

## Book Review: What God is Honored Here? Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss by and for Native Women and Women of Color

Gibney, S. & Yang, K. K. (Eds.). (2020). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press

Reviewed by Eunie Alsaker

In our culture, miscarriage and infant loss typically reside in the “we-don’t-talk-about-that” category. The literature that does exist is by and large written by white women. These experiences of grief, along with native women and women of color, have historically been silenced. Now a collaboration of grieving mothers tells their stories and invite others to listen and share their grief.

*What God is Honored Here? Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss by and for Native Women and Women of Color* is a unique and important literary anthology. Shannon Gibney and Kao Kalia Yang, two MN writers and previous Minnesota Book Award winners, are both contributors and editors of this book. They write of their fear that “...life would continue as if our babies had never lived if we didn’t do something to commemorate their existence.” (p 2) In response, they gathered the stories of 24 additional women with similar losses, including Yang’s own mother who had seven miscarriages.

The writing is powerful as well as beautiful. The mothers walk us through their heart-breaking losses, infertility, and fear during subsequent pregnancies and births. They tell of both compassion and lack thereof in hospitals. Some are left wondering how much race played a role in the loss of their child given the disparity in infant mortality rates among races in our country. They share the “You’ll get pregnant again,” and “It’s time to move on,” comments. They write of how they remain connected to their lost child. They note how both rituals and the writing process itself contributed to their healing.

The editors affirm that it was a gift for them to work in collaboration with other authors. This book is a gift to the rest of us. Their stories teach us about grief related to infant and pregnancy loss. They guide us to slow down and understand their stories. They remind us to consider how race and ethnicity impact grief and loss. They provide me, a white woman, with a way to expand my knowledge and become more inclusive. They teach us that it is not “just” a miscarriage, but the loss of an expected future—of their child. They remind us to honor these losses.

The stories touched and challenged me. My friend of twenty-two years miscarried before we met. The other day I finally asked, “What was that like for you?” And I sat down to listen.

