

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Amy Uyematsu: “Purple Like Iris”

Amy Uyematsu · Friday, June 25th, 2021

### Purple Like Iris

I chose Cisco Kid, Tonto, and men dressed in black.  
I cheered the loudest when the Indians attacked.  
I chose loners, despising cliques at every age  
but secretly hoping one day I'd get picked.

I chose revolution, not evolution.  
I carried the *Red Book, Soul on Ice*, quoted from  
Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.  
I knew the meaning of dialectical materialism.  
Once I held my husband hostage for having no opinion.  
Once a lover who wronged me said I take no prisoners.  
I took sides like a junkie until I could see  
they both cared about winning no matter the cost,  
And when I chose to give up the battle,  
a voice inside was still calling my name.

I always chose the romantic ending,  
listened to torch songs long before  
I'd ever died of longing.  
I took my cues from the moon.  
I chose saxophone and cha-cha, sipped Scotch  
on the rocks, lounged  
On the shade of June afternoons  
slowly chewing the skin of a Japanese plum.  
I chose purple for my bridesmaids  
when the custom was pastel.  
I wanted the alchemy of two hearts  
but kept ending up with just one.

I chose “That’s not fair” as my stubborn refrain.  
The sky would rise bluer than gorgeous,  
just to jeer me on.

I chose the wisdom of woman,

Mom over Dad even when she hurt him,  
all the mothers of soldiers who never come back,  
and the grandma who made my favorite rice balls  
though she forgot to add wine to sweeten the vinegar.  
How much I've relied on the kindred blessings  
Of goddess, witch, and crone.

I chose stone over grass, fish over bear.  
Trusted hands that can make things grow  
from cotton, clay, and seed.  
I chose poetry because she spoke to me  
so lovingly, the way my whole world  
quieted to hear.

Previously published in the book *Stone Bow Prayer* (Copper Canyon Press, 2005)

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