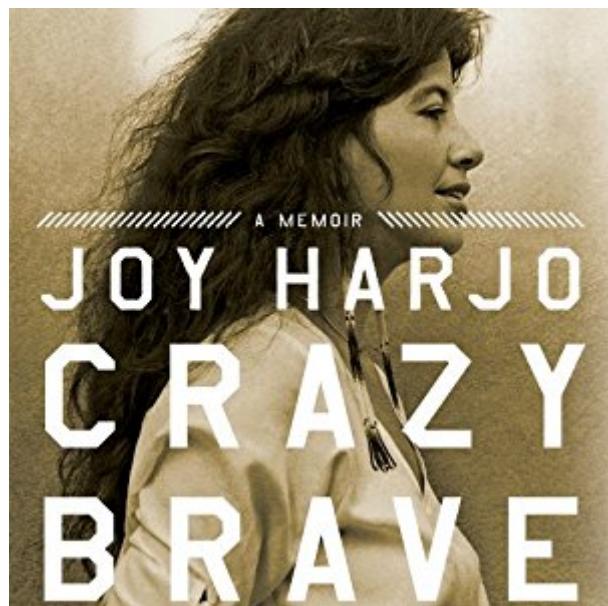


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# Crazy Brave: A Memoir



## **Synopsis**

In this transcendent memoir, grounded in tribal myth and ancestry, music and poetry, Joy Harjo, one of our leading Native American voices, details her journey to becoming a poet. Born in Oklahoma, the end place of the Trail of Tears, Harjo grew up learning to dodge an abusive stepfather by finding shelter in her imagination, a deep spiritual life, and connection with the natural world. She attended an Indian arts boarding school, where she nourished an appreciation for painting, music, and poetry; gave birth while still a teenager; and struggled on her own as a single mother, eventually finding her poetic voice. Narrating the complexities of betrayal and love, *Crazy Brave* is a memoir about family and the breaking apart necessary in finding a voice. Harjo's tale of a hardscrabble youth, young adulthood, and transformation into an award-winning poet and musician is haunting, unique, and visionary.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is a gorgeous, lyrical, gracefully flowing book about the triumph of the human spirit. It is written with the beautiful economy of words I have come to expect from a poet. I highly recommend "Crazy Brave" to everyone who longs to follow inner guidance. Joy's life is a shining example of successfully doing that, even through great hardship. On the personal side, I am so grateful to Joy Harjo for this book. While it is about her life, what she could not know is that her life resonated with my life as well, and explained so much to me of why I am how I am. I too had the knowing, and saw things that were not there. I grew up believing I was just white. My mother was just white. My

deeply-adored yet alcoholic, darker-skinned father was largely gone by the time I was eight or nine, and only there on the weekends before then. He never once mentioned that we were part Cherokee. I only found out in a letter from his older sister, my Aunt Joy, when I was sixteen that we were. I went into a kind of shock that lasted a really long time. I was excited, but at the same time confused as to who I was! It was not until I read Joy Harjo's book that it all came together for me that my mystical strangeness was not only about all my past lives, but also deeply about my ancestral blood. Thank you, Joy Harjo, thank you.

I very much enjoyed reading this beautifully written memoir. It presents honestly and frankly the dangers that young women face in growing to maturity, especially for a woman coming from a troubled family of mixed ethnicity. Joy dives into life, and out of love at times gets herself into dangerous situations which seem to offer no way out, but "a knowing" helps her along her path and she is able to find her way and "release her fear" of change. I'm not Indian, and could be wrong about the "knowing" she speaks of, but to me it seems like an intuitional conscience that is in part ancestors speaking through us, guiding and guarding us. I was greatly moved by the concept of ancestors moving in and around us from reading African literature. People made fun of me if I talked of it because it was not part of my culture, but being married to a Japanese woman has confirmed in me something that is sadly lost in Western culture. Thanks, Joy, for this strong hearted book. I can see a second volume to it maybe in another 5-10 years.

Joy has a beautiful way with words and this book is beautifully written - I couldn't put this down. I enjoyed hearing firsthand about her coming to grips with the choices she was making and then with resistance and struggle, turning her life in the right direction. All humans are guided by a great 'knowing', most do not know how to access or simply choose not to listen. I think Joy brings this to the forefront in her story and it calls to all of us to tune in and make choices in line with our life's journey.

When I can't get home to Oklahoma, Oklahoma comes to me in Florida, usually as powwows. Last weekend it came to Gainesville as Joy Harjo, celebrating publication of her newest "baby" - *Crazy Brave* (which is what Harjo means). I'm a Joy fan anyway, and the July Smithsonian Magazine gave it a rave review, so I ordered it prepublication and had already read it twice when I was fortunate enough to meet her for the first time. It's indescribably magical, soul-touching, and heart-strengthening, as is Joy herself. She jazz-sings her poetic stories like she jazz-sings her

saxophone, reaching backward through tribal and personal history and upward through the stars. She brought *Crazy Brave* and some of her other books and CDs. I came home with an armload to keep company with those treasured ones I already had. I have a new favorite song now, too - on her CD "Native Joy for Real" - "The Had-It-Up-To-Here Round Dance." Heya-hey!

I love this book. Joy Harjo is obviously a gifted writer. I couldn't put this book down and I was amazed by all of the adversity this artist experienced and how she survived to be a loving human being. This book is written with a voice that is deeply rooted in a compassionate vision for this planet and the beings who populate it. I hear that same voice in her music and in her poetry. Obviously the ancestors sing through her and I am grateful that she has shared her prophetic and healing story.

I have been a follower of Joy Harjo for many years. I have her books and CDs. Her wisdom is deep, abundant and true. It is born of experience, pain and survival, though she imparts her truths with insight and clarity. In this memoir, Joy Harjo recalls important aspects of her life. Joy's journey in life has been a difficult one. Being of Native American heritage (though mixed), her experiences are clearly rooted in tradition and spirit. Yet, she has always felt this "knowing". It has been her guide and her saving grace throughout her life. Her ability to trust her inner vision, her "knowing", and this unspoken voice is indeed more than brave. Her example in following this is powerful. I greatly respect the strong ties to nature and the earth found in Native American spirituality. I incorporate many of these beliefs and thoughts, personally. My own heritage is mixed and rough. Unfortunately, I do not know much about this part of my ancestral history. In addition to this brave, lyrical memoir and her poetry, Joy Harjo is a gifted musician. I highly recommend all of her creative and important offerings. She is both inspiring and wise.

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