

# **“Japadog” Racial Slur Breaks During Olympic TV Coverage**

- by Andy Noguchi (March 13, 2010)

“Japadog”, a Japanese style hotdog stand in Vancouver promoted by a Japan-based company, garnered widespread American media due to NBC’s Olympic TV coverage, including on Sacramento station KCRA 3, on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Complaints about the racial slur “jap” started popping up around the country, including at the Northern California and National JACL offices. The Florin JACL has taken up this issue.

“Jap” is a racial slur used to attack and dehumanize Japanese and other Asian Americans, often justifying actions including locking up 120,000 innocent people in internment camps during World War II. If anyone has any doubts about the racial slur, they can even look it up in Webster’s dictionary.

You can also ask many Japanese Americans today (throwing in the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Hmong, Thai, and Cambodian Americans, too) and they’ve been targeted with this slur, as well as chinaman, chink, gook, slant eyes, and any number of other epithets. I know my wife and I, as well as our college age daughter, grew up with those insults.

Whether people intend harm or not, makes no difference. This is how such slurs have been used and continue to be used. They’re insulting and need to stop. Do you think that an “N”dog would be OK for African Americans? Slurs are racism, pure and simple.

Some ignorant viewers across the country seeing “japadogs” on TV might now think they’re cute, exotic, and chic – quite acceptable. Maybe like the sushi craze of the 1990s - only with a serving of racism on the side. No, thank you. Shove the “japadog” down the disposal and hold the racism.

The Florin JACL contacted KCRA TV3 to protest the “japadog” broadcast. We might not be able to control what a foreign company names itself, but we can certainly talk to our local TV stations about spreading racial slurs in our community.

To KCRA’s credit, News Director Anzio Williams promptly took the “japadog” news clip off their website, discussed the offensive nature of this term with his producers, and contacted other NBC affiliates around the country. Williams mentioned the story had originally been shared by an Orlando, Florida NBC reporter working in Vancouver.

We are also taking up this issue directly with the “japadog” company. Being from Japan, they might be clueless, ignorant, unaware, fill in the blanks, etc. about Japanese Americans. Either way, no one should be making a buck off of other’s misery, at least without a fight that is.

Additionally, we are contacting other JACL Chapters around Northern California and other Asian Pacific American groups across the nation about this racial slur attacking our families and community. “Dropping a dime” to your local NBC affiliate to remove this free news clip publicity from their websites might be a good step in other locales, too. Sounds like a plan.