



I Respectfully Dissent: A Biography of Edward H. Nakamura

Tom Coffman

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Tom Coffman's portrait of Edward Nakamura is both insightful biography and engrossing political history. The arc of the story may sound familiar (the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the GI Bill, Statehood), but it is strewn with surprise, resulting from Nakamura's unshakable creed and unique angle of vision.

Translating the political gains of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Nakamura played a central role—unpublicized—in devising arguably the most progressive program of legislation in an American state: universal health care, temporary disability insurance, collective bargaining rights for public workers, and more—all of which forever changed the Hawai'i worker's landscape.

Vaulted from relative anonymity onto the Hawai'i Supreme Court, Nakamura was acclaimed for his powerful intellect, his writing, and, most of all, his iron will and integrity. In retirement, he became a dissenting moral force. He fought mismanagement in the State Retirement System, helped to block a highly controversial Supreme Court appointment, and agitated for separating the high court from the Bishop Estate.

Against his background of comforting the afflicted, in retirement Nakamura afflicted the new "in" crowd, the smug and self-serving—fighting corruption, mismanagement, and the corrosive effect of Bishop Estate appointments on the Hawai'i courts.

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