

### Culturally Diverse Consumers: Are We Reaching Them?

This workshop focused on methods consumer educators could use to appreciate and address cultural differences, beyond language, of Asian, Hispanic, and African-American audiences.

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As more and more immigrants enter the United States, consumer educators find reaching and teaching diverse audiences to be a challenge. Translating materials into a native language is not the only major consideration. Although socioeconomic and language differences exist, many times cultural differences are the significant demanding factor in adjusting teaching techniques and tools to the target audience. Cultural beliefs can affect the method or content of information transferred to these audiences.

#### Summary of Panelist Remarks

##### Mr. Phil Tajitsu Nash

Asian Americans and consumer rights were addressed. Mr. Nash indicated that there are 25 ethnic groups within the category of "Asian." Although they represent only 3% of the American population, Asians represent two-thirds of the world's population. Asian Americans suffer discrimination, fought discrimination, and improved their situation as a result. There are no quiet Asian Americans. There are, however, generational differences. The differences generally stem from language and how many persons of the specific Asian group are already in the United States. Some passivity exists, as with other cultures influences by large amounts of television viewing. A few topics such as wills and spousal abuse might raise taboos among Asian Americans. Wills are taboo because of religious beliefs. Spousal abuse issues recognize conduct which brings shame upon an Asian family. To address the needs of Asian American audiences, consumer educators should determine what the group is and how long they have been in the United States. Ask the audience members what he or she knows about the topic being addressed. Mr. Nash's perspective was that basic consumer information is needed. A resource list for information and of successful programs was provided as follows:

- Asian American Journalists Association 415-346-2051
- Curriculum Resources (free catalog available) 415-343-9408
- Association for Asian American Studies 607-255-3320
- Research Information 310-825-2974
- Amerasian Journal 310-825-2968
- Labor Organization 202-842-1262
- Asian American Legal Defense Fund 212-966-5932
- Chinatown Health Clinic 212-732-9545
- National Asian Women's Health 510-208-3171
- Japanese American Social Services (Elderly) 212-255-1881

##### Dr. Lydia Y. Savage Johnson

The issue of diversity and reaching African American audiences was addressed. Dr. Johnson indicated that older African Americans prefer to have someone of their own age and color to deliver information. This group is interested in receiving information about money management. Young African Americans would also prefer to receive information from their peers. Dr. Savage remarked that cultural differences appear within one's sense of self and space, communication and language, appearance and dress, food and eating patterns, values and norms, and mental processes. Her suggestions included not labeling African Americans, using the term "you people," and making examples referring to African Americans a negative example.

### Dr. Horacio Soberon-Ferrer

Hispanics and their consumer preferences were addressed. The Survey of Consumer Behavior indicates that Hispanics are twice as likely to be victimized than members of other ethnic groups. Eighty-two percent of Hispanic consumers attend religious services. Therefore, Dr. Soberon indicated that churches are a point at which Hispanic consumers can be reached. In a survey of Hispanic consumers conducted by Dr. Soberon while with the American Association of Retired Persons, informal education was the lowest preferred method of receiving information by older Hispanics. More preferred methods were personal attention, telephone referral, formal classes, and videos. Radio is viewed as an excellent option for program delivery because Hispanics are likely to live in larger families with lower education levels.

### **Question and Answer Period**

A question and answer session followed the panel presentation interspersed with shared information from the audience members. A suggested reading on diversity was The New Leaders by Ann Morrison. Other suggestions included researching the needs of the particular audiences with the use of coalitions and not translating existing materials due to cultural differences that may exist.

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### Endnotes

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