



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Honorary Degree Citations The degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, conferred on Dr. Joy Nozomi Kogawa Thursday, June 3, 1993

Madam Chancellor, a voice charged with poetic conscience has spun beauty's line across the page and across the expanse of Canada. That voice belongs to Joy Nozomi Kogawa and it is my opportunity and my delight to introduce her to you today. Removed by force from her birthplace, interned, deprived of liberty and property, Joy Kogawa and her family were part of the great dispersal and shameful internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. Out of her experience and memory's spur, she has turned the freedom language offers to lift us on her haunting words toward a new acknowledgement of past wrongs. Both for her contributions to literature and to justice redress, we are moved to honour her.

Born in Vancouver in 1935, as a child Joy Kogawa suffered the abuse of imprisonment in her own land. Sent to internment camps in the British Columbia interior and later in Alberta, she witnessed the disintegration of a community through racist pressure made powerful by the face of war. Freed from the camps, but not from the pall of injustice, she attended high school in Coaldale before going on to study at the University of Alberta in the mid-1950s.

It was as a poet that Joy Kogawa's first books appeared bearing titles such as *The Splintered Moon*, *A Choice of Dreams* and *Jericho Road*. But it is as the author of *Obason* - a novel combining great delicacy with compelling power - that her voice rang out in full cry, drawing from her personal history the iniquitous past other Canadians had long held silent. For the persecution visited on Japanese Canadians during World War II, the Canadian Government took steps to provide redress in 1988 and the aesthetic force that helped drive the movement forward came in large measure from Joy Kogawa's pen.

Acclaimed by critics, Joy Kogawa's great talent has been widely recognized. She is the recipient of honours ranging from the Books in Canada First Novel Award to the Canadian Authors' Association Book of the Year Award, from the American Library Association Award to the American Book Award. For her literary achievements and for her victory in the cause of Japanese redress, she has been installed as a Member of the Order of Canada and received honorary doctorates from the Universities of Lethbridge and Guelph.

Her writing remains an aesthetic spark enlivening our literature. New collections of poetry such as *Woman in the Woods* and a recent novel, *Itsuka*, impress through intricacy folded upon intricacy, providing an elegance lightly sketched in silhouette like the graceful folds of an origami crane in paper flight. The beauty she has given, and the passion with which she has spoken out to heal an historic wrong, offer us a precious gift. On behalf of the Senate of Simon Fraser University, Madam Chancellor, it is my pleasure to present Joy Kogawa for the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.