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Jae-Ha Kim



[https://blogger.googleusercontent.com/img/b/R29vZ2xl/AVvXsEiMNYvFXOOpZzvBbqzla-ge9ImG4tDbAJoihtbtHyC9Zb3hr0JL9PTNiSZBGrJv1UtPd3qouc3Ex9ge_Gc1TnJ3UsbnYeMt7PQEijtJVlh23-qk5T-xVMvjP5hvo4qn3AnGYqGT3zUErA/s1600/Jae-Ha+Kim_Photo+Credit+Denton+Morris.jpg]

If you read the Sunday paper (*Chicago Tribune*), you may often see a piece by [Jae-Ha Kim](https://twitter.com/goawaywithjae) [<https://twitter.com/goawaywithjae>], who interviews celebrities about their favorite and dream places to travel. Her pieces are titled *Go Away With...* and the name of the celebrity, which has included Tupac Shakur, Rachael Ray, Britney Spears, Kunal Nayyar, Andi Dorfman, Phil Collen, Joe Morton, Iliza Schlesinger, Lucy Walsh, and Angelique Kidjo. (Check out her full list [here](http://www.jaehakim.com/interviews/interview-index/interviews-celebrity-index/) [<http://www.jaehakim.com/interviews/interview-index/interviews-celebrity-index/>].) From French film producers to fashion designers, musicians, authors, actors and Goodwill ambassadors, just as the world has no limits with travel destinations, there are no limits to the range of people she interviews. She has also interviewed a ton of Korean-Americans including actors [John Cho](http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-john-cho/) [<http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-john-cho/>] and [Daniel Henney](http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-daniel-henney/) [<http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-daniel-henney/>], and chefs [Judy Joo](http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-judy-joo/) [<http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-judy-joo/>] and [Kristen Kish](http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-kristen-kish/) [<http://www.jaehakim.com/travel/go-away-with/go-away-with-kristen-kish/>]. Read on to my interview with the pro!

Please tell us a little about yourself.

Hello! Thanks for your interest. My name is Jae-Ha Kim and I'm a syndicated columnist whose work appears weekly in publications nationwide, including the *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Baltimore Sun*. I'm married, and we have a son.

Where did you grow up? How long have you lived in the Chicagoland area?

I grew up in the Old Irving Park neighborhood of Chicago and have lived in the area for most of my life.

What surprised you as a Korean-American when you moved to Chicago?

I was only four years old when we moved from Seoul to Chicago, and we had been told that America was a beautiful and rich country. I guess I expected it to look like a fairytale, and it didn't. I would grow to love the city, but what I remember the most about those first few months was wanting to go back home. Everything looked and smelled different and I missed my friends and family in Korea. I remember my mother had to buy Minute Rice, because we didn't have access to any Asian markets early on. Chicago's very different now. :-)

Can you tell us about your life as a journalist and how your career has evolved over the years?

I started out as a freelance writer and I loved it. I could set my own hours and time. When the *Chicago Sun-Times* offered me a full-time job as a staff reporter, I almost turned it down, because I really enjoyed the freedom of working for myself. I went from my 20s to my 30s in that newsroom and loved it. Around the time that my father was dying, it really hit me that we're only here for a short period of time. I began to reassess what I wanted out of life. I loved my job, but I often got home so late that it was difficult to have dinner with my husband most nights. Around that same time, the Tribune Content Agency (which at the time was called the Tribune Media Services) bought my column, allowing me the freedom to control my work hours. I quit my job at the *Sun-Times* and became my own boss again -- just like when I had started out in journalism. So, in a way, my career has come full circle.

How did you get interested in interviewing celebrities and high-profile persons, and about travel?

When I was in college, I wrote for magazines to earn money. It was easier for me at the time to sell a story about an upcoming album or film than it was to sell a freelance news story, since there was more leeway in time. So I started writing about celebrities at first because it was more practical. And travel is something I've always been interested in. I've had a passport since I was a baby and one of my goals is to take my son to a different place every year for his birthday. We started traveling with him when he was a baby and he's a wonderful traveler who goes with the flow. He has already been to four different countries and dozens of cities. We look forward to more adventures in the future.

What are some of your favorite interviews that you have done?

I really liked interviewing Viggo Mortensen ("Lord of the Rings") over the years. He's a wonderful actor, but he's also a very interesting man. The first time I profiled him, he ended up calling me back after our allotted time so that we could

finish our conversation about the current state of politics.

Is there someone you are hoping to interview?

I have interviewed just about every Western celebrity that I have wanted to talk to, but I haven't talked to many KPop stars or Hallyu actors and actresses. It was really fun profiling PSY at the height of his popularity and the Wonder Girls prior to that. I was offered an opportunity to sit down and talk with a famous KPop star when I recently visited Korea, but I turned it down, because his management wanted too much editorial control. But it would be interesting to talk to people like Shin Minah, Kim SooHyun, So JiSub and Song JoongKi one day.

You have several other projects, sites, and blogs. Can you tell us about them?

Besides my syndicated column, I like to stay active on social media. It's a wonderful way to connect with readers and hear their views. On my website, I archive my columns. I also share essays I've written about being an immigrant, race relations and social injustice. As time permits, I've started writing about Korean Dramas (K-Dramas). After literally decades of avoiding them, because I didn't want to get sucked in, I am at the point of no return. :-))What I've found is that while these dramas can be a fun escape from reality, many of them deal with serious issues about adoption, poverty and gender inequality in a very progressive way.

Thank you so much, Jae, for taking some time away from your jam-packed life to be on the other side of an interview. Here's to happy travels!

Photo shot in Scotland by Denton Morris.

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