

Shannon
Gibney
and Kao
Kalia Yang,
Editors

What God Is Honored Here?

Writings on
Miscarriage and
Infant Loss by
and for Native
Women and
Women of Color

A BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

for *WHAT GOD IS HONORED HERE?: Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss by and for Native Women and Women of Color*
edited by Shannon Gibney and Kao Kalia Yang

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“Pregnancy loss is a most enigmatic human sorrow, unique to every woman who suffers it. These stories of resilience, grief, and restoration are essential, for to understand is to heal.”

—**LOUISE ERDRICH**

“*What God is Honored Here?* is the hardest and most important book I’ve read about parenting, loss, and imagination. It’s also the most frightening book in my world, but not because it is horrific: it is about the terrifying possibilities of love.”

—**KIESE LAYMON**, author of *Heavy*, winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal and finalist for the Kirkus Prize

“These writers have pierced the silence that too often surrounds miscarriage and infant loss, crafting hallowed stories from thoughtful, honest prose. As readers we are invited to witness the heart-mending love of mothers as they share memories of their lost babies, and in the telling offer solace in community.”

—**DIANE WILSON**, author of *Spirit Car* and *Beloved Child*

“This collection unspools from the start as a wrenching look at grief, refracted through the prism of race, religion, and class in the context of war, migration, and displacement. A unique contribution to the writings of women of color, this anthology brings together a range of women’s literary voices who write against the idea that grieving must be experienced as a solitary act. It reminds us of our resolute ties to one another and asks us to honor our experiences of joy and grief, love and pain, with story, song, and narrative.”

—**LAN DUONG**, coeditor of *Troubling Borders: An Anthology of Art and Literature by Southeast Asian Women in the Diaspora*

ABOUT THIS BOOK

What God Is Honored Here? is the first book of its kind—and urgently necessary. This is a literary collection of voices of Indigenous women and women of color who have undergone miscarriage and infant loss, experiences that disproportionately affect women who have often been cast toward the margins in the United States of America.

From the story of dashed cultural expectations in an interracial marriage to poems that speak of loss across generations, from harrowing accounts of misdiagnoses, ectopic pregnancies, and late-term stillbirths to the poignant chronicles of miscarriages and mysterious infant deaths, *What God Is Honored Here?* brings women together to speak to one another about the traumas and tragedies of womanhood. In its heartbreaking beauty, this book offers an integral perspective on how culture and religion, spirit and body, unite in the reproductive lives of women of color and Indigenous women as they bear witness to loss, search for what is not there, and claim for themselves and others their fundamental humanity. Powerfully and with brutal honesty, they write about what it means to reclaim life in the face of death.

Editors Shannon Gibney and Kao Kalia Yang acknowledge “who we had been could not have prepared us for who we would become in the wake of these words,” yet the writings collected here offer insight, comfort, and, finally, hope for all those who, like the women gathered here, have found grief a lonely place.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

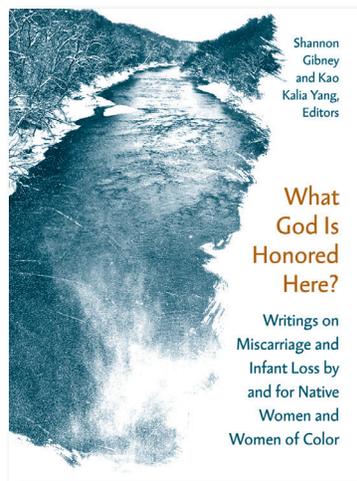
1. What is the significance of the title of the collection? What do you think the space of “here” refers to for the women in this anthology?
2. How does this book speak to the times we are living in and the conditions and realities of the lives of Native Women and Women of Color?
3. What are the advantages of putting together a collection of voices as opposed to these women individually writing and publishing their individual stories? What are the disadvantages?
4. This book sheds light on a tragic reality in America: miscarriage and infant loss disproportionately affect Women of Color and Native Women in this country. What can we do to alleviate and/or address this problem?
5. If you had to choose one piece from this book to speak to the collection as a whole, which story or poem would you choose and why?
6. In this collection, we see women from a wide margin of society contending with pregnancy loss and infant death. What is the role of your religion, culture, and/or beliefs in guiding your response to these stories?
7. Is it possible to heal from the traumas of pregnancy loss and infant death?
8. Have the experiences of miscarriage and infant loss impacted your own life and altered your stories? How?
9. How do the men in your life deal with miscarriage and infant loss? What does this reveal about the different ways our societies and cultures treat men and women in these situations? What about individuals who are gender queer?
10. How does this collection speak to the power of love in women’s lives?

ABOUT THE EDITORS

SHANNON GIBNEY is a writer, educator, activist, and the author of *See No Color*, a young adult novel that won the Minnesota Book Award in Young People’s Literature. She is faculty in English at Minneapolis College, where she teaches writing. She has been a Bush Artist and McKnight Writing Fellow. Her critically acclaimed novel *Dream Country* follows more than five generations of an African-descended family as they crisscross the Atlantic, both voluntarily and involuntarily.

KAO KALIA YANG is author of *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*, winner of two Minnesota Book Awards and a finalist for the PEN USA Award in Creative Nonfiction and the Asian Literary Award in Nonfiction. Her second book, *The Song Poet: A Memoir of My Father*, won a Minnesota Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Chautauqua Prize, the PEN USA Award in Nonfiction, and the Dayton’s Literary Peace Prize.

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