



Joy Nakayama Kogawa

“

We are sent to Siloam, the pool called “sent.” We are sent to the sending, that we may bring sight. We are the scholarly and the illiterate, the envied and the ugly, the fierce and the docile. We are those pioneers who cleared the bush and the forest with our hands, the gardeners tending and attending the soil with our tenderness, the fishermen who are flung from the sea to flounder in the dust of the prairies. We are the Issei and the Nisei and the Sansei, the Japanese Canadians. We disappear into the future undemanding as dew.

— Obasan

”

Quick Facts

- * Born in 1935
- * Japanese-Canadian poet, novelist, and children’s writer
- * Wrote *Obasan* and *Itsuka*

Biography

Joy Nakayama Kogawa was born in 1935 in Vancouver, British Columbia. She lived there until her family was transported to an internment camp in central British Columbia. In 1941 the Canadian Government began a movement of Japanese people to internment camps. The Canadian government feared subversive acts from Japanese-Canadians and immigrants. The government also confiscated possessions and property from the Japanese-Canadians. Later they were sent to a camp in Coaldale in South Alberta. At the camps she and her family lived a life of field labor until the late 1940s when Joy began her studies at several universities.

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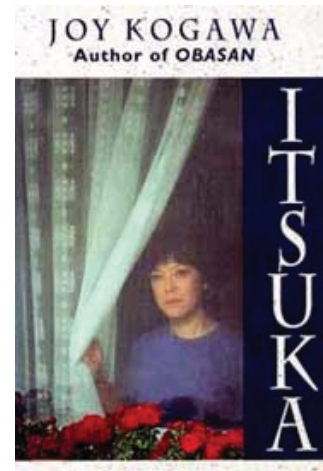
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Biography continued

Kogawa, a Canadian poet, novelist, and children's writer, pursued studies in education at the University of Alberta. She then taught elementary education. After one year of teaching, she went back to school to study music at the University of Toronto. Her education did not end there. She subsequently studied at The Women's Training College and the University of Saskatchewan.

In 1957 she moved permanently to Toronto where she married her husband and where they had two children. It was in 1959 that Kogawa began writing. By 1964 she had her first short story published. The more she wrote, the less concerned she was with the technical aspect of writing. She began writing more poetry than short stories. In 1968 Kogawa divorced her husband.

In 1974 she published *A Choice of Dreams*, and in 1978 she published *Jericho Road*. In 1981 Kogawa published an award winning book entitled *Obasan*. *Obasan* focuses on Japanese Canadians and the many injustices they suffered during and after World War II. *Obasan* won Books in Canada's First Nobel Award and the Canadian Authors Association's Book of the Year Award. Eleven years later, Kogawa would publish *Itsuka*, a sequel to *Obasan*. In 1982 she began her involvement with Sadan-Kai, a Japanese Canadian activist who has sought redress from the Canadian Government. Kogawa currently resides in Vancouver, British Columbia.





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