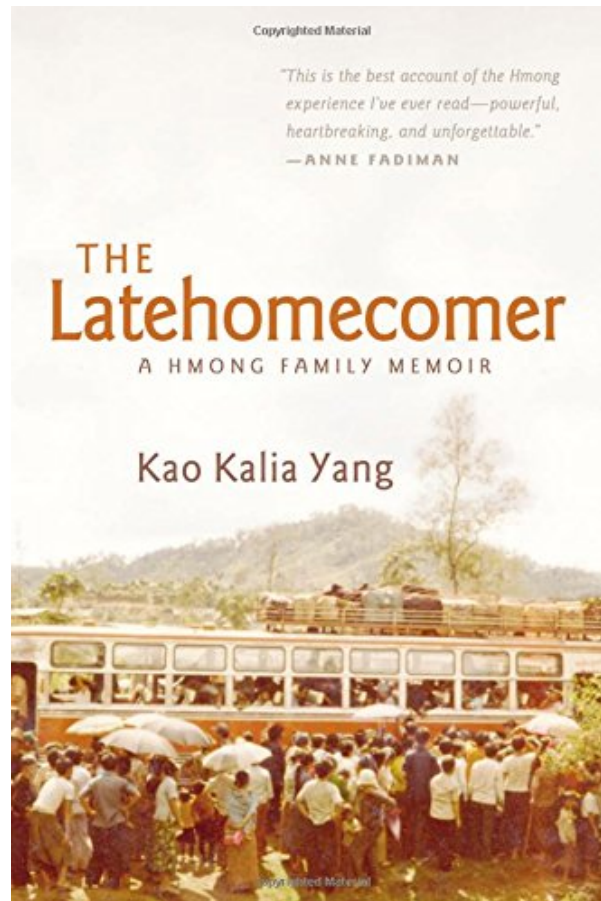


THE LATEHOMECOMER: A HMONG FAMILY MEMOIR BY KAO KALIA YANG



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"This is the best account of the Hmong experience I've ever read—powerful, heartbreaking, and unforgettable."

—ANNE FADIMAN

THE Latehomecomer

A HMONG FAMILY MEMOIR

Kao Kalia Yang



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From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Yang, cofounder of the immigrant-services company Words Wanted, was born in a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand in 1980. Her grandmother had wanted to stay in the camp, to make it easier for her spirit to find its way back to her birthplace when she died, but people knew it would soon be liquidated. America looked promising, so Yang and her family, along with scores of other Hmong, left the jungles of Thailand to fly to California, then settle in St. Paul, Minn. In many ways, these hardworking refugees followed the classic immigrant arc, with the adults working double jobs so the children could get an education and be a credit to the community. But the Hmong immigrants were also unique—coming from a non-Christian, rain forest culture, with no homeland to imagine returning to, with hardly anyone in America knowing anything about them. As Yang wryly notes, they studied the Vietnam War at school, without their lessons ever mentioning that the Hmong had been fighting for the Americans. Yang tells her family's story with grace; she narrates their struggles, beautifully weaving in Hmong folklore and culture. By the end of this moving, unforgettable book, when Yang describes the death of her beloved grandmother, readers will delight at how intimately they have become part of this formerly strange culture. (Apr.)

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From Booklist

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Review

"Passionate and powerful, *The Latecomer* is a tale that highlights the universal pain of immigration, one of leaving home and adapting to new worlds."#8212The Culture Trip

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THE LATEHOMECOMER: A HMONG FAMILY MEMOIR BY KAO KALIA YANG PDF

In search of a place to call home, thousands of Hmong families made the journey from the war-torn jungles of Laos to the overcrowded refugee camps of Thailand and onward to America. But lacking a written language of their own, the Hmong experience has been primarily recorded by others. Driven to tell her family's story after her grandmother's death, *The Latehomecomer* is Kao Kalia Yang's tribute to the remarkable woman whose spirit held them all together. It is also an eloquent, firsthand account of a people who have worked hard to make their voices heard.

Beginning in the 1970s, as the Hmong were being massacred for their collaboration with the United States during the Vietnam War, Yang recounts the harrowing story of her family's captivity, the daring rescue undertaken by her father and uncles, and their narrow escape into Thailand where Yang was born in the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp.

When she was six years old, Yang's family immigrated to America, and she evocatively captures the challenges of adapting to a new place and a new language. Through her words, the dreams, wisdom, and traditions passed down from her grandmother and shared by an entire community have finally found a voice.

Together with her sister, Kao Kalia Yang is the founder of a company dedicated to helping immigrants with writing, translating, and business services. A graduate of Carleton College and Columbia University, Yang has recently screened *The Place Where We Were Born*, a film documenting the experiences of Hmong American refugees. Visit her website at www.kaokaliayang.com.

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Features

- Hmong American
- Family Memoir-Hmong
- Culture

From Publishers Weekly

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America looked promising, so Yang and her family, along with scores of other Hmong, left the jungles of Thailand to fly to California, then settle in St. Paul, Minn. In many ways, these hardworking refugees followed the classic immigrant arc, with the adults working double jobs so the children could get an education and be a credit to the community. But the Hmong immigrants were also unique—coming from a non-Christian, rain forest culture, with no homeland to imagine returning to, with hardly anyone in America knowing anything about them. As Yang wryly notes, they studied the Vietnam War at school, without their lessons ever mentioning that the Hmong had been fighting for the Americans. Yang tells her family's story with grace; she narrates their struggles, beautifully weaving in Hmong folklore and culture. By the end of this moving, unforgettable book, when Yang describes the death of her beloved grandmother, readers will delight at how intimately they have become part of this formerly strange culture. (Apr.)

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Review

"Passionate and powerful, *The Latecomer* is a tale that highlights the universal pain of immigration, one of leaving home and adapting to new worlds."—The Culture Trip

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A very compelling memoir

By Camp Runamok

A very good, very different book for me. The memoir is about her parents and grandmother's journey from their home in Laos to the refugee camps in Thailand, where Yang was born, and finally to Minnesota, where the majority of the Hmong were resettled. And of course it's about her journey as well. The Hmong made the mistake of siding with the US during the Secret and Vietnam wars, which led to a concerted effort by the Pathet Lao and the Vietcong to eradicate the Hmong, once the US left.

The memoir is very well written - very compelling, with very vivid descriptions - much from the view of young child, but blending in the memories of her grandmother and parents. You will get a real appreciation for what it means to be a refugee, and the challenges they face in a new country and culture.

56 of 57 people found the following review helpful.

A Stirring, Poignant, Evocative Masterpiece

By West Wing junkie

I had the privilege of reading a pre-publication manuscript of this book. I cannot recommend it highly enough. Kao Kalia Yang tells the story of her family--which in Hmong culture extends far beyond one's parents and siblings. From the jungles of Laos, where her family lived before she was born, across the treacherous Mekong River, into Thailand's Ban Vinai refugee camp, and ultimately here to the United States, Yang tells us of the alliance her Hmong people made with the US, the dangers they experienced as a result of

America's withdrawal from Southeast Asia, their harrowing flight from the only country they had ever known, and the indignities suffered and hopes and dreams shared while living an uncertain life in a refugee camp. At the center of this unforgettable tale is Yang's grandmother, who struggles to keep her family together in the camp, but must ultimately surrender to the inevitability of their parting. Through Yang and her family we are connected to the challenges, pains, joys, and triumphs of the refugee/immigrant experience and the love and dedication of a family unlike any we have met before, yet as familiar and comfortable as any we are likely to know. We are drawn into Yang's seductive prose, the poignancy of her family's and her own circumstances, and the hope that their suffering, including that of her grandmother, who ultimately comes to America, will somehow be redeemed in this new country that in many ways necessitated their flight from Laos. This irresistible and moving debut--and its author--deserve a wide and appreciative audience.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Better Late Home than never ...

By Coordinator Clive

I read between 30 and 40 books a year and seldom is there one that I do not 'enjoy' but there are times when I 'find' a book which I never want to reach the last page/end. Although originally published in 1998 - I finally came across in April of this year what IS (for me) the most beautiful, eloquently written book I've read so far this year: A 'tale' about the precious gift of life and the unforgettable memories it affords. Constantly tears watered my eyes and my heart ached as turned the pages my 15th book this year. A memoir which I never wanted to end ... but which like 'life' finally does. All I can say is IF YOU have not read The Latehomecomer by Kao Kalia Yang - I urge you to do so ... as this IS a book that 'deserves' more than 5 *****.

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From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Yang, cofounder of the immigrant-services company Words Wanted, was born in a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand in 1980. Her grandmother had wanted to stay in the camp, to make it easier for her spirit to find its way back to her birthplace when she died, but people knew it would soon be liquidated. America looked promising, so Yang and her family, along with scores of other Hmong, left the jungles of Thailand to fly to California, then settle in St. Paul, Minn. In many ways, these hardworking refugees followed the classic immigrant arc, with the adults working double jobs so the children could get an education and be a credit to the community. But the Hmong immigrants were also unique—coming from a non-Christian, rain forest culture, with no homeland to imagine returning to, with hardly anyone in America knowing anything about them. As Yang wryly notes, they studied the Vietnam War at school, without their lessons ever mentioning that the Hmong had been fighting for the Americans. Yang tells her family's story with grace; she narrates their struggles, beautifully weaving in Hmong folklore and culture. By the end of this moving, unforgettable book, when Yang describes the death of her beloved grandmother, readers will delight at how intimately they have become part of this formerly strange culture. (Apr.)

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