

FIRST PERSON

TRINITY ORDONA

Trinity Ordoná recently helped make a video aimed at opening up discussion between Asian parents and their gay children.

I come from a big Filipino family with 12 brothers and sisters. When I fell in love with Desiree 10 years ago, I was so happy I couldn't help myself from telling everyone. We decided to have children. But first, I said, we have to get married.

My mother was reluctant at first, but eventually surprised us all by volunteering to make both our wedding dresses — a Filipino dress for me and a *holoku* (a Hawaiian formal dress) from Hawaii for Desiree.

When we went to pick out the material, the woman at the store said, "Oh hi, Mrs. Ordoná, oh two wedding dresses, oh a double wedding!" Afterward, my mother said, "I didn't know what to do." I said "Mom, it's a homo-blooper. It's what we go through all the time."

In my family, they completely understand what it is to be married, so they treat Desiree like an in-law. But it took years, and a lot of talking, to help them understand.

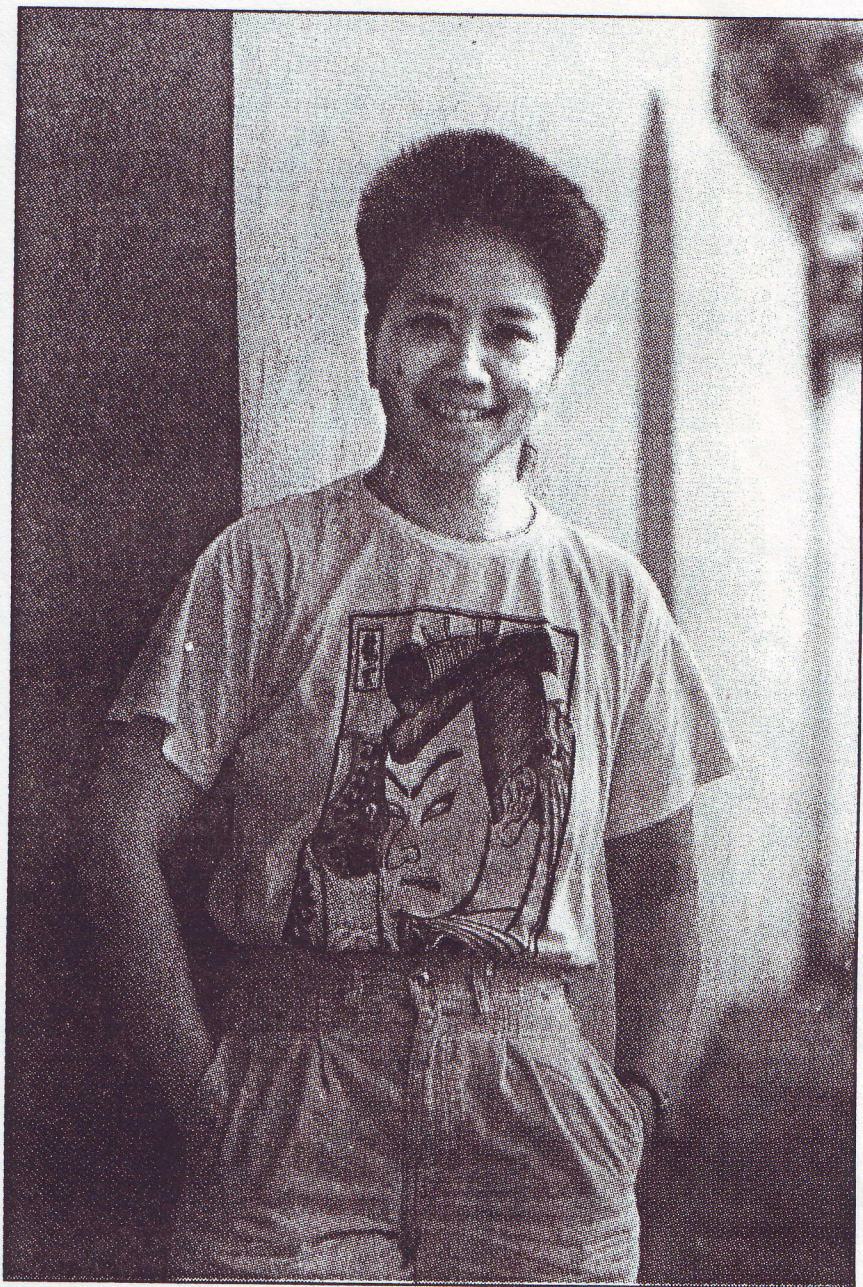
Asian families with gay relatives have been hard to reach through groups like PFLAG, because it goes against the culture to talk to strangers about problems, especially ones that carry shame. Whereas in the white culture, group discussions provide anonymity and comfort, for Asians they are distressing.

For Asians, the family is the unit of self-sufficiency. When there are any issues of stigma — domestic violence, alcoholism, homosexuality — the question becomes: Who do you talk to in the family unit? It's difficult to talk about them, so they don't usually get talked about.

So it creates the illusion that there are no homosexuals, no domestic violence, inside the family and outside. It has to be talked about in the family. If a family has skills and knowledge, then they do discuss it; if they don't, then it doesn't go anywhere.

So parents have to work it out alone. It's difficult. It takes a long time. And you have a generational issue. Parents don't listen to kids. Understanding usually comes because of dialogue between parents and child.

To try to encourage the dialogue, PFLAG and the Asian community have made a videotape of Asian parents of gay kids. They knew what they had gone through, wanted to help other Asian parents to learn to talk about shame, guilt and how hard it is.



Personally, I think in another five to 10 years, if we can win over the families, there is nothing in the way. They are very conservative, and they are very protective of their children. Once you get Asian parents behind their kids, then they will take on the world. If you have a problem with "my" child, they will defend them.