Albert Tan Talks with Author Charles Yu for 'Asian American Stories' Webinar

By Albert C. Tan | September 15, 2021

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Haynes Boone Partner Albert Tan last week interviewed Charles Yu, author of several award-winning books and TV shows and a former corporate lawyer, as he discussed his career and experiences being Asian in America.

Haynes Boone was a presenting sponsor of the discussion, titled "Asian American Stories: Changing the Narrative with Charles Yu," in conjunction with the Asia Society Texas Center and the Asian Pacific Interest Section of the State Bar of Texas (APIS).

Tan, a member of the Firm's Appointment Committee, Board of Directors and Partner Compensation Committee and Co-Head of the firm's Global Fund Financing Group, is a regular speaker and moderator of discussions about fund finance and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) topics.

Watch a replay and read more about the discussion on the Asia Society website.

Here is a short recap:

Yu discussed events that shaped his personal journey, the challenges he overcame, and his dreams for reframing the ways Asian Americans are perceived and understood. Through his writing, he is helping shift the narrative away from commonplace depictions in media.

"The angle of all of it is to humanize the subjects – to tell a real story that people can connect with," Yu said. "The storytellers are there, and there is more of an appetite for different kinds of stories."

As an example of the changing narrative, Yu and Tan discussed how Marvel Cinematic Universe broke new ground by introducing actor Simu Liu as its first Asian superhero on the big screen in the movie "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings."

"An Asian superhero is pretty cool. I hope it opens doors for other types of stories to get told," Yu said.

Yu spent 13 years practicing corporate law at law firms including Sullivan & Cromwell LLP and in-house at tech companies before turning to writing full time, leaving his job as associate general counsel for Belkin International to write for the HBO show *Westworld*.

He has authored four books, including *Interior Chinatown* (the winner of the 2020 National Book Award for fiction) and the novel *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (a *New York Times* Notable Book and a *Time* magazine best book of the year). He received the National Book Foundation's 5 Under 35 Award and was nominated for two Writers Guild of America Awards for his work on *Westworld*.

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When asked what advice he has for others contemplating their career paths, Yu recommended bringing one's authentic self to the workplace.

"I used to feel like I had to partition and keep things back from people … when someone would find out I had been writing, they might share something of their own and we might relate to each other on a different level," Yu said. "People were a lot more accepting than I gave them credit for."

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