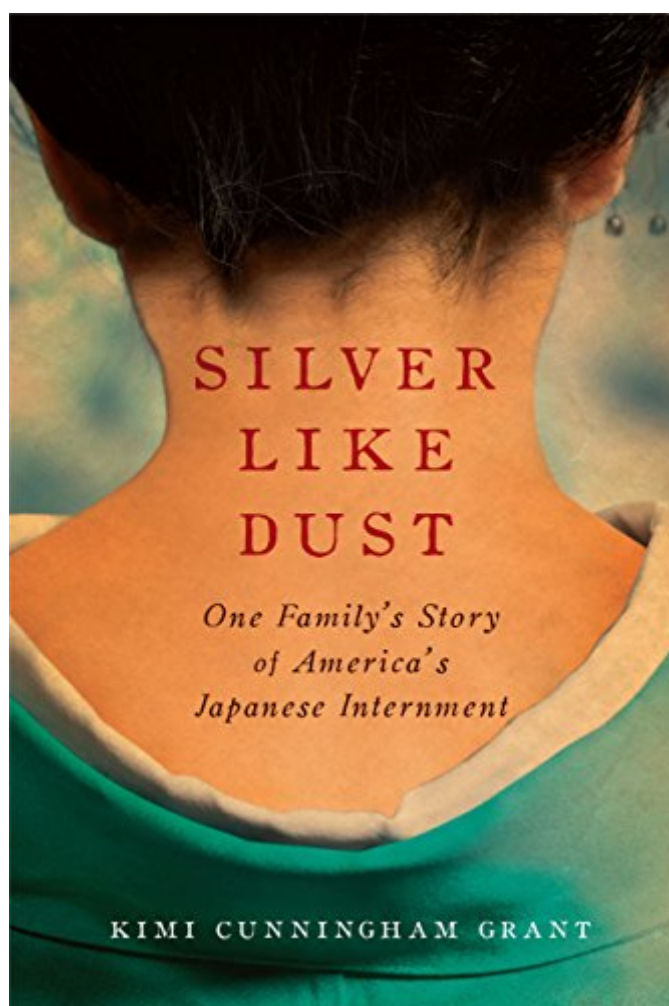


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Silver Like Dust: One Family's Story Of America's Japanese Internment: One Family's Story Of America's Japanese Internment



Synopsis

The poignant story of a Japanese-American woman's journey through one of the most shameful chapters in American history. Kimi's Obaachan, her grandmother, had always been a silent presence throughout her youth. Sipping tea by the fire, preparing sushi for the family, or indulgently listening to Ojichan's (grandfather's) stories for the thousandth time, Obaachan was a missing link to Kimi's Japanese heritage, something she had had a mixed relationship with all her life. Growing up in rural Pennsylvania, all Kimi ever wanted to do was fit in, spurning traditional Japanese culture and her grandfather's attempts to teach her the language. But there was one part of Obaachan's life that fascinated and haunted Kimi—her gentle yet proud Obaachan was once a prisoner, along with 112,000 Japanese Americans, for more than five years of her life. Obaachan never spoke of those years, and Kimi's own mother only spoke of it in whispers. It was a source of haji, or shame. But what really happened to Obaachan, then a young woman, and the thousands of other men, women, and children like her? From the turmoil, racism, and paranoia that sprang up after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, to the terrifying train ride to Heart Mountain, Silver Like Dust captures a vital chapter the Japanese-American experience through the journey of one remarkable woman and the enduring bonds of family.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a wonderful memoir. The author as an adult interviews her Japanese grandmother, whom she never really knew that well while she was growing up. As she spends time with her, she comes to know, understand, and love the old woman. She learns the details of the difficulty those Americans of Japanese extraction faced after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in WWII and the subsequent distrust, prejudice, and ultimately imprisonment of many of them as the war played out. Kimi's grandmother was a teenager when her family was forced to rid themselves of their home, most of their worldly goods, and their relationships after many years living in California. They could take with them only what they could carry, and were placed on a bus to an internment camp in Pamona, CA, and then to a camp in Wyoming which was to be their 'permanent' home until....? They didn't know how long or what would become of them later. Her young grandmother meets a boy in the camp, and they soon become engaged. Once married, they tried to make as normal a life as possible in the camp, and faced an uncertain future. The book is very well written, and brings to life a shameful time in our country's past. We learn about the hope and resilience of the internees, who continue to love America even while being imprisoned there. My only negative comment is that I wish the author had included some pictures. She describes several photographs in the narrative, but I would love to have seen them in the book.

I really loved this book! It is a not often told story of the resilience of some of our Greatest Generation. Many are not familiar with the Japanese interment during WW II and how our citizens of Japanese ancestry were treated. The author's sensitivity to her grandmother's story and their relationship made the story profound for me

I had a friend in junior high and high school who was born in a Japanese relocation camp in Albuquerque NM. She didn't, of course, remember much about it, and her parents never talked about, certainly not to her friends. I remember feeling embarrassed that this has happened in my town. Learning more about that time and the people that we're affected, has helped me realize again that we Americans must not repeat this. An entire culture or ethnicity must not be blamed and punished for the acts of some members of that culture.

I just finished Silver Like Dust and also went to Heart Mountain to view the Relocation Visitor Center. The book was accurate to what was shared at the visitor center. An easy to read novel that told of a time in our American history that has been kept very quiet. The author includes other pieces in her book that are not directly related to her family but tell of life in the camp. It was just what I was looking to read before visiting Heart Mountain. I was raised around the area and really never had any real understanding what it was all about.

What makes this book so important and beautiful is the author's ability to NOT make this book simply a criticism of the U.S. government's decision to imprison (the euphemisms are "relocation" and "internment") over 100,000 Japanese who were living legally in this country, and the prejudices & discrimination the Japanese experienced. She certainly covers those terrible things in appropriate measure: "Three days before Christmas of 1941, Life magazine ran an article titled "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese". Nor does the author try to portray her family as super-humans who courageously endured a terrible chapter in American history. Instead, the author stays on course and brings us into four generations of her family. A family with personalities and differences and weaknesses and frustrations. The imprisonment of her grandparents during WW II wasn't discussed when she was a child. During college, the author began spending more time with her widowed grandmother. A hard-working woman of few words, the grandmother didn't suddenly open up and let loose with something she had bottled up for over sixty years. The author's multiple year journey in talking to her grandmother, along with the attitudes of the subsequent generations, are as much a part of this book as the events that took place in the Wyoming camp. And that's why I think this book is so well done. The stories of the relocation and internment are astounding: We learn not only about the pains of life in the camp, but how her grandparents dated, married and began a family while imprisoned. We also learn about how the attitudes and experiences carried on well after the imprisonment and affected subsequent generations. The author allows herself to wonder how she personally, and others of her generation, would react in the face of a similar experience. Does the attitude of "shikataganai", surrendering to one's fate, have a place in our lives today? Your heart will ache when you read about how Americans threw stones at the busses that were relocating families away from their homes. You will get angry when you hear how the author's family, including her very ill great-grandmother, was housed in a fairground barn before the Wyoming camp was built. But more importantly, you will get to know a family who endured all of this.

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