

MINUTES

Community Discussion About the WCCO Story on Oct. 31 About Chinatown Meat Market

Hosted by: Community Action Against Racism and MN APIA
Saturday, Nov. 19, 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m., Center for Hmong Arts and Talent,
St. Paul

Meeting Leaders: Margie Andreason (MN APIA) and Boa Lee (CAAR)

Meeting Objective: To discuss reactions to the WCCO story; discuss impacts of the story; determine next steps to address story with WCCO.

Time and Topic (Lead)	Notes
5:30-5:45pm (Margie) Welcome and introductions	Number in attendance: 10
5:45-6 pm (Boa) Background on the Story	Boa provided background on the story, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Aired Oct. 312. November is sweeps month for TV, often when most investigative stories air3. Story aired 10 p.m., reported by I-TEAM's James Schugel4. Story primarily centered on allegations that a white MN woman was running a puppy mill – should not have been selling dogs. Somehow is still sending shipments of dogs to NYC. Address shipment went to happened to belong to Chinatown meat market.5. Reporter assumed dogs being killed for meat.6. Sent undercover staff from CBS affiliate in NY to go into meat market. No dog meat found.7. Reporter called meat market from Minneapolis.8. During call, person at meat market said he did not understand English but recorded interview proceeded anyway.9. Language barrier resulted in James Schugel believing the meat market was selling dog meat. Rather, the meat market was confirming they sold DUCK meat.10. Story resulted in meat market being raided by New York Heath officials. No dog meat found. Same meat shop was target of similar complaint in 2010

but, again, no dog meat ever found.

11. Boa spoke to the meat market on the afternoon of Nov. 18 via telephone. The person who answered said owner speaks no English. He said they are too scared to try to get any more media attention. They think more media attention will result in more raids because people simply don't understand. They are not sure what we can do to help them. They wish the entire thing had never happened.
12. Local AAJA chapter sent letter to WCCO on Nov. 5. SPJ sent letter following. National AAJA sent a letter Nov. 15. None have gotten a response, as far as we know.
13. Several stories in local press noted that the story was approved by middle managers and others up the chain. No one questioned the accuracy of the phone interview with meat market.
14. One story said "heads will roll" but a WCCO staff memo from the news director a few days ago appeared to try to calm fears in the newsroom. It did not say whether anyone would be fired/disciplined.
15. WCCO has since scrubbed the story online. We haven't found a video of the actual story – just a transcript of it.
16. WCCO has not apologized publicly or shared publicly how it is addressing the issue and/or how it intends to prevent the error from happening again.
17. Only media outlets covering the fallout have been City Pages, New York Post (which broke the story that WCCO got it wrong) and MinnPost.
18. A Taiwanese animation company released a video telling people what happened. It had less than 700 views as of late Thursday.
19. No indication any other organization in New York or elsewhere is leading work on this issue.
20. Boa emailed Asian Americans for Equality in NYC late Friday. No response yet.
21. TPT Almanac on Nov. 18 aired 10 minute segment with media panel that included Jane Kirtley from UoM, a St. Thomas professor and Don Shelby (retired from WCCO). Shelby said he had been in touch with newsroom and thinks WCCO will issue a response in coming days. He thinks they haven't said anything because of legal.

Boa passed out local news articles on the WCCO story.

6-6:20 pm (Boa)
Reactions from Attendees

Meeting attendees expressed the following concerns:

1. I am not surprised this happened. People of color and immigrants, esp. non English speaking, are mistreated and misrepresented in media all the time.
2. This is classic case of journalists lacking cultural sensitivity and knowledge.
3. The reporter had a preconceived notion that Asians eat dogs (stereotype) and went with it. He demonized people of color in this story when the real “demon” was the white woman who was allegedly running this puppy mill – treating poorly these dogs.
4. It is shocking that WCCO aired this story because I always thought WCCO was one of the more considerate and knowledgeable TV stations in town.
5. It is disappointing that they have not responded to AAJA and SPJ – essentially, their peers in the media industry.
6. We need to get more professional associations together to pressure WCCO.
7. We have to connect with the local Chinese American community, those in the meat industry (esp. Long Cheng) and build a united response.
8. We should write a letter to SPJ to help them understand the nuances of race and encourage them to challenge their industry to uphold higher ethics.
9. We should publish this letter to SPJ.
10. We should do an op-ed on this issue, written by community members. Who might co-author this with us?
11. We should contact other news agencies to get them to cover this story. Why has there been so little media attention?
12. Journalists need anti racism training. J-schools don't offer anything like it.
13. Journalists need to be educated on cultural awareness because they seem to think their American cultural norms are the only and best ones. They want to judge what is wrong or OK.

14. They create the narrative when they air what is “normal.”
15. We cannot educate racism out of people. Need to be mindful of that. Some of the racists out there are the most highly educated – people you would think “get it.” Sadly, these are also those with most power.
16. Eating dog has historically only occurred in one part of China (southern area near Hong Kong) and it was only eaten by those with money. It was a delicacy and it has recently caught on. Generally, it’s still a delicacy and only those who can afford it can eat it.
17. A small segment of Korea also eat dog. These dogs, however, are specially bred for consumption – only one kind. Because of that, people don’t see it as “eating man’s best friend.” People are able to separate that. It isn’t seen as cruel because of such specialized industry.
18. So terrible to generalize an entire group of people based on a stereotype and the impact that had on the community and meat market.
19. The station was irresponsible. It was only concerned with getting ratings and gave no thought to the impact it would have if the story was wrong.
20. Their decision to not respond in and of itself perpetuates racism. Because the victim is Chinese, it appears less important. What if it were an Italian meat market?
21. WCCO does not feel the urgency to respond. The way they see it, only their professional peers (the SPJ and AAJA) have raised concerns.
22. We need to encourage media panels to include community members so we can all continue learning and teaching each other. TPT show on Friday only included two professors and Don Shelby.
23. The organization the community could have contacted would’ve been the MN News Council. They would’ve held a hearing with a panel that includes media and community. The news council closed its doors a few years ago due to lack of funding. Now the community is responsible for taking on these matters on its own.
24. How is the NYC APIA community responding?

6:20-6:40 pm (Margie)
What We Want

The attendees listed these objectives:

1. Inform the FCC of the situation.
2. Get an on air apology from WCCO that tells the public exactly what the error was, how it happened and issuing a correction.
3. Perhaps run a corrected version of the story.
4. Clarification from WCCO as to how it intends to prevent this from happening again.
5. Change societal views that one cultural norm supersedes. WCCO, as media, has power to educate people on this. Maybe they should do a story addressing stereotypes and cultural norms.
6. Use their power as media to promote the meat market.
7. Have a dialogue with the community. Use this as a case study about how journalists can be more sensitive, ethical. Learn from us in the community.
8. Have a debate on cultural norms. Who gets to decide, how and why? Talk about power.
9. Find out how many people of color work at WCCO. Find out their EEO policy. Find out plans to diversity their newsroom.

6:40-7 p.m. (Margie)
Next Steps

These are the next steps, in order of priority:

1. Create list serve for this group to share documents and communications. (Boa to send out notes too)
DEADLINE: Nov. 20
2. Connect with other groups and organizations, esp. in APIA community. Connect with Chinese American student group at the UoM (**Mai Nou** via her Asian American studies course).
DEADLINE: ASAP and ongoing
3. Write and send a letter to WCCO from the community (**Margie** will draft and share via Google Docs).
DEADLINE: Draft by end of Monday, Nov. 21.
Send out Mon. Nov. 28.
4. Write and send a letter to the FCC. (**Pa Der** will draft and share via Google Doc.)
DEADLINE: Draft by end of Monday, Nov. 21

5. Begin an online petition for accountability from WCCO. (**Der** to draft one and place on change.org and Facebook petition.)
DEADLINE: Nov. 20
6. Circulate the animation from Taiwan. Mobilize via social media. Raise awareness of the issue. (**Boa** to add new page on CAAR website with stories, links, and share video on CAAR page).
DEADLINE: immediately!
7. Connect with schools of journalism, esp. UoM, (**Boa** to connect with Jane Kirtley), some media outlets (**Sandy** with TPT), and journalist associations (**Boa** with AAJA and SPJ) to do a community dialogue.
DEADLINE: ongoing and ASAP
8. Escalating step if no response to letter from WCCO after Nov. 28: rally/protest at WCCO.

MEETING ADJOURNED
AT 7:15 P.M.