

*The following is the entire Q & A between Columnist and Executive Editor, Caroline Aoyagi-Stom and myself regarding her article, "N-Word vs. J-Word" which appeared in the March 2-15, 2007 issue of the Pacific Citizen. I have highlighted the portions that were actually used as excerpts in her article. The quotes are not necessarily in the order as they appear in the article.*

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**Q. Caroline Aoyagi-Stom: Have you heard of the "Abolish the N-word" campaign and what do you think of it?**

**A. Michael King:** Yes I have heard of this campaign, and though you would probably think I would jump right behind this campaign, I am on the fence with it and let me explain why. **Morally and logically I have always been opposed to the use of the N-word for all of the obvious reasons.** It is a moniker created solely for the purpose of degradation and dehumanization of a group of people by another group of people that has historically treated African American people on the same level as a herd of cattle and listed them as property inventory like a box of nails. Anyone would have to be a complete fool to use this word to describe oneself and each other, yet as we see more and more, African American youth use this derogatory term as if it were a term of endearment. This is because (with the help of the entertainment media machine) in order to decrease the emotional strife from the social implications of this word, many African Americans have chosen to internalize this it and try to give it a meaning that is not hurtful to them. But like I always say, you cannot pour syrup on doo-doo and make it pancakes. **A negative thing is a negative thing, you cannot change it only cancel it out. So yes, in that respect I am all for the effort to abolish the use of the word. But, in terms of constitutional rights this campaign is treading the line of trampling freedom of speech.** It is a very touchy area when you start talking about dictating what people have the right to say. When you talk abolition in terms of legislation you are talking about law. Is it lawful to command what someone can or cannot say? At any rate, this would cause more problems than we think it would solve. Laws cannot change what is in a person's heart; it only promotes dissension and resentment rather than true tolerance and change. **Ultimately, I think it is a matter of how we go about re-educating people regarding this word and how we go about phasing it out.** For instance, the media can at least take the responsibility of censoring the word when it is used with bleeps or not including it in its script content to begin with; showing the community (children in particular) that it is not a good word that civilized people should have in their vocabulary. It is all about proactive choice and not law. When anything is a matter of law, significant change only happens when generations die out, and even then the ill's that a law was meant to abolish still linger. For instance, you still have large groups of racist people in this country of which if slavery was to become legal again, they would accept it with no hesitation. **Laws do not change the heart and it is the heart that truly changes the world.**

**Q. Caroline Aoyagi-Stom: Do you think a similar campaign would work for the Asian American community, an "Abolish the J-word" campaign?**

**A. Michael King:** I think for the same reasons as I previously explained it is simply a proactive choice within any given community to demand greater respect amongst each other first and then with the community at large. In the crazy state society is in currently, African American people are not the only ones who are willing to use derogatory terms to describe oneself and others like them, so to expect anyone to respect someone else when they cannot even respect themselves is expecting too much. We as a community at large do not spend enough time educating our children on how to respect all people and not conduct themselves with indifference when

dealing with others. We spend more time teaching our children how to make money without even considering teaching them how to be decent human beings. It is no wonder how such demeaning terminology such as J-words and N-words can so easily fall off the lips of people. You would think with all of the racism people of color (African, Asian, Latin, etc) have gone through, you would figure we'd know better than to treat ourselves and each other this way. I wouldn't venture to say that everything is exactly the same for the Asian community in particular, since I know for a fact that many concerns of this community are often tragically ignored by the community at large, especially the state and federal government communities. For instance, how when politicians are campaigning for offices, they never seem to worry about wrangling the Asian American vote. I think if there is going to be any success with any such campaign as an "Abolish the J-word" or "Abolish the N-word" campaigns; the two communities would have to make it a joint venture. I always say, the African American community is a strong community, the Asian American community is a strong community but the two together is a mighty force indeed. We can serve each other best as acting as each other's metaphoric mirrors of morality to promote true positive change in our troubled society.

**Q. Caroline Aoyagi-Stom: Some in the Asian American community have commented that the mainstream media is quick to recognize the N-word as a racist term yet racist terms directed at the Asian American community such as "Jap", "Chink", and "ching chong" are more readily used with little apology. Do you agree with this view and if so, why do you think this happens?**

**A. Michael King**: Slavery is kind of a big bruised eye in the history of this country and the N-word is a big part of that checkered past. There is a difference between what can be ignored and what is impossible to be ignored. This country has a history of applying plausible deniability whenever it can practice it. Since far too many people are unaware of the equally deplorable racist past America has against the Asian community, there is no reason for the country at large to acknowledge its existence. Believe me, if this country could possibly ignore the existence of the slave trade it would; but it can't because the African American community in the last century spent very proactive efforts in making sure the community at large and the world knew of America's transgressions against them. I believe that the Asian American community simply should just continue to make the society at large more aware of the significance of the racism it faces and has been facing in this country. Like I said before, it would be prudent for the Asian American community to join efforts with other communities like the African American community to help its voice be heard. If we treat our struggles as "selfish struggles", and not acknowledge that we have common problems, adversaries, desires and hopes, we will continue to find it difficult to move forward in a positive manner. We need to demand greater virtue of our selves if not for our children's sake, then for what?

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*To make it clear, I am not posting this interview to imply that Caroline Aoyagi-Stom's article is lacking in journalistic integrity in anyway. I simply want readers to have a chance to know what my complete thoughts on the matter of the N-word Campaign are. As a holder in a degree in communications I am very aware of how sound bites and excerpts can be misinterpreted by the viewing and reading public when it is compared by surrounding information and viewpoints even when that is not the intention of the maker of a piece of journalism or other form of media.*

**Michael King – AAAUnity.com**