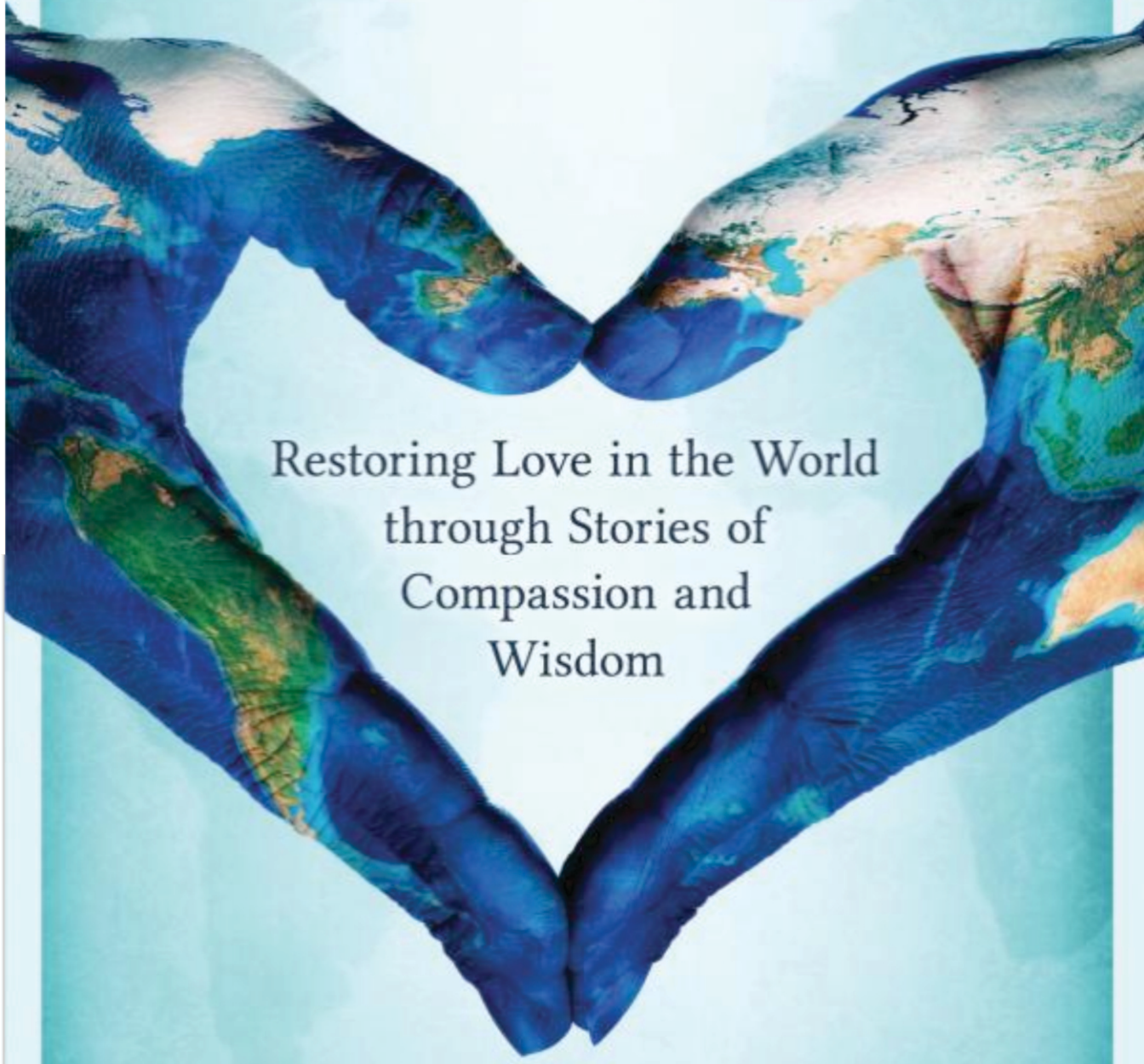


The *Peacemakers*



Restoring Love in the World
through Stories of
Compassion and
Wisdom

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Foreword by **LOUISE HUEY GREENLEAF**

Plus 21 visionary women from *The Peacemakers* author group

Sayoko-San

My Peace Maker Mama

From the kitchen I hear my mother humming and break out into song, quietly singing to herself in what may well have been a part of her spiritual practice. "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me..."* Throughout my childhood mom sought to bring peace not only to her past but into the lives of all she met. A true peace-nick and semi-hippy mama, she had us recycling and meditating long before the wave of self-awareness was the booming phenomena it is today. I remember hearing her say that she was going to register my brothers as Conscientious Objectors to prevent them from having to go to war. The Vietnam war was in full swing during my childhood but thank God, it ended before my brothers came of age to be drafted.

My mother is third generation Japanese American. At the age of 8 her home and childhood were taken from her and her family – in the name of war. Over the years I have asked her to write down her story, the fascinating history of her own life. Despite my curiosity and fascination, she has resisted saying essentially that she is not that story. It has long been my desire to know every tiny detail of what it felt like to lose your home and be placed into a refurbished horse stall with only whitewash covering the remains of horse manure, awaiting shipment out. I wondered what did it feel like to be whisked away from life as she knew it and put in a concentration camp with barbed wire? These questions remain unanswered to my inquiring mind. Why wasn't she furious? Why doesn't she want to tell her story? That's a very good question and I will do my best to embrace her experience.

From the time she was young, my mother Sayoko (Sayoko-san would be a term of endearment) had a feisty streak. While the world may have told her she was powerless, she turned to her rich inner world of faith. No, she probably did not call it faith at that time. What my mother possesses, that cannot be taken from her, is insatiable curiosity. Her curiosity, I believe, is what protected her from buying into a story that she was a victim of some governmental act. Time at camp was a bit of an adventure to this very bright young girl. If you ever want to know about life, strip away the trappings of comfort and see where you are left. Luckily for mom, she was good company to herself and did not waste time on self-pity.

During my childhood mom fed her curiosity reading progressive thinkers like Edgar Cayce and Carl Jung. Unlike other moms, she didn't dally around with gossip, the PTA or playing bridge. Mom had a calling from the metaphysical realm. She got her answers by tossing three pennies and asking the I Ching her important questions and received spiritual sustenance from this ancient Book of Change. Around the age of 13 she taught me how to read the hexagrams and I would ask my silly 13-year-old girl questions. Does so and so like me? Will I make get selected for cheerleader? What I know now, is that even though my questions were superficial, this was my initiation into mysticism and spirituality. As I look back I see that this was preparation to my spirituality and my future as an intuitive reader.

Throughout our childhood she sprinkled us with consciousness beyond what made sense at the time – to my brothers and I. In the early days we would rinse out cans, remove the labels and flatten them to be recycled...how embarrassing...really mom? Everybody else just threw theirs in the garbage, not us! Recycling was not optional because mom was not going to litter mother earth with garbage for us kids to inherit. Mind you this was in the 1960's! We were taught to respect mother earth. I recognize that she always had a higher calling and was unafraid to put her spiritual practices and earthly responsibilities into her household.

My mother was unapologetic about her rituals. As a teenager I was often embarrassed about her rituals. Another totally embarrassing thing she did was make homemade bread...all I wanted was Wonder Bread. Nope! She would time her baking so that the bread would be hot out of the oven when we arrived home from school, knowing the house would smell amazing and we could have a snack of fresh bread. Feeding was one of her go-to medicines. My older brother Jeff and I had friends from broken families. Divorce was uncommon in the 1960's. As a child I didn't understand that my friends didn't get fed like we did. Our dinner table often had extra hungry mouths to feed, and mom was in her element. Maybe part of her desire to feed these hungry kids was born of her past in the concentration camp, but if it was, she never admitted it. My peace-nick earth mama loved to feed those children that she felt needed nourishment. There are still kids from my childhood that recall her kind and loving nature and most especially her food! Mom taught us that generosity is always possible, she used to tell me, "There's always enough honey." She was right. Raising my children, our table was the one with extra mouths to feed. Providing a loving environment for kids that may not have that at home was a passion for me. There were many who came for dinner, and many who came and stayed, some for days, and some for weeks. Whether they stayed for dinner or longer, feeding them created a bond between me and the children that lives forever in my heart.

When I was fourteen my dad got transferred 60 miles north of my childhood home. I truly felt that I would die. My whole childhood, all my friends and our family home were gone. What I didn't realize was that this move was an opportunity to learn about who I had grown to be under my mom's gentle upbringing. You see, we didn't have a lot of rules at home, there was really only one; be thoughtful of others and their feelings. If we were caught not living up to this our punishment was not to be grounded, no it was something far more challenging; Mom would sit us down and make us think about what we did and how it might have made the other person feel.

Consciousness building. She was consistent. My brothers and I would joke that we just received lecture 127 or lecture 251...we'd giggle and she knew it but I'll tell you, there were plenty of times I would have preferred to be sent to my room and not have to look at my actions through my mother's lens. During these times of "punishment" she taught us how to think for ourselves and also, that we would not escape accountability. There was no wiggle room, you'd sit and listen and have to engage your mind and heart. Consistent with mom's peaceful nature, she was never punitive and punishment was never arbitrary, it was never more than engaging with whichever lecture I was receiving.

The result of my mother's method of training us to engage our hearts and minds, was three people who think for themselves and have no problem questioning authority. Yeah, that was part of the lesson plan. These were the days where children were expected to respect our elders. Many elders still held to the archaic belief that children were to be seen and not heard. Whelp...we were not those children. Our mother instructed us that we only had to respect that which is respectable! Aha! Loophole! But alas, no loophole. Bottom line was that because we had been taught to be thoughtful of others and their feelings. We were respectful even to those who did not warrant it. What I learned is that kindness to someone who is unkind has a way of softening their edges. Wow! This was a huge revelation!

As we matured the life lessons we were faced with changed as well. I remember complaining to mom about someone and wanted nothing more than for her to join my team and agree with me! "Honey, I read something once that said; the person who seems to deserve the love the least needs it the most." Dang, really mom? Do you really have a kind explanation for everything in life? So what you're telling me is that this person with horrid behavior needs a hug? Time and again her commitment to peaceful resolution of any and all situations bore out to be true. The lesson of

compassion taught through recognizing bad behavior as internal pain is a big gigantic tool in my tool box of life. I didn't learn it all at once as my ego really wanted to be pissed off. Heck, sometimes I even wanted to be the victim! I wanted mom to jump up and down and defend me! I later understood that she did in fact protect me...in her own unique way.

When something came up at school, she was "Johnny on the spot" to let the faculty know that they absolutely did not have permission to paddle her children! I'm pretty sure the principal would cringe when he saw her coming...this of course made us giggle... And there were also times she did not jump up and defend me, she would create a whole new lecture to fit the circumstances and I would once again, have to think and feel my way to a peaceful conclusion of my own design. She never gave us the answers, but she gave us the confidence to seek them out on our own.

At 85 years old my precious mother's faith continues to amaze me. She told me once that she decided to always trust us kids. So when we'd make some silly decision, she'd say, "I trust you honey, you'll know just what to do." I guess it's good that she trusted us even though we were normal teenagers doing normal teenage antics, it probably saved her a few grey hairs! I adopted this in raising my children as well. It was empowering to them to know that I believed in their life skills and problem solving ability. As a parent I would still give guidance when asked, I am a mom after all – that's in the mom play book. I emulated my mom's teaching and gave my children the gift of my trust, which in turn gave them the confidence that even if they made a bad decision, they could figure a way out of it. In reality, there have been many times I worried and fretted over my children and their choices until I remember the antidote to fear, which is what my mother had been teaching us all about all along, faith, "Don't fight every battle, don't take everything personally, and let things play out and see where you stand." Letting things play out is allowing faith and grace to fill in the spaces of what we do not know.

The last mom-ism I would love to give you is a gift she gave me often growing up. As a young girl there were really scary things happening in the Bay Area. There was a serial killer – I was very afraid. The police couldn't find him and he seemed to be in control of my feelings of security. The mom balm I received was something she repeated often; "You are always safe and protected." I heard it so often that it became part of the tape that played in the background of my mind. She would occasionally offer more words of comfort such as, "this is not part of your reality honey," or "some people are here to learn lessons about violence, but not you."

I am truly grateful for the opportunity to share the story of my mother's incredible influence on all who she has touched. When she said she didn't need to tell the story about the concentration camp because it wasn't her story, I get it now. Her story is and always has been about faith, hope, kindness and love. She walked her talk and continues to inspire me to know that in spite of what the world may be doing, I am always safe and protected. As the most profound peacemaker in my life, she would want you to know that you too, are always safe and protected.

*"**Let There Be Peace on Earth**" written by Jill Jackson Miller and Sy Miller in 1955.