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ROBERT T. MATSUI WRITING COMPETITION

INTRODUCTION
THE AEF ROBERT T. MATSUI ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION

James C. Ho

2005 COMPETITION WINNER
A "HARDY HANDSHAKE SORT OF GUY":
THE MODEL MINORITY AND IMPLICIT BIAS ABOUT
ASIAN AMERICANS IN *CHIN V. RUNNELS*

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The AEF Robert T. Matsui Annual Writing Competition

James C. Ho*

The untimely passing of Representative Robert T. Matsui on January 1, 2005 was a sudden and profoundly sad moment for the Asian American community. It inspired numerous efforts to commemorate his life—including the establishment of this annual legal writing competition by the Asian Pacific American Bar Association Educational Fund (AEF).¹

The son of Japanese immigrants and a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and the University of California Hastings College of the Law, Robert Takeo Matsui was first elected to the United States Congress in 1978. He won re-election to Congress 13 times. A proud Democrat, Matsui won praise from Asian Pacific Americans and other Americans across the political spectrum for his leadership, commitment to public service, and devotion to country. President George W. Bush called Matsui “a dedicated public servant and a good and decent man who served with distinction and integrity in the U.S. House of Representatives for more than 25 years. In the Congress, he was a leader of his party admired by colleagues on both sides of the aisle.”²

A third-generation Japanese American, Matsui spent the first years of his life in an interment camp during World War II. Four decades later, he would play a leading role as a member of Congress in securing passage of legislation apologizing for the internment and providing financial compensation for survivors.³ Paul Igasaki, former Vice Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, would later write:

As a Japanese American and a Sansei (third generation Japanese American), I want to address what [Congressman Matsui] meant to me and my generation in the community. He was the first of our generation to achieve election to Congress. He grew up in an environment in which Japanese American self-esteem was deeply affected by the imprisonment of our community during World War II. I remember him once describing how he and a friend once talked about how they wished they weren't Japanese. That discussion resonated with me. How many of my generation at one time or another confronted the psychological burden of the wrongful incarceration, or the ongoing burden of feeling the need to prove one's Americanism? He worked with others in Congress to do

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1. AEF is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and the charitable arm of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of the Greater Washington, D.C. Area.

2. President's Statement on Congressman Bob Matsui, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/20050102-1.html>.

3. Civil Liberties Act of 1988, Pub. L. No. 100-383, 102 Stat. 903 (1988).

