

One of my proudest recent achievements was my work at Avaaz.org, an international online multi-issue progressive political campaign organization, where I worked on the conception, production and internationalization of “Stop The Clash of Civilizations,” an online video that argues against the idea of “the West” and “Islam” as monolithic entities that are fundamentally incompatible and points out that it is the manipulation of certain extreme political leaders, and not cultural differences, that lies at the root of many international conflicts. While mistaken and often erroneous perceptions between peoples and cultures can cause conflict, these differences are not as great as many imagine them to be, and we all share a common humanity and desire for peace. The video has received more than 1.5 million views on YouTube and has been awarded the 2007 DoGooderTV Non-Profit Video Award and a Progressive Source Communications Award for the Most Popular Awareness-Raising Video.

The video was born through extensive collaboration and dialogue. The technical execution was done in collaboration with Agit-Pop Productions. The script was conceived by the entire Avaaz team. We organized an open brainstorming session and solicited input from friends of different cultural communities and various creative and activist backgrounds, which offered us more diverse perspectives on the work and helped us to produce a thought-provoking piece that would resonate across cultures. Although our staff was informed and well-intentioned, our similar educational backgrounds hindered the potential range of creative solutions. Opening ourselves up to outside input kept us honest and offered a refreshing counter-perspective, allowing ideas to evolve organically out of spirited dialogue.

I joined Avaaz.org in August of 2006, shortly after I moved to New York City from Japan, where I had been teaching English language and American culture for three years and dealing with issues of intercultural communication and understanding on a

daily basis. I served as a cultural ambassador of sorts, sharing my culture with my colleagues and students, while I was immersed in theirs. When I moved back to the States, I wanted to take my international experience and communication skills and apply it to a medium with a wider audience, beyond the classroom. I had also been interested in blogging, online videos and other social media, so Avaaz.org, which was just in its start-up phase when I joined, seemed like the perfect place to explore these interests. In addition to contributing to the group effort of creatively conceptualizing the video, I had the specific task of managing a team of translators to localize and subtitle the video in ten different languages, which allowed us to communicate with an even wider global audience. My experience showed me the power of online media as a means of promoting positive change by raising awareness of social issues and encouraging deeper thought and discussion about the challenges that face our world.

You can watch the video online here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWyJJQbFago>