

Manzanar

Dust storms.
Sweat days.
Yellow people,
Exiles.
I am the mountain that kisses the sky in the dawning.
I watched the day when these, your people, came into your heart.
 Tired.
 Bewildered.
 Embittered.

I saw you accept them compassion, impassive but visible.
Life of a thousand teemed within your bosom.
Silently you received them and bore them.
 Daily you fed them from your breast,
 Nightly you soothed them to forgetful slumber,
Guardian and keeper of the unwanted.

They say your people are wanton
 Saboteurs.
 Haters of White men.
 Spies.
Yet I have seen them go forth to die for their only country,
Help with the defense of their homeland,
America.

I have seen them look with beautiful eyes at nature.
And know the pathos of their tearful laughter,
Choked with enveloping mists of the dust storms,
Pant with the heat of sweat-days; still laughing.
 Exiles.

And I say to these you harbor and those on the exterior,
"Scoff if you must, but the dawn is approaching,
When these, who have learned and suffered in silent courage;
Better, wiser, for the unforgettable interlude of detention,
Shall trod on free sod again,
Side by side peacefully with those who sneered at the
 Dust Storms.
 Sweat days.
 Yellow people,
 Exiles.

- Michiko Mizumoto

from <http://www.ionaprep.pvt.k12.ny.us/projects/intrnmnt/sweet.html>