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**ITVS'S COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROJECT** presents the  
Worlds Apart—Common Voices Community Engagement Campaign

**Worlds Apart—Common Voices (WAVC)**, a series of Asian Pacific American programs produced by Independent Television Service (ITVS) for public television, looks at APA stories that highlight differences and commonalities in cultures and communities.

In the 1970s, many Southeast Asians, including the Mien and Cambodians, fled war-torn countries and traveled to the U.S. as refugees. These families experienced tremendous turmoil, separations and culture shock, upon arrival in their new home in America. Often, these communities faced difficulties in language, education and employment.

Years later, the younger generation's exposure to this impoverished legacy and its increased fluency with the digital age has created a number of documentary films on this much-overlooked segment of American society. Through compelling personal stories and a broad-based community engagement campaign, Worlds Apart—Common Voices is designed to stimulate cross-cultural dialogue and encourage long-term partnerships for lasting social and educational impact. The following films are featured in WAVC:

In **REFUGEE** by Spencer Nakasako, three young Cambodian American men, raised on the streets of San Francisco's tough Tenderloin district, travel to Cambodia wielding video cameras to capture their experiences of meeting fathers, sisters and brothers for the first time. These family reunions reveal the quagmire of Cambodian political upheaval and military invasion, as well as the heavy toll of years spent apart in different worlds.

**DEATH OF A SHAMAN**, by Fahm Fong Saeyang and Richard Hall, follows a path of self-discovery and empowerment as the Mien filmmaker, Fahm, retraces her family's path as refugees. From the Kansas Amish family that first hosted them to the gang-saturated streets of Sacramento and finally to Mien refugee camps in the mountains of Thailand, her mission is to finish the documentary film she had started together with her father before his death. In seeking understanding of her father as an ex-shaman and Mien in America she comes to a deeper understanding of herself.

In these films, Southeast Asian refugee youth come into their own and ultimately tell an uplifting story as they begin to record their personal journeys of joy and pain in reconnecting to their families and tracing their pasts. As we watch, we learn that many other youth share similar issues: cultural barriers, war trauma, intergenerational misunderstandings, low-incomes, violence and drug abuse. By exploring the complexities of American identity, these stories provide a backbone to our education and outreach campaign.

# WORLDS APART—COMMON VOICES

Using the **REFUGEE** and **DEATH OF A SHAMAN** films as a centerpiece, the WACV Community Engagement Campaign reaches out to:

- Southeast Asian youth and communities
- High school and college students
- Educators
- Community organizations
- Service providers

The **goals** of the outreach and education campaign are to:

- Demonstrate how media storytelling can be used as a tool for empowering at-risk youth.
- Provide examples of youth leadership and community services.
- Acknowledge the complexity of identity in the Asian American community.
- Integrate diverse and underrepresented voices into curricula as a way to teach how world affairs and international issues can affect U.S. populations.
- Address the long-term generational effects of lack of support for refugees.

The WACV Community Engagement Campaign invites national and local organizations to participate in this multi-phase effort:

## **PHASE 1: Public Awareness through Broadcast**

Select community screenings, complimentary community and educational resource development; community engagement website.

## **PHASE 2: Education**

Discussion guides, lesson plans, curricula support and classroom screenings.

## **PHASE 3: Sustainable Activities and Evaluations**

Organizational and institutional use of video, discussion guide and screenings.

WACV programs will appear on PBS's *Independent Lens* series in celebration of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May 2004) and co-presented by the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA). *Independent Lens* is presented by the ITVS with funds provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

For a list of other ITVS programming during Asian American Heritage month in May, visit [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org).  
For outreach resources, visit [www.itvs.org/outreach](http://www.itvs.org/outreach)

Since 1980, NAATA has been at the forefront of bringing Asian Pacific American media to the American public. NAATA was created to challenge the historical exclusion and counteract the distorted portrayals of Asian Pacific Americans in mainstream media. Started with seed funds from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, NAATA is one of five Minority Consortia formed to provide culturally diverse programming for public television. For more information, please visit [www.naatanet.org](http://www.naatanet.org).

ITVS brings to local, national and international audiences high-quality, content-rich programs created by a diverse body of independent producers. ITVS programming reflects voices and visions of underrepresented communities and addresses the needs of underserved audiences, particularly minorities and children. The ITVS Community Connections Project (CCP) is a public education and outreach project that transforms timely social issue independent film and public television broadcasts into tools that engage communities, convene public dialogues and support ongoing positive action—in partnership with local and national organizations. Visit our website at [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org) or contact: [outreach@itvs.org](mailto:outreach@itvs.org).

