

June 2009:

Dear Mr. Libin,

The Asian American Journalists Association Minnesota chapter is concerned with a WCCO story published online June 28, 2009: "Man Killed in Drive-By Shooting in St. Paul." In an early edition of the story, WCCO identifies the victim as a "23-year-old Hmong man." The ethnic identifier is not pertinent to the issue at hand, and perpetuates negative stereotypes of the Hmong community.

Chai Moua's ethnic heritage did not play a role in his murder, and should not have been included in the story as a sole indentifying characteristic. Had "Hmong" been replaced with any other ethnic or racial identifier, red flags would have certainly been raised. Simply because that piece of information was provided by the police department and was public record does not mean that it should have been used.

We acknowledge and appreciate the fact that WCCO took corrective action without prompting by AAJA Minnesota and later omitted "Hmong" from the online story. We hope we can keep the lines of communication open. Our chapter welcomes questions, suggestions or concerns about coverage of the Asian and Pacific Islander-American communities. AAJA also has an online style guide for covering these communities. It is available at: http://www.aaaja.org/resources/apa_handbook/

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chao Xiong
Thomas Lee

OUTCOME:

Thank you for writing, Mr. Xiong, and for acknowledging that we corrected our error as soon as we discovered it. The concept of careful deliberation over ethnic and racial references is not new to us, and we discuss these issues frequently, but we are far from perfect and did make a mistake in this case.

I would ask you to reconsider your certainty that, had the victim in the story been of another race or ethnicity, red flags would have been raised sooner. We are no less concerned about our coverage of the Hmong community than we are about coverage of any other community. We will continue trying to make effective, appropriate decisions about how we identify people, whatever their ethnic, racial or other characteristics. In fact, we have shared the lesson of this incident with our entire newsroom staff in an effort to ensure that we all learn from it.

Thank you too for the reminder about AAJA's style guide. It is one of many valuable resources we should consider as we go about our work.

Scott Libin, News Director, WCCO-TV

June 2009:

Dear Mr. Dallman,

The Asian American Journalists Association Minnesota chapter is concerned with FOX's story published June 29, 2009 about the shooting death of Chai Moua. We find this line troubling, "The victim was a Hmong man from St. Paul." The ethnic identifier is not pertinent to the issue at hand, and perpetuates negative stereotypes of the Hmong community.

Chai Moua's ethnic heritage did not play a role in his murder, and should not have been included in the headline. Had "Hmong" been replaced with any other ethnic or racial identifier, red flags would have certainly been raised.

We appreciate your time and consideration, and hope we can keep the lines of communication open. Our chapter welcomes questions, suggestions or concerns about coverage of the Asian and Pacific Islander-American communities. AAJA also has an online style guide for covering these communities. It is available at: http://www.aaja.org/resources/apa_handbook/

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chao Xiong
Thomas Lee

OUTCOME:

I agree with you and that's against our policy. I will address

Bill Dallman, News Director