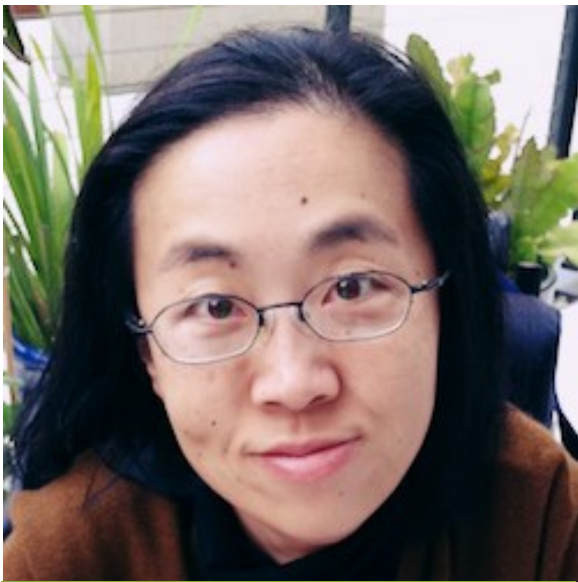


Asian American Heritage & Disability

By Raquel Castaneda

The month of May is Asian American Heritage Month. In celebration, I would like to highlight the lives of two amazing women from the Asian community. Both women have a disability; one from birth and the other acquired from serving our country in the military.



“When I grew up as an Asian-American disabled girl, I never saw any role models or people like me in popular culture.”

Alice Wong is the creator and manager of the [Disability Visibility Project™](#) (DVP). *“When I grew up as an Asian-American disabled girl, I never saw any role models or people like me in popular culture,”* said Wong. *“The DVP allows all people to tell their stories on their own terms without the filter of the media. This is incredibly important and empowering for marginalized communities.”* DVP began in 2014 and is an online community resource dedicated to documenting the stories of people with disabilities. Without the filter of media, participants are encouraged to create and share their own stories to document their lives and what matters to them.

On March 23, 2016, the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) honored Ms. Wong with one of two AAPD Paul G. Hearne Leadership Awards. The annual prize recognizes individuals with disabilities who “exemplify leadership, advocacy and dedication to the broader cross-disability community.” Since Ms. Wong no longer travels, she accepted the award via telepresence robot. She was also the first person to meet President Barack Obama via [telepresence robot](#). ← Make sure you click this hotlink to see some great pictures of their meeting.

Tammy Duckworth is currently the [U.S. Senator from Illinois](#), an Iraqi War Veteran, Purple Heart recipient, and former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. In 2004, she was injured in combat and suffered wounds to her legs and right arm serving as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot. She became the first female double amputee from the war, but she did not let this stop her. She continued to serve as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Illinois National Guard until she retired from duty in 2014.

Since her recovery, she continues to excel in life and became the first Asian American woman to be elected to Congress and the U.S. House of Representatives. She is also the first member of Congress to be born in Thailand. She has used her position to advocate for the rights of veterans and people with disabilities.

I hope this piece inspires others to identify themselves as more than just a minority group. I also encourage you to read more about these two amazing women's lives and further your learning on their contributions to our world.



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