



TAIWANESE

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Contact Leona Chu
Leona.chu@tacl.org
TACL
(626) 551-0227

ASIAN AMERICANS ASK, WILL CENSUS EVER GET IT RIGHT?

The missteps and causes of recurring undercount of Asian Americans in the U.S. Census

Within the Asian American community, there are genuine concerns that minorities will not participate in the Census. Some of those reasons include unawareness of inclusion, language barriers, and fear of the government. Individuals whose race(s) are not listed as check boxes, such as Indonesian, Sri Lankan, and Taiwanese would not automatically assume the option of writing in an unlisted response. "I didn't know there was a choice, I just marked off the next best option by default," said actor Adam Wang from the feature film, *Formosa Betrayed*.

Although the Census form will be offered in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese has been dropped from the in-language forms mailed to households. This neglects a number of Asians who do not read Simplified Chinese; for example individuals from Taiwan and older overseas Chinese schooled in Traditional Chinese, such as community members from Hong Kong, Vietnam, and Singapore.

In another effort to reach out to underrepresented minority groups, Census 2010 ran in-language public service announcements on TV, online and the radio. Unfortunately, the PSA targeted to the Taiwanese community did not use a native speaker, making the ad largely incomprehensible to those it was targeting.

Non-profit organizations such as, Taiwanese American Citizens League (TACL), an official Census partner since 1990, were not contacted for the official Census 2010 "Taiwanese" PSA. TACL in conjunction with TaiwaneseAmerican.org, Slideshow Pictures and several second generation Taiwanese American organizations have come together to create its own PSA on YouTube. Since the launch in early March, the "Write In Taiwanese" PSA has gone viral and generated over 150,000 hits. In addition, t-shirt orders for the TACL "Check Other Asian" t-shirt have spiked. Orders from across the country, even overseas countries such as Canada, Singapore, Taiwan, and United Kingdom, have been pouring in.

Despite the popularity of the Write In Taiwanese PSA on YouTube, some regard the campaign as being controversial. Heated discussions on the YouTube message board have sprung up with debates on the validity of a Taiwanese identity being the main argument. However, this is a moot point, since the choice to check a race box, or check "Other Asian," will come down to the individual. Census Day is April 1, 2010.

Data obtained from the Census Form's race question are necessary for (1) evaluating racial disparities, (2) assessing the characteristics and needs of particular communities, (3) implementing laws and programs that promote equal opportunity, and (4) allocating funds and other resources.

TACL is a non-profit organization of education, public affairs and human rights representing Americans of Taiwanese ancestry. The mission of TACL is to enhance the well being of Taiwanese Americans and to promote Taiwanese American's participation in American democracy.

For more information please find us online at:
TACL Census 2010: <http://census2010.tacl.org>
TACL Census PSA: <http://taiwaneseamerican.org/census2010>

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Leona Chu, please call: (626)551-0227, or email leona.chu@tacl.org.

Physical press kits are available upon request.