



From left, authors of "Voices From Colorado: Perspectives of Asian Pacific Americans" Elnora Mercado, Nestor Mercado and Alok Sarwal pose April 9 at the CAHEP Medical Clinic in Denver. (Photo by Joe Nguyen/AsiaXpress.com)

'Voices' highlights histories, perspectives of Colo. AAPIs

Book chronicles AAPI history in Colorado, profiles numerous individuals within communities

By Joe Nguyen, AsiaXpress.com

April 27, 2009

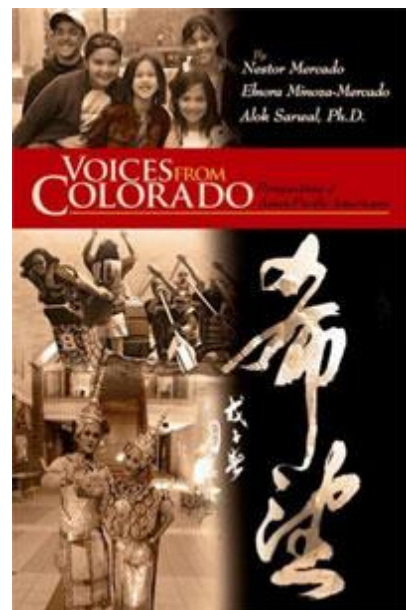
DENVER – A voice.

For 10 years, the husband-and-wife team of Nestor and Elnora Mercado served as a voice for Colorado's AAPI communities, working as editors for the now-defunct newspaper *Asian Pacific American Times*.

“Since we retired, we figured let's do something,” Elnora said.

Today, they share the communities' histories and experiences in their book, "Voices From Colorado: Perspectives of Asian Pacific Americans." Teaming up with Alok Sarwal, executive director and co-founder of Colorado Asian Health Education and Promotion, they set out to tell the stories of the state's AAPIs, a group, they say, are invisible to the wider community. They're hoping the book will be used as a resource at local schools and libraries.

"We are truly silent and hidden. This book raises that awareness," Sarwal said.



The book, which was released in August, details the history of the various Asian communities here, presents statistics about the local AAPIs and features the profiles of people within the communities. Sarwal said the book's page limit restricted the number of people who were included.

"We really had a hard time trying to include a lot more people," Elnora said. "When the book was out there was, 'why did you not include this (person)?'"

An idea they've been toying around with, Sarwal said, is adding an online component to accompany the book in order to highlight more individuals and reach out to younger generations.

"It makes sense to create a blog or a Web presence where all the people who could not be in the book could be included," he said.

The three authors began brainstorming about the project during the summer of 2007, he said. But with Sarwal's busy schedule, it was the determination of the Mercados that kept the book going.

"(Nestor and Elnora) kept the momentum going," he said. "We met late nights and evenings, but they kept the fire burning."

Nestor said he began outlining the historical aspects of the book in January 2008, but it was the profiles of people in the community that makes the book special.

"We started including interviews and that's what made it unique," Nestor said. "It became contemporary."

"Instead of other people defining us, now, we're doing it through our experiences and values."

It's these profiles that help provide distinct points of view into what Asian America is rather than what it's perceived as, Sarwal said.

"This culture has, for probably no fault of their own, has a one-dimensional or a very narrow view of our Asian cultures," he said. "And over time they have tended to pick up on the negativity."

"... This is where this book is intended to bring the spotlight and bring the recognition of so much brilliance and so much importance."

For more information about "Voices From Colorado: Perspectives of Asian Pacific Americans," go to www.voicesfromcolorado.com.

"Voices From Colorado: Perspectives of Asian Pacific Americans"

Authors: Nestor Mercado,
Elnora Mercado and Alok
Sarwal

Publisher: Mercado
Information & Business
Services

Format: Paperback, 312
pages

Price: \$17.95

Official website:
www.voicesfromcolorado.com