



In Thought and Action: The Enigmatic Life of S. I. Hayakawa

Gerald W. Haslam

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One of the most gripping images from the 1960s captures the slight figure of Dr. S. I. Hayakawa scrambling onto a sound truck parked in front of San Francisco State College amid campus unrest. Hayakawa had hoped to use this soapbox to address the assembled demonstrators, but instead he ended up ripping out speaker wires and halting an illegal campus demonstration—or denying first-amendment rights to the crowd, depending on your perspective. Indeed, Hayakawa's entire life defies simplistic labels, and his ability to be categorized largely depends on personal perspective.

This intimate and detailed biography draws on interviews with friends and family members, as well as Hayakawa's own papers and journals, to bring this controversial and fascinating figure to life. He was an enigma to colleagues as well as adversaries, a Republican senator who consistently bucked his party's ideals with his support of the women's movement, abortion rights, and even Ronald Reagan's search for a female running mate. The son of Japanese immigrants, born and raised in Canada before moving to the United States, Hayakawa emerges here as a complex and complicated figure. His blend of heritage, politics, artistic inclination, and intellectual achievement makes him quintessentially American.

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