



# **Kiyo's Story: A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream**

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Kiyo's father arrived in California determined to plant his roots in the land of opportunity after leaving Japan. He, his wife, and their nine American-born children labored in the fields together, building a successful farm. Yet at the outbreak of World War II, Kiyo's family was ordered to Poston Internment Camp. This memoir tells the story of the family's struggle to endure in these harsh conditions and to rebuild their lives afterward in the face of lingering prejudice.

## **Kiyo's Story: A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream Details**

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# **From Reader Review Kiyō's Story: A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream for online ebook**

## **Matt says**

I loved this story so much more than I thought it would. It was a random recommendation from my dad, and then Amy read it first and I finally got to it quite a bit later, just because. For no good reason.

And I am lucky for doing so. Kiyō's tale is about family. There is history, much of the Japanese internment and Japanese-American relations (or lack thereof) in the 20th century. There is farming and hard work, the American dream perched on the backs of industrious and persistent immigrants, people with dedication, loyalty, and love--to their families, their dogs, their newly adopted nation, to any spot of land that could be called theirs.

More than inspiring. I felt encouraged to work harder, love deeper, and experience fuller. I will be a better father, tell my children more stories, work and play with them more. (Kiyō's mother and father were apparently some of the truest saints in this world.)

I finished this at 3:30 am, weeping. That's a little hard to admit, maybe, but I felt such a deep appreciation for people and family and love, life and living it. Potential. History under the asphalt, history for every person living or dead, told and untold, remembered and forgotten. This book is a gift to Kiyō's family. It's a history of good people, the best. I want to visit the very few remnants of their family farm near Mather Field, maybe find one of those long-abandoned almond trees in the high weedy grass and just sit under it, put my hands in the fallow red soil that was once turned fecund by the toils of gentle souls.

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## **Megan Elizabeth says**

POPSUGAR Reading Challenge: A book by a local author

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## **CritiCalGal says**

I liked this book so much that, after having borrowed it from the library, I bought a copy to keep and read again. That's huge for me.

It's easy to get caught up in Sato's vivid description of her experience of World War II, incarceration, and recovery. However, the real story here is that of love, resourcefulness, strength and resiliency.

Every parent should read this book, and so should every resident of Sacramento, California. Sato's parents understand that children really do "learn what they live". They learn from what we do, more than what we say. Also, people of Sacramento will recognize the place names, but probably won't bring to this book a full awareness of how much the incarceration of Japanese-Americans impacted the region we now know.

Kiyo's story instructs the reader about history, yes, but mainly about the triumph of the human spirit over seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Very readable, and hard to put down, it was a very quick read for me, despite what the dates indicate at Goodreads.

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### **Elizabeth Varadan says**

*Kiyo's Story, A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream* was originally titled, *Dandelion Through the Crack*, suggesting how the spirit can bloom, despite unbelievable adversity. This book won the 2008 William Saroyan Prize for Non Fiction and should be required reading in high school history classes to give young people an understanding of how political hysteria can sweep a nation into unthinkable behavior.

Kiyo was nineteen when she and her family, as well all of the Japanese -American communities on the West Coast, were sent to an interment camp; in the Satos' case, in Arizona. Prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, there was already a mindset in place: Japanese immigrants were not allowed to become citizens or to own land. Their children, however, were citizens by reason of birth. But following Pearl Harbor, and Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, anyone with 1/16 or more Japanese ancestry was suddenly declared a "non-alien". Curfews were established. They were not allowed to travel more than a five mile radius from their homes. Finally they were rounded up, and forced to abandon their homes, taking only whatever they could carry on the train to an interment camp. The Sato family, like neighboring families, were fruit farmers; their fields would be untended. Some farms were simply taken over by squatters.

Kiyo Sato first acquaints the reader with her parents' lives before this tragedy. Her father, Shinji, left Japan as a boy because of extreme poverty in his village. He labored for farmers in California, returned to Japan to wed a pretty nurse, and saved enough money that, through the help of others who were citizens, he could obtain a parcel of land. (At the time, Japanese immigrants were not allowed to own land.)

Kiyo's mother, Tomomi, worked side by side with Shinji in the fields, as did Kiyo and, later, her eight brothers and sisters. Slowly they brought the barren acreage to life until their produce was in demand and they had markets as far away as Canada. The close-knit family lived frugally, with dignity, as did their neighbors, happy to be making their way in the Promised Land.

Skip ahead twenty years, and they are stripped of everything they worked for, on their way to a camp guarded with soldiers, living with minimal privacy in cramped, thinly partitioned rooms, eating meals in overflowing mess halls meant for 250 people.

This could have been a scaldingly bitter book. Instead, it is a testimony to how the spirit can triumph. *Kiyo's Story* charts the course of lives lived with integrity, no matter what the injustice: Some young men, including one of Kiyo's brothers, enlist in the military to show their loyalty. The Satos and fellow inmates farm the land in camp, bringing flowers and crops out desert soil. Classes are started for the children. Adults hold meetings to resolve festering problems.

Their repeated reminder to each other is, "For the sake of the children . . ." They bend gracefully to what cannot be helped and hope for the future, rather than breaking down. Shinji never loses faith that this will pass, they will return home, and he and Tomomi will one day be granted citizenship -- which does come to pass. Tomomi is selfless in her devotion to family and friends. Both show their trust in life by deeds rather than words.

I cried several times while reading this book, not just because of the sadness they experienced, but in the deeper recognition of how they triumphed over hardships that could have destroyed them. Tomomi's gentle spirit shines as she takes unceasing care of her family. Shinji, a farmer with the soul of a poet, writes haiku and nurtures beauty. The devotion and wisdom of both permeate every thing they do. This is a book to be read more than once -- one that shows the true meaning of abundance and grace.

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### **Sharon says**

This memoir is an incredible account of one family's legacy. Kiyoko starts with her parents' lives in Japan and their journey to the US. They were so determined to build their lives here and contribute to society even though they were banned from applying for citizenship. A large portion of the book is about our WWII concentration camps and the pervasive anti-Japanese racism that supported them. The rest of the book is the sprawling tale of her eight siblings (whom she calls "the children" because she helped raise them) and her dozens of nieces and nephews.

The book is told almost entirely in chronological order, with the camps in the middle and family stories before and after. This allows Kiyoko to build a picture of her childhood on farms, which was difficult because of the work involved but always loving because of how her family supported one another. Knowing how hard they had worked for everything on their farm makes it even more painful when FDR signs Executive Order 9066 and their fellow Americans seize their land and their possessions.

I found this book from a 2016 Cracked article ("Why Modern America Scares Me: By An Internment Camp Survivor") and I'm so glad that I did. I believe that every person in the US has a duty to learn about the mistakes this country has made. These camps are too often glossed over in history classes, and it's illuminating to see the brutal impact of racist policy decisions on people's lives.

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### **Mariel says**

I received this book from a Goodreads giveaway, and I must say that I loved it. Having grown up in Japan as a military brat, I was reminded of home while reading this, even though it took place in America.

Kiyoko begins by telling of how her parents moved to America and were able to establish a good living for themselves and their eventual family through hard work and perseverance. Although there were many laws that made it difficult for Asians to move up in society, they were able to accomplish quite a bit and made a great home for their children. Then tough times came during World War II, and they had to deal with racism and ignorance, culminating in their being forced into concentration camps. Although they were luckier than many others and were eventually able to return to their farm, it wasn't without a large amount of sacrifice. I learned a lot about what the Japanese-Americans went through when they were torn from their homes so

abruptly - and it's hard to believe that something like this happened in our country not so long ago.

The story is told very beautifully, as the picture is woven through stories and haiku by Kiyō's father and mother. Although the narrative does get repetitive in some instances, I was so drawn in by the beautiful imagery (although I was often left hungry with all of the description of food!)

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### **Kristina V. Ramos says**

I am amazed with how strong her family and other immigrant farmers were and what they had to go through. I love everything about this book...

The only thing that I would personally change if I were writing this is there are a couple times where she repeats herself, and to me personally that's annoying. For example on page 124, she said Masashi was whining and said he wanted to go home to which Kiyō responded, "let's go exploring after supper...", then on page 131, once again Masashi is telling her he wants to go home. And it said "to divert his thoughts, I suggest, 'let's go exploring.'" I'm not sure why she decided to write it like that, almost copy and pasted that little excerpt, but I noticed it right away when I read it the second time and it bothered me a little, I would word it differently. Even if she tried to emphasize it, I still feel she could've described the situation better in other words. Nevertheless, I admit I might be being too picky and critiquing this great piece too much. It's a great book, I couldn't put it down at times, and I'm very happy I found it at the Japanese museum in San Jose.

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### **Sandy says**

I loved this book. I heard about it in the Sac Bee because the author is from Sacramento and currently lives in Folsom. It tells the story of 120,000 hard-working Japanese citizens being "relocated" to various parts of the country during WWII. For the Sato family, they had to leave the Sacramento fruit farm they developed from scratch and travel first to Fresno, then to the Arizona desert in the heat of summer and live in black tarpapered barracks. They were allowed one suitcase and a bedroll and ended up losing most of their belongings and property left at home. The author asks, "How can our president do this to us?". It's a good question and makes one think of ways the government and strong-willed politicians guide us into crazy laws.

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### **Ruby Paustian says**

Kiyō Sato wrote her life story of being raised by immigrant parents, living in the Japanese internment camps, going to nursing school, and facing prejudice in this memoir. Parts of this book was rushed and others had too much inconvenient detail. However this makes sense, since it was written by a non-author in her 80s. It was really interesting learning about her story though!

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### **Terri Lynn says**

This book is breathtaking. As I read, I thought that my late father would have loved this family. My Dad was drafted into WW2 as a very young man who had lived his life in a small town and knew nothing of racism, hatred, or killing. He loved people of all races, creeds, ethnic groups, etc and had no bigotry in him because

his family never taught him to hate.

Daddy was drafted and left California on a ship for the Pacific theater. He knew what it was to panic when kamikaze pilots sought to crash into his ship. He knew what it was to be a prisoner of war of the Japanese and to be tortured, abused, and seriously injured. What he DIDN'T know was how to hate all Japanese people. He was bitterly angry that nuclear weapons were dropped on innocent babies, toddlers, school kids, grandmas, housewives, and other innocent civilians. As he often said "The Japanese targeted a military target in Hawaii while we committed a human rights violation and slaughtered the lambs who had done us no harm."

He also was blazing mad that Americans of Japanese ancestry were locked away like animals in places like Poston, the internment camp where Kiyoko and family were imprisoned for no reason whatsoever other than racism. As he often pointed out, we had no such camps for German-Americans or Italian-Americans because they were white people and Christians though those countries were also at war with us.

I have met a number of people over the years who were placed in these camps . I fully empathize with them and am ashamed of my country for this national racism that robbed them of their freedom, their dignity, and their property. I love Kiyoko and her family. They are people I too would be proud to call "friend". They were so hardworking and never gave up. They faced racism with such grace. I wish none of this had happened to them but I thank Kiyoko for sharing her story and enriching our lives with it. I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway and thank Goodreads for choosing me to receive this special memoir.

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### **Bernadette says**

Amazing memoir, especially considering this is the author's first book. As the eldest daughter of a Japanese immigrant couple, Kiyoko Sato captures the hard work, perseverance, ingenuity and love of her parents and her eight siblings who built a successful strawberry and walnut farm from a nothing piece of land in Sacramento, California in the late 1920s and 30s. Like others of Japanese ancestry, in 1942 they were imprisoned in deplorable conditions in a relocation camp. The Satos returned three years later to find their land and home in ruins. With pluck and determination, the family rebuilds, children get educations and new generations help to maintain the farm tradition their parents' loved so much. The family's story documents important changes in California and in the country as a whole; it is one that is worthwhile for future generations to remember.

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### **Erika says**

This was an excellent book. It is the story of Japanese-American, Kiyoko Santo (oldest of nine children) and her family. Her parents are trying to live the American dream by starting their own farm in Sacramento, CA, in a time when Japanese weren't allowed to own land in this country. I was impressed with how hard-working the family was. They didn't complain about how hard life was, they just worked hard to figure out a solution. Their farm flourished but they were forced to leave everything behind during WWII when Japanese-Americans were seen as a threat to the country and sent to a relocation camp. Even in a relocation camp in AZ during WWII, their hard work and ingenuity helped them find a way to flourish in the desert. The prisoners in these camps somehow were able to farm in the hot AZ desert and grew vegetables to sustain their camps and others. I loved how much Kiyoko's family loved each other and stuck together. I also love how their parents taught them the value of education and they sacrificed so much to obtain a great

education. Great read.

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### **Selena says**

I enjoyed this, although the narrative was a bit disjointed and choppy at times and Kiyō's siblings seemed to appear out of nowhere occasionally. Some parts of her story brought up questions that I'll have to look into as my research progresses.

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### **Sarah Crawford says**

This is an incredible book about the life story of Kiyō Sato. It starts out with looking at what brought her parents to the U.S., and then examines her life growing up, her life at the Poston internment camp, and her life afterwards.

The book succeeds on a variety of levels. For one thing, the reader can see just how hard it was to make a living farming at the time. Her parents, her, and her brothers and sisters all had to help in order to plant, care for, and harvest the crops. They never had a lot of money, but they did have wonderful family life.

Her description of the anti-Japanese prejudice after Pearl Harbor, the way the FBI arrested people without charge, her transportation to Poston and her life, and the life of her family, there, all make for some fascinating reading. Kiyō herself had a very hard life, having to work a variety of jobs, to help out her family and to help her get a college education.

One of the most interesting parts, and a part not covered in very many books, is the numerous problems she and her family had after their release from Poston and their attempts to move back to their former home. There was still a great deal of prejudice against Japanese Americans.

There were also problems with greedy councilmen and even more greedy developers that threatened to destroy their farm, and she had to fight against them. Then there's a section dealing with her mother's cancer and how her mother faced death.

There's also a great deal of anger in the book, anger against FDR and those who treated the Japanese Americans, 2/3rd of whom were actually American citizens, so shabbily, arresting some without any charges or trial or legal representation, taking the homes and property of many, and putting them away in the internment camps, surrounded by barbed wire and guns pointing inward.

This is without doubt one of the best books I have read on the subject.

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### **Jeannie says**

If it was possible I would give this beautifully written memoir 10 stars. Yes, it's that good!



I fell in love with this family and wished to be a part of it. It's truly tragic what our government done to these kind and gentle people...I believe I understand the fear after Pearl Harbor and struggled even with that...still it does not excuse the cruel and barbaric way they were treated. No matter where they were sent they managed to keep their family intact and make it "home". Deeply moving and very nicely written, the authors voice, her pain, her pride, flows completely throughout this book. I must rate this memoir as the best one I've ever read in my life. So thankful to the author and to GoodReads for the chance to read this book which I won in the monthly giveaway.

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