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Review

"Originally published in 1946, Citizen 13660 is a documentation of life inside the World War II "relocation centers" for those of Japanese ancestry. This oft-overlooked portion of American history is brought poignantly to life by Okubo's expressive ink drawings and accompanying text. . . . Without a doubt, this book should be on required reading lists for high schools across the country."?Foreword Reviews

"This forerunner to the modern graphic memoir is a must read, both for the important - and shameful - period of American history it documents and its poignant beauty."?Printers Row , The Chicago Tribune

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Mine Okubo was one of over one hundred thousand people of Japanese descent - nearly two-thirds of whom were American citizens - who were forced into "protective custody" shortly after Pearl Harbor. Citizen 13660, Okubo's graphic memoir of life in relocation centers in California and Utah, illuminates this experience with poignant illustrations and witty, candid text. Now available with a new introduction by Christine Hong and in a wide-format artist edition, this graphic novel can reach a new generation of readers and scholars.

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- 240 pages

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Eyewitness history with pictures

By Daniel J Cross

Okubo's book is a valuable eyewitness account of a sad period of U.S. history, the forced relocation of Japanese-Americans during WWII. I don't know anything about Okubo's life, but her book suggests she was one of those relocated. The book is illustrated on every page with great, expressive pen-and-ink drawings, and each picture is accompanied by a caption thoroughly explaining the scene depicted. The story begins with her family awaiting relocation orders, being sent to two different camps in the interior valleys of California, and concludes with her release. She does a great job documenting daily life in the camps, like the ways the prisoners created a community by organizing school for their children, publishing a camp newspaper, staging performances, etc. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of Okubo's book is her lack of anger

and bitterness. One would think forced relocation would spawn a lot of anger, but she emphasizes positive aspects of life at the camps, and even expresses some wistfulness about leaving upon her release. I'm not sure how we should read that--is it the genuine response of a young, resilient woman who was able to see the whole experience as an adventure? Her attempt to dignify the prisoners by emphasizing how well they made the most of the oppressive conditions? Or, seeing that the book was first published in 1946, a conscious effort not to voice more outrage than mainstream America was willing to tolerate from a Japanese-American woman so soon after our war with Japan? I wish I knew. In any case, *Citizen 13660* is a very important document, which deserves a place next to other illustrated accounts of prisoner camps like Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and *The Book of Alfred Kantor*.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

"Graphic" memoirs

By Hunter

Mine Okubo lived and painted for more than 50 years in the same Manhattan studio apartment. She died in 2001. She was known not just as *Citizen 13660* from the internment camps, but as a talented and dedicated artist (see her profiled in the video *Persistent Women Artists ...*). This book, a reprint of the 1946 original, uses her deceptively simple style to tell how she was forced to leave behind the life of an American college student to become a Japanese-American detainee, and what her artist's eye observed in the camps.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Visuals and Text

By crazycleveland

I don't know how anyone could read this novel and not appreciate the text and visuals simultaneously. It would be easy to just read the text, but the visual representations created by Mine Okubo are profound and provide the viewer with a greater understanding of the events that Mine Okubo and other Japanese Americans underwent while in the camps. Unlike other graphic novels, the text and image are separate and not integrated. Some may find this difficult to read the text and then view the picture or vice versa, but the sketches were created while Mine Okubo was in the camp and then the descriptive text was added later to correspond with the visuals. These sketches were a descriptive journal for Mine Okubo, who like so many others wasn't allowed to bring in cameras or video recording devices to capture what she underwent and saw while in the camps. Personally, I found the text and visual continually playing off one another and neither one would have been nearly as successful without the other.

Many of the internment camps no longer exist and what remains, "are pieces of concrete, pipes, and wire," they are but a cemetery to the past. Mine Okubo has created a piece of living history and has produced a personal memoir for herself and the United States. This even should never be forgotten and should be a key portion of history that is taught within our private and public schools. Art is an expressive outlet that provides a means of releasing tension, anger, sadness, and anxiety. During the internment other artists and writers were creating profound works of art to communicate and further understand their own circumstances. For anyone that questions the relevance of this text a film that is worth watching is called, "9066 to 9/11." This film takes a look at the secretive footage taken by Japanese American Internees in the camps and corresponds their hardships and mistreatment with our current predicaments based on the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

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