

Discussion Questions for *Evergreen* by Naomi Hirahara

1. Aki takes a lot of risks in this book to figure out who killed Mr. Watanabe. Why do you think she pursues this specific case with such determination? Would you have done the same if you were in her shoes, or do you think she was acting recklessly?
2. How do grief and trauma (both collective and personal) affect Aki as she settles back into her new life in California? What about Art?
3. Do you see any parallels between how AAPI people are treated in America today and how they were treated in the years following WWII? How so?
4. Interracial tension plays an omnipresent role in Aki's Los Angeles. A critical housing shortage has created ruthless competition between two dispossessed groups: Japanese Americans, who were forced to abandon their homes during the wartime incarceration, and Black Americans who have arrived in the city in large numbers in the last two decades. How do these two communities' respective difficulties differ, and how do they overlap? What do you think of Aki's attempts to navigate them? In what ways has racism united the Japanese American and Black communities, and in what ways has it pitted them against each other?
5. The *Rafu Shimpo* newspaper, where Art works, has played an important role in disseminating information to a largely Japanese audience for decades. How do you stay informed in your neighborhood and community?
6. Aki has a conversation with a Jewish man as she is looking for a new home for her family. Speaking about his own experience, he says, "Too bad it took the gas chambers for *them* to see that we are also human" (p. 17). And as Aki leaves, he tells her, "I think it's awful what *they* did to you people" (p. 18). Why do you think he uses non-specific "them" and "they" pronouns? Do you think there is still a prevailing us v. them mentality, or has the "them" become more clearly defined in recent years?
7. Japanese residents were forcibly removed from their homes and as a result, had to start their lives over in many ways. Do you support reparations for communities that have been exploited, mistreated, forced to relocate, and even killed? Have any stories about reparations in the news recently caught your eye?
8. From Willie Mae to Babe to Mr. Watanabe, Aki is forced to rethink some of her preconceived notions about people. Which character arcs in the book were you surprised by?

9. Although Aki navigates a lot of hardships in this book, there are also moments of hope. What scenes gave you a sense of hope? What events give you hope in your community today?