

# Serving *the* Underserved



**April Joy Damian**  
*Awarded '05*

Growing up in the south of Market and Tenderloin Districts of San Francisco in the midst of poverty, *I became acutely aware of the socioeconomic inequalities facing poor people of color.* Daily, I observed police brutality, gang violence, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and prostitution in my neighborhood.

Fortunately, my faith and my single mother inspired and strengthened me. I committed myself to excel in school as a means of improving my situation. The support of my church and communities, both on and off campus, helped me thrive as a pre-med Ethnic Studies major at UC, Berkeley.

*I sought ways to connect my education with the community,* including creating a mentorship program for inner-city youth, and conducting research on heart disease among Filipinos.

Breast cancer affected those close to me; I walked in the 39.3 mile Avon Walk for Breast Cancer. I expanded my understanding of health issues facing Asian Pacific Islanders. I spent a year as a Truman Scholar working on federal health programs in Washington, D.C.

*Access to circles of privilege and influence showed me new opportunities to empower marginalized communities.* I will serve as an unwavering advocate for culturally competent health care access and outcomes through a career in research and policy.

*I am now a student in the Harvard Medical School MD/MBA program.*

