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*Suzanne Kamata*

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**Paperback** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised [ Call Me Okaasan: Adventures in Multicultural Mothering[ CALL ME OKAASAN: ADVENTURES IN MULTICULTURAL MOTHERING ] By Kamata, Suzanne ( Author )May-01-2009 Paperback:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. a plate of international soulfoodBy kbirdlincolnA long time ago I picked up a picture book to read with my Japanese/American bicultural daughters called "The Wakame Gatherers" and found myself all choked up at the end.Imagine my pleasure when I found Suzanne Kamata, the author of the Wakame Gatherers had put together a collection of thoughtful essays from various writing mothers about what it means to raise a child in a multicultural/multilingual context.I picked up this book eager to read about how other mothers deal with issues like what home language to use, feeling like an outsider in both countries, dealing with kids who identify with

different cultures, and who basically worried about the same kinds of issues I have raising daughters first in Japan and then the United States with a Japanese father and a Caucasian/American mother. I was not disappointed. I think the greatest gift you can give your multicultural children is to show them they are not alone in their tricky role, and it dawned upon me reading Kamata's introduction where she describes the assumptions she had about raising children in Japan (that she would be called Mommy or that her children would give two shakes of a rat's tail about Thanksgiving) that I could also give the same gift to myself: I wasn't the only one with seemingly at once inconsequential and earth-shattering fears about how my children will create and form positive identities for themselves when they are so obviously formed from both Japan and the United States. But it's not only bicultural mothers represented in this book; there are bicultural mothers themselves raising international children, a US mother who adopted from Korea, a US mother who has become Israeli, North Americans living abroad and non-US mothers dealing with encroaching US culture. The stories that spoke most of me and my own particular set of worries were Anjali Enjeti-Sydow describing her daughters; one pale skinned and the other dark brown, and worrying about how the disparity in how society will treat them will affect their sisterhood. Also, Holly Thompsons' description of the bullying her children face in public school in Japan and how different choices for her two very different children had to be made. And finally, the Violeta Garcia-Mendoza's essay "Two Names for Every Beautiful Thing" that describes with heart-breaking (for me) familiarity the way she can only ever relax and be herself with other bilingual/bicultural people. The most satisfying friendships of my life were with other US women married to Japanese men who had children around the same age as mine. They were the only people I didn't have to censor or rephrase or educate about some part of my life. Truly this is a gift the Kamata has given. And not just for mothers with multicultural children. It explains so much that I haven't found the words to express myself. This Book's Snack Rating: A plate loaded from an international buffet of soul food, where you can take a bit of pancit or karaage or gyoza or tamale and taste the mother's care that went into it. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Helpful, Inspiring, Diverse . . . !By Osaka Lady To all multi-cultural mamas, dads, children, expats, TCKs, etc -I've had a hard time finding reading material (specifically personal stories) related to the area of raising children overseas/multiculturally. "Call Me Okaasan" not only fills a niche, but very entertainingly and movingly so. Thank you Suzanne for putting this together and giving us all a little perspective. I've already given it as a present and probably will again. Arigato! 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Real, meaningful stories By Andrew Couturier I am not a mother, but through my sister I do have a close relationship with a bi-cultural child, and I found the stories in this book very moving. One story by Leza Lowitz was so moving and affecting that I was stopped stark in my tracks imagining all the ways that cultural ideas and norms smack hard into emotions and real-world decisions as this woman, a powerful writer, grapples with one of the largest decisions of her life. One scene, such a well drawn, quiet scene with a little boy walking up to an injured cat in a huge city, and stopping to comfort the cat moved me very deeply. The writing in this story glowed. Another piece I really responded to and remembered (it's been more than 6 months since I read this book and I still remember this story) was an essay by a woman who is partially of Indian descent with a partly African-American partner has two children, and how one of them is born with white skin, and another, full sisters, is born with brown skin, and how this wise mother grapples with both her own feelings as a person of color in the US, and her predictions and emotions about how these two sisters will grow up. The work of the editor here, in choosing what stories and essays are important for us to read, is evident throughout. Her ability to spot, and highlight, those with real punch make the collection itself much more than your standard thematic hodgepodge of loosely related pieces of writing. If you care about children who are ripped between two cultures, and what they go through, definitely pick up this book.