New Historical Novel Illuminates a Nearly Invisible Chapter of American Immigration

The Japanese of Early Texas

MONTGOMERY, TX, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In 1910, the U.S. Census counted just 340 Japanese residents in the entire state of Texas, a number that grew to only 449 by 1920, even as more than 41,000 Japanese immigrants built lives in California. Among those few hundred souls scattered across the Texas prairie were young women who crossed the Pacific for arranged marriages to men they barely knew, their voices largely lost to history.

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> *Thomas K. Walls, author of The Japanese Texans.*

Where the Bamboo Bends, a new historical novel by Kristin Kagawa Bedford, recovers one of those voices. Told through Kichi Murakami Kagawa's intimate diary entries spanning 1913 to 1919 and inspired by the life of the author's great-grandmother, the novel offers readers something remarkably rare: a firsthand-style account of the Japanese immigrant experience in early-twentieth-century Texas. It provides insights into a community so small it barely registers in the historical record, and one that remains virtually untold in America.

" . . . the most powerful section of Kichi's story was her crossing of the Pacific in steerage. The conditions those women had to endure were horrendous, and both the diary and the author's writing vividly convey the depth of depravity and suffering they were subjected to." —Readers' Favorite, 5-Star Review

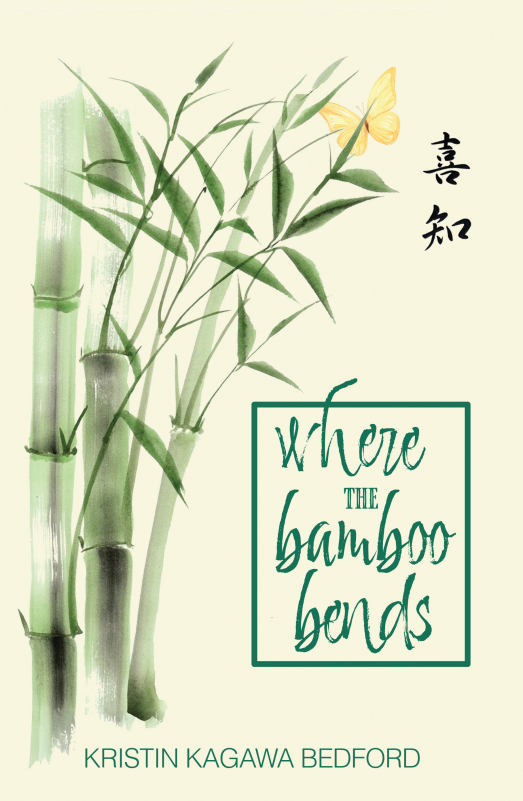
A Family Story, A Forgotten History

Japanese settlement in Texas began in earnest after 1902, when Gulf Coast officials invited Japanese rice farmers to the region. Yet unlike the well-documented Japanese American communities of the West Coast, the Japanese Texans of this era left behind few narratives of their own. Where the Bamboo Bends gives voice to the women of this community, whose interior lives went almost entirely unrecorded. The novel features a foreword by Thomas K. Walls, author of The Japanese Texans, the definitive history of Japanese settlement in the state.

“Mrs. Bedford beautifully tells this story with compassion and with insights that perhaps only a great-granddaughter could summon,” says Walls.

“My great-grandmother crossed an ocean carrying her world in memory, and her quiet endurance shaped every generation of my family that followed. I wrote Where the Bamboo Bends so her voice, and the voices of women like her, could finally be heard,” says Kristin Kagawa Bedford.

Where the Bamboo Bends will release on September 10, 2026, which would have been Kichi Murakami Kagawa’s 130th birthday. Buy direct or from Amazon.



Where the Bamboo Bends by Kristin Kagawa Bedford



Cozy up with 4K Press's *NEW* historical novel

About the Author

Kristin Kagawa Bedford is an award-winning author whose background in journalism shapes her meticulously researched, deeply human storytelling. A Yonsei, or fourth-generation Japanese American, she is a direct descendant of Kichi Murakami Kagawa through her grandfather, Tomiji "Tommy" Kagawa, and grew up hearing fragments of Kichi's story passed down through her family. That space between what was remembered and what was lived became the inspiration for this novel.

Book Details

- Title: Where the Bamboo Bends
- Author: Kristin Kagawa Bedford
- Genre: Historical Fiction
- Publisher: 4K Press
- Publication Date: September 10, 2026

- ISBN: 979-8-9968091-0-3 (paperback); 979-8-9968091-1-0 (ebook)
- Format/Price: $18.99 (paperback); $7.99 (ebook)
- Available at: Amazon.com

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Houston Asian American Archive, Rice University, "History of Japanese Farmers in Texas," citing Thomas K. Walls, The Japanese Texans — over 41,000 Japanese residents in California in 1910 versus 340 in Texas. (haaa.rice.edu/history-japanese-farmers-race)



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