition; John Echohawk, director of the Native American Rights Fund; and Joe Garcia, president of the National Congress of American Indians.

"There is a strange thing that revolves around identity that other minority groups don't have to cope with. It's certainly an issue people in academia are writing about, and tribal governments are concerned with," said Mr. Palmer. "It's a kind of controversial and taboo subject. Anything to do with racial issues people treat with kid gloves, and Native American culture is no exception."

NAJA's other conference panels include "Power of the Word: Revitalization of Native Languages and the 2008 Reading Red Report," "Reaching an Off-Line Audience in an Online World" and "The Politically Savvy Journalist: Getting It Right in a Political World."

"There's a gap for people of color compared to the general population," said Cristina Azocar, board president of NAJA and director of the Center for Integration & Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University, who will moderate the latter panel. "There's a real cultural disconnect when it comes to what types of stories people think are important. Our vision is to make news more inclusive."

Board member Shirley Sneve is participating in the "Power of the Word" panel and is concerned with how Native Americans deal with the new-media landscape and demonstrating to young people how they can make a career in journalism.

"With the conglomeration of news sources, a lot of individual stories of people are getting lost to headline news and sensationalism," said Ms. Sneve, director of Native American Public Telecommunications, an entity that provides support and funding to filmmakers and television producers. "You hear the same stories over and over again, such as when you hear news from Indian country about corruption at casinos and teen suicide. I like to know more about positive things tribes are doing."

And some very positive things will come from Friday night's awards banquet at the American Indian Center of Chicago, when NAJA will hand out 44 awards in categories such as feature news story, environmental story and general excellence awards in television, radio, online and print reporting.

Jack Marsh, executive director of the Al Neuharth Media Center at the American Indian Journalism Institute in South Dakota, will be honored for his service and excellence in representing Native people in the field of journalism. Native comedian Charlie Hill will provide the evening's entertainment to the expected 200 guests. ■

**JOBS CENTRAL** Unity '08 is the largest journalism career fair in the country.



# MONROE

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**TVWeek:** What's the significance of Unity '08?

**Bryan Monroe:** Every four years the four major journalism organizations of color in the United States gather together and it's a departure from each association's annual conference. We pull together a mega-conference called Unity '08: Journalists of Color.

This started back in 1994 in Atlanta. We did 1999 in Seattle, then 2004 in Washington, D.C., because that was an election year, so the board made the change from five years to every four years. Now, in 2008, we'll be in Chicago.

It's really a historic opportunity to get together not just a lot of journalists of color but what will end up being probably the largest single gathering of journalists in the

U.S. this year. I don't know how many are registered for the convention, but last time we had about 8,000 and this year we're closer to 10,000. It's huge, and that includes white journalists, black journalists, Asian journalists, Hispanic and Native American journalists. And their bosses, because this also is a gathering of some of the top news editors and executive editors and talent scouts. It's the largest career fair in the country focused on journalism. If you're a journalist, especially in these tight times, and you're looking for a job, you've got to be at Unity '08.

**For the full Q&A with Mr. Monroe, go to TVWeek.com.**

**TVWeek:** In 2004 Unity had both presidential candidates address the conference. Are you going to have Sen. Barack Obama and Sen. John McCain this year?

**Mr. Monroe:** We're working on that right now. ... We're trying to work through some of the scheduling and logistics to get the right setting and opportunity for them. All our fingers are crossed and we've got them on the schedule. ... It doesn't happen till it happens.

**TVWeek:** It seems they would want to appear before such a large gathering of media members.

**Mr. Monroe:** Oh, yes, it's a huge opportunity. It's a huge venue, plus with our partnership with CNN



**ALL TOGETHER** Recruiting, education and fellowship are important components of Unity '08.

and Time magazine, where they want to go live with this presidential forum across as many as 2 [million] or 3 million viewers, for them it's free publicity and a chance to get their message out.

**TVWeek:** What kind of forum is it?

**Mr. Monroe:** While we're not against a traditional debate format, we're not doing this like a debate. We want it to be a conversation with each candidate separately. We'll accommodate them if they want to meet together, but we understand the sensitivities and really find it as important to have each candidate address journalists who have significant questions and issues, from health care and violence in the inner cities, to the war in Iraq and the Supreme Court—a host of issues out there that we hope to be able to discuss with them.

**TVWeek:** How important were the appearances by President Bush and Sen. John Kerry at Unity 2004?

**Mr. Monroe:** They were put on the record. I remember when President Bush spoke and he was asked some tough questions about America's sovereign rights. Sen. Kerry spoke as well, and he was hit with questions on military policy. At that time, it was live on C-SPAN. They were both on the record. If you go back and Google a couple of days after that conference, there was an enormous amount of press about what was said. As they say in the military, it had a force multiplier effect.

And with this year's theme being "New Journalism for a Changing World," we will have an international presence. We have the president of Senegal, who is speaking Friday. We have a panel that morning

called "What the World Needs Now," talking about globalization and the importance of media and free speech. This is very much an international audience.

**TVWeek:** To what extent will the conference focus on new media and journalism in the digital age?

**Mr. Monroe:** We have more than a dozen different workshops and seminars focused squarely on Web training, how to do video for the Web, how to write for mobile phones and the Web, as well as the ethics involved. And this year what's going to be really fascinating are the student projects. Each year we have a newspaper, radio, TV and online project that the students work on concurrently with the convention. This year will be the first they'll have a truly integrated newsroom in that online will be permeating everything we do journalistically. ...

**TVWeek:** Will the job fair reflect the new skills that are demanded of journalists, such as working both in print and on the Web, writing traditional articles as well as blogs?

**Mr. Monroe:** They have to be able to do multiple things, absolutely. In fact, you're going to see recruiters out there looking for people who have many skills and talents. They'll need to know HTML and Flash, and be comfortable going out to the meeting at City Hall and reporting instantly for the Web, or coming back and writing the story for a daily newspaper, and an audio clip for a podcast.

**TVWeek:** Are you holding sessions that deal with the relationship between journalism and blogging?

**Mr. Monroe:** ... We are assuming that blogging is very much a pres-

ence in the journalistic conversation. Whether or not it's pure, traditional journalism with a capital J, it's very much part of the media diet. So to deny it would be ridiculous. ... Blogging is here to stay and we have to figure out how to integrate it and how to also make sure it's armed with the same standards of credibility. We have a few workshops, specifically one focused on blogging politics: "Blogging: Covering and Investigating the Government."

**TVWeek:** How much of the conference deals with intellectual and ethical concerns and how much is focused on business concerns?

**Mr. Monroe:** We try to have a really good balance between panels where we sit around and talk about issues that we're facing with hands-on, roll-up-your-sleeves sessions where you learn skills ... really hands-on, useful, nuts-and-bolts kind of training. Particularly now, because the economy has gotten tougher and, quite honestly, companies have tightened up. Training dollars are one of the first things to get cut, and we're able to provide training for journalists from around the country in one place at Unity.

**TVWeek:** Speaking of the economy, has there been any diminished interest in Unity because of the cost?

**Mr. Monroe:** I think more people will be coming to Unity out of their own pocket versus having their company pay for it. But that shows the power and the draw of this event. It's a time when people can recharge their batteries in fellowship and learn new skills. ...

**TVWeek:** Is there ever any conflict among the organizations when planning the Unity conference?

**Mr. Monroe:** Oh, no. It's actually fun. ... Different members of the board come on and drop off for different terms, but one of the great things about this whole exercise is that it allows us as journalists of color, who come from different backgrounds, to demonstrate the importance of unity in our day-to-day activities pulling this event together. We have to walk the talk. Are there issues? Sure, there always are, but we're able to resolve them and push through them in a spirit of professionalism and camaraderie. And at the end of the day, we have some fun, too.

**TVWeek:** Are there any other big names coming that you can share?

**Mr. Monroe:** We just confirmed last week Father Michael Pflieger. He's going to talk about religion and the 24-hour press. ... He's very eager to engage the media head-on.

We have so many more people who are popping up for workshops, I almost won't know until I show up. There will be some surprises. ■