



**KIMI GENGO**

# Kimi Gengo

## (1903-1987)

**Writer, educator, activist**

*Kimi Gengo (1903–1987) was a literary pioneer and advocate for Japanese Americans. Born on April 4, 1903 in Holualoa, Hawaii, Kimi attended high school in California before her family moved to Ithaca in the early 1920s. She enrolled at Cornell in 1924, becoming one of the university's earliest female Nisei (second-generation Japanese immigrant) graduates. During her time at Cornell, Kimi published her first verses in *The Columns*, a Cornell literary magazine, and won the Morrison Poetry Prize two years in a row. After briefly working as a stenographer at the Farm Bureau after graduation, she moved to Brooklyn in 1932. In 1933, Kimi published *To One Who Mourns at the Death of the Emperor*, a collection of poetry, verse, and translations that was the second book ever published by a Nisei woman in the United States.*

*In the early 1940s, Kimi became a member of the national board of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association). She used her platform to advocate for racial tolerance, speaking at national conferences about the YWCA's work helping Japanese Americans and African Americans. In the fall of 1943, she published three stories in YWCA's magazine about a Japanese-American girl named Fuji Mae, educating readers about Japanese culture, immigration, and anti-Japanese racism. After the end of World War II, Kimi did not continue her literary career, dedicating herself to social work instead.*

**See Kimi Gengo's 1930 census record at:  
[www.historyforge.net/census/1930/10816](http://www.historyforge.net/census/1930/10816)**

