

How I Found My Joy



I used to live in a state of inarticulate mourning. Except for my children, I had little to show. My life felt empty and without further meaning. I was a stranger to myself.

Good fortune led me to discover photography as a medium. Morrie Camhi, a photography instructor, became my mentor. His profound sense of empathy, his training and sensitive guidance, provided the trust by which I could reveal myself in a series of self-portraits. Photography became the way to explore and transform, to give face to memory, to turmoil.

Born in Germany, I grew up inhibited by the shadow of Hitler, Nazi indoctrination, terror, persecution, destruction and death. The father I cherished died in battle while in Russia.

My embittered mother and a hysterical aunt, also a war widow, raised me. A hidden Jewish background was our secret. Living in a small town, our lives enchaind by deception and lies, we witnessed with horror the persecution and disappearance of our Jewish friends. To this day, wherever I go, gnawed by introspection and held back by shyness - I remain an outsider, the product of a terrible war.

A war bride to an American of Japanese ancestry I immigrated to the United States in 1958. The complexity of an East-West marriage, attending to a promising son tragically disabled by mental illness, my struggle with cancer and the acceptance of my own mortality have remained my deepest challenges.

Photography opened a path for unusual and precious friendships and has allowed me to transform the sorrows of history and present.

By Lisa Kanemoto, resident at [Wesley Palms Retirement Community](#)

www.lisakanemoto.com