

*GLA JACL November 6 virtual program with Michael Goi,
Hollywood director/cinematographer/producer*

The following article appeared the next day in Knight Edge Media



Director Michael Goi Exited A Previous Project For Netflix's 'Avatar: The Last Airbender' Because What It Could Mean For Asian Representation (EXCLUSIVE)

Exclusive, News November 7, 2022 8:29 am November 7, 2022 10:17 am Caleb Williams

We at **Knight Edge Media** recently attended a virtual Q&A with director **Michael Goi** hosted by **The Greater Los Angeles JACL**. During the hour-long virtual presentation, the director recounted wanting to be a filmmaker at a young age and growing up in the city of Chicago in a Japanese-American household.

The director eventually moved to Los Angeles to pursue his career in the industry but soon learned there were not many Asian cinematographers or directors represented, even in the 1990s. Never-the-Less, Goi believed the only way to change that was to work from inside the industry and build up his resume as a filmmaker. He soon became known as a quick and efficient cinematographer around Hollywood on small-budget movies before making the move to the director's chair. He eventually got a big break to work in television on **Glee**, **Sleepy Hollow**, and then **American Horror Story** in the 2010s.

Goi revealed that during the height of the COVID-pandemic in 2020 many Asian Americans were targeted online with hateful messages due to their Asian ethnicity. As **NPR** reported in 2021, there have been over 9,000 anti-Asian incidents since the beginning of the pandemic. Goi even shared some DM's he personally received showcasing the hate. After the incident, Goi was called personally by **Avatar: The Last Airbender** showrunner **Albert Kim** (Nikita). Kim and Goi worked together on **Sleepy Hollow** for Fox. Kim wanted to interview Goi for the position of director and executive producer on the upcoming Netflix episodic. Unfortunately, Goi was already attached to another project, at the time, and he has only ever walked away from a project once before but for a noble reason. A low-budget film's lead was undergoing chemotherapy for breast cancer. Goi left his previous project and joined the low-budget film in Texas at the request of the film's producer. Due to his quick and efficient filmmaking, they were able to complete the film with her limited time and energy.

However, after **Albert Kim** explained his vision for the series, following the departure of original show creators **Bryan Konietzko** and **Michael DiMartino**, would feature an all-Asian and Indigenous cast (just like the original show). As well as featuring an all-Asian writing and directing team, Goi quickly saw what this could mean for Asian representation in the film industry. Let alone what it could mean for Asian fans throughout the country during the pandemic. He called up showrunner **Alex Kurtzman** (Star Trek: Discovery) and explained why he needed to exit the *untitled* project for Avatar: The Last Airbender. Kurtzman was ecstatic at the prospect of an all-Asian directing/writing team. He gave his blessing and released Goi from his contract.



During the Q&A portion of the virtual event, we asked the director about when he had heard of the series and to expand upon his initial reaction to an all-Asian cast & crew in terms of representation:

“I was a fan of the original animated show. So I had heard about some of the things going on regarding the live-action adaptation. I had heard Mike & Bryan, the original creators, had left the show at a certain point. But because it was Albert Kim that I knew and worked with previously was now the showrunner calling me and asking me if I wanted to interview for it, that kind of centered my thoughts. I know Albert, I know the kind of filmmaker he is. I know the kind of writer he is. And he was going to preserve the heart of the show and I think he has.”

He goes on to say:

“And when the show ultimately does come out, which I don’t know when [Netflix] will drop the episodes. It’s going to be a big deal. It’s going to be a big deal because every single person in that cast is Asian. Every single director we hired for the entire show is Asian. It’s an enormous demonstration of Asian representation. So I’m looking forward to that time but there’s a lot of visual effects to finish before that happens.”

Goi went on to direct and serve as cinematographer on the first two episodes of the upcoming series. He also was given an Executive Producer credit as well along with **Dan Lin** (The LEGO Movie, Two Popes) of Rideback Ranch. Directors **Roseanne Liang** (Shadow in the Cloud), **Jabbar Haisani** (Lost in Space), and **Jet Wilkinson** (Percy Jackson) all boarded the series for the reminder episodes. We at **[Knight Edge Media](#)** also revealed **[Albert Kim’s daughter and Marvel Comics writer Emily Kim was part of the all-Asian writer’s room](#)** on Avatar.

If anyone you know has been affected by Asian or South Pacific hate, you can report the incident at [StopAAPIHate.org](#)

Avatar: The Last Airbender will stream exclusively on Netflix

Caleb Williams, editor-in-chief, Knight Edge Media, attended GLA's Nov. 6 program with speaker Michael Goi. Below is the link to his report of Mr. Goi.

<https://knightedgemediacom/2022/11/director-michael-go-exited-a-previous-project-for-netflixs-avatar-the-last-airbender-because-what-it-could-mean-for-asian-representation-exclusive/>

Director Michael Goi Exited A Previous Project For Netflix's 'Avatar: The Last Airbender' Because What It Could Mean For Asian Representation (EXCLUSIVE)

Notes from the program: Michael Goi loved movies since he was 4. At 8, Goi learned how movies were made when his friend projected an 8 mm film on the refrigerator. His mother asked what would you like to do when you grow up. He replied he wanted to go to Hollywood and make movies. His parents replied, then that is what you should do.

Goi's mother was in Tule Lake and Minidoka during World War II. His father was in Tule Lake.

His father wanted to study engineering, but was not allowed to after leaving the camp. He was offered to be a cook or a janitor. He chose cook because at least he would be able to eat.

In the picture in the article, Michael Goi is in the middle of the standing group.

Four pictures in the article are not included above.

Louise

Happy Holiday Season!

