

# Unbound Spirit: Letters Of Flora Belle Jan - Fleur Yano

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This volume collects the letters written over a thirty-year period by a second generation Chinese American woman, Flora Belle Jan (1906-50). Her writings illuminate the inner life of a sensitive, unconventional, and ambitious woman--an exceptional Chinese American flapper, writer, and journalist.

Born in California to immigrant parents, Jan grew up resisting her parents conservative Chinese values as she internalized American culture. Throughout her relatively short life, she studied literature at Berkeley and the University of Chicago, raised three children with her husband Charles Wang, and worked as a journalist in both the United States and China. Her closest friend, Ludmelia Holstein, a daughter of German immigrants from Russia, was the recipient of the letters collected in this volume.

While living in China, Jan wrote about how her gender and nationality complicated her uneasy adjustment to Chinas foreign yet familiar culture, and she reflected on her roles as a wife, mother, and career woman. Describing encounters with in-laws and servants, marital problems, and competition for newspaper jobs, her letters record her personal struggles in an environment of political turmoil in the 1930s and 40s.

Written during the years 1918-48, these letters offer unique insight into the situation of educated, middle-class, professional Chinese American women in the early twentieth century. Literate, candid, and charming, they convey the intellectual curiosity and perspicacity of a vivacious and ambitious woman while tracing her engagement with two different worlds.

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