

Book Review: *A Journey Book: The Compassionate Activist. Transforming the World from Within*, by Lucy Draper-Clarke, PhD

书评：《旅行之书：富有同情心的活动家。从内出发改变世界》，作者：Lucy Draper Clarke博士

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This paper reviews the title: *A Journey Book: The Compassionate Activist. Transforming the World from Within*. By Lucy Draper-Clarke, PhD, Publisher: Portal Works, Printer: NOVUS PRINT, Location: South Africa, Year: 2022, Pages: 183, ISBN 978-0-6397-2341-9, Copyright © Lucy Draper-Clarke, 2022 www.lucydraperclarke.com

This book came out in 2022 as a timely response to the collective trauma created by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The book opened with a personal narrative of receiving the shocking news of Thailand's 2004 tsunami devastation after the author had recently departed from a yoga retreat at that location. She quickly returned to Thailand and worked with the survivors from the yoga retreat and volunteers to set up the North Andaman Tsunami Relief organization. She worked as a storyteller, looked for donors, and helped develop a sense of solidarity while reconstructing the Thai village life. As an introduction, she described many emotions during this time before realizing that the disaster relief she engaged in was actually a form of activism. That is how the idea of this book began to form.

Five years after this experience in Thailand, she began her PhD studies in South Africa to research mindfulness in education at the University of the Witwatersrand, an institution focused on working toward the end of apartheid. During her studies there, she encountered many stories of injustice and a few of joy and compassion. She observed that the students came from a structure where they did not receive what was expected of them: compassion and care. In this new environment, she found within herself the challenge to create joy amid sorrow. A picture by Emma Mary Mills at the end of this rich preface illustrates the challenge as a message of possibility (Picture 1).

The introduction to the book invites readers to join the author on a journey toward compassionate activism. Like a workbook, she shares exercises and practices informed by Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, contemplative science, and evolutionary psychology. The book is structured as a 10-week course combining practice, theory, and personal stories. Many charts and activities throughout the text give the reader a systematic perspective on becoming a compassionate activist while also challenging one's privileges and righteousness.

In chapter 1, "A Call to Stillness," the author investigates the impact of the climate crisis on the human body, and how when the brain gets overwhelmed by all the news arriving continuously at great speed, one may shut down or get enraged by blaming others; both of these responses are unhelpful to the self, others, and the collective field. The author then places an easy-to-understand chart on the window of tolerance



PICTURE 1 | ‘The Compassionate Activist’ by Emma Mary Mills, 2022.

between hyperarousal and hypoarousal, followed by practices of centering and grounding. Continuing further, Draper-Clarke gave an account of coming into the city of Johannesburg and how she found deep traumas that came from transgenerational traumas and systems of oppression, which, within the new pandemic of COVID-19, were a trigger that activated traumas that lived in the bodies of the students she worked with. She describes her realization of how arts-based inquiry, such as rhythmic movement, breath work, and dance, is a path of return to a sense of an ancient “shamanic practice of our forebears” (p. 17). The author suggests meditation practices, engagement practices, and shadow integration work. Clarifying, she said, “The shadow is simply the parts of ourselves that we are unwilling to love” (p. 27). She differentiates apathy or hopelessness from cultivating awareness, which she defines as a form of compassionate activism. Simply she writes, “The call to stillness and silence is as important as the call to action” (p. 18).

In chapter 2, “Circles of Safety,” the author describes how our autonomic nervous system is a natural inner protector in constant search for danger. To return to the present and not assume the past will repeat, the author guides the reader in contemplative practice to perceive the present moment by bringing awareness to the breath and how one might resensitize to its flow and possible soothing rhythm. Once the inner world is perceived, Draper-Clarke invites the readers to explore how to engage with others. In this engagement, she named six possibilities as circles of safety: feeling safe with others, feeling safe alone, feeling safe with homogenous groups, feeling safe with diverse groups, feeling secure in threatening environments, and being a safe person for others. After that, the author balances the reading with a soothing exercise in accepting

any feelings that might arise and speaking gently to them: “It’s ok” (p. 34). The concept of these exercises was to know more about oneself and cultivate a sense of safety within the self so that one could provide safety for others. The author describes each emotion as information that could transform into strength and wisdom when listened to, or it could remain an obstacle when ignored. She suggests the method of listening and transforming one’s emotions by using the acronym RAIN, derived from the work of Tara Brach as (recognizing, allowing, intimately attending, nurturing). She closes this chapter by defining forgiveness as a practice of releasing disturbing emotions.

Chapter 3, “Ways to Engage,” describes a range of possibilities of how one could engage with the world in small ways through different stages in one’s life. The author challenges the image of activism as an extrovert marching to protest an issue that needs to change. By showing how introverts can feel engaged in activism, the author offers different compassionate paths for action, such as giving a 10% donation of one’s time or income. The reader guides the reader to contemplate what archetypal role fit through the Deepa Iyer ecosystem of weavers, experimenters, frontline responders, visionaries, builders, guides, storytellers, healers, disruptors, and caregivers. These archetypes show ways in which one may already naturally engage. Draper-Clarke defines activism as non-violent communication by using Marshall Rosenberg’s 4-step process: observing without judgment what is being communicated, checking and identifying own feelings, checking one’s own needs, and making a reasonable request.

Chapter 4, “Our Indestructible Essence,” explains one’s positive qualities as precisely that. She invites the reader to listen to one’s positive and wholesome emotions while surrounding these growing inner positive qualities with support. With that in mind, the author suggests that the reader find one’s inner quality and wholesome thoughts while working with a partner. Using the metaphor of the small mind as a toddler in the kitchen, Draper-Clarke is able to illustrate how the mind must be guided into a safe and creative expression, or it can hurt itself with dangerous instruments such as sharp knives or a hot oven. By focusing on positive wholesome thoughts, one can get out of longing for an imagined future or regretful present but can remain in the vast mind that expands generations of love and compassion.

Chapter 5, “Activist’s Achilles,” is about the primary objective of doing no harm. Draper-Clarke explains that this straightforward intention is not so easily performed due to unconscious bias, prejudices, and habitual tendencies that are hidden within each person’s shadow. In this chapter, the author guides the reader in investigating where these goodwill intentions came from, where sometimes, this potentially innocent motivation could be harboring archetypes that blocked the first objective of doing no harm. Here are some named unconscious examples: “the wounded healer, the burnout martyr, the controlling founder, the white savior, the razing firebrand, the othering activist” (p. 71). By going into these archetypes and exploring the shadow of each motivation, the author also shares her journey and, in the process, offers a model of how to face these shadows.

Chapter 6, “The Activist Archetype,” is about the activist as a spiritual warrior transcending personal barriers and reaching toward compassion for all living beings, such as in the bodhisattva. “A bodhisattva embodies the evolution of humanity, from

violence to wisdom, from cruelty to care, and from oppression to social justice” (p. 88). Therefore, Draper-Clarke offers a path when working with ignorance to ask oneself to return to own “thoughts, feelings, and physical sensation” (p. 89). After telling the story of Green Tara, the author offers the practice of prayer and engagement in three different archetypal roles: “the monarch, the ferry driver and the shepherd” (p. 94). The chapter then provides instructions for the reader to write ten aspirational commitments as a way to have a compass for one’s intentions and practices, such as “May I remain light hearted” (p. 96).

In Chapter 7, “Enlightened Self-Interest,” Draper-Clarke names the four immeasurable qualities: love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. She gives examples of how to offer these qualities with the following phrases: “May you be happy, may you be free from suffering, may you find joy, may you be at ease” (pp. 100–101). This chapter had exercises to use these elements in contemplative practices, personal engagement, and in offering support to others on a large or small scale. The idea is that these practices eventually could feel more accessible and flow toward self, toward the issues at hand, and toward helping others along the way. She advises the compassionate activist not to rush but to allow what is essential, such as the immeasurable qualities, and to stay focused.

Chapter 8, “A Life Purpose,” combines Martha Graham’s words as a dancer and choreographer, followed by Ikigai’s theoretical framework, to guide readers to investigate their shadows and passions, intending to find and clarify their calling. In the next chapter, she focuses on “self-care” as an antidote for burnout. She guides the reader to write resources for one’s needs while considering one’s environment and community through a 1000-year vision, or seven generations. This approach to self-care could create a longitudinal goal, where the vision one found could inspire the next generation to keep going. This chapter includes a workshop on listening while being attentive to own feelings and physical sensations, celebrating the moment in relationship to the past and future as well as keeping one’s vision with a sustainable and sustaining engagement practice.

Chapter 10, “Joy of Insurrection,” begins by stating that joy is manifested when in service of others. Through empathic resonance, one could connect with the pain in others, but it could also cause vicarious trauma and disrupt one’s capacity to work. Draper-Clarke makes her case for workshoping caring through joy by differentiating empathic fatigue from compassion fatigue. In her words, “compassion can be cultivated if we are aware of others and emotionally regulated” (p. 135). Through the practice of tonglen meditation and using joy as a practice, the author guides the reader to a broader perspective of pain where it could be no longer a personal issue but one of the “human predicament” (p. 137). She encourages joyful activism as a path for change by appreciating others and interrupting injustice through focusing on awareness, compassion, and engagement. She offers a way of engagement by inviting six friends to address issues present in the community; this way, together, she believes that sorrow could be transformed into joy by facing “despair head-on” (p. 142). Therefore, one could find the motivation for joyful activism by meditating with one’s heart.

Moving forward, mindfulness with heartfulness could avoid a self-centered intention, and promote insightful activism by engaging with compassion for all suffering, including oneself. Therefore, by acknowledging interdependency, one could be aware of own shadow and bias and hold intergenerational mindfulness. Draper-Clarke also reminds her readers to be ready for conflict: “Conflict is not to be feared or avoided, but understood with compassion and curiosity, for it is usually in moments of disagreement or disruption that new insights and ideas emerge” (p. 150). She finishes the book reminding readers to be creative while working with the community, using simple rules that could facilitate a beautiful dance, like a choreographer. The book’s journey ends, but it launches the reader into a life of possible compassionate activism.

About the Author

Giselle Ruzany is a Brazilian-American artist, choreographer, and psychotherapist. She has worked for the last 12 years at the George Washington Corcoran School of Arts and Design Theater and Dance Department and as a licensed professional counselor in private practice for the last 20 years, presently with an office in Washington, DC. She has a master’s in Somatic Psychology with a concentration in Dance/Movement Therapy from Naropa University, advanced post-graduate certifications in Gestalt Therapy and EMDR, and a Ph.D. in Expressive Arts Therapy from Lesley University. She works through embodied movement research and is interested in how the somatic world informs psychology and dance. She is a published writer who has presented workshops and performed dance works worldwide. Giselle is grateful to have had the opportunity to review this book.