

**Radical Revisions of the Spiritual Life**  
A Review of *Spiritually Incorrect* and *Instinct for Freedom*

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Beloved, gaze in thine own heart," Yeats advised. "The holy tree is growing there." Yet many seekers of spiritual growth seem—as another poet, Pamela Sneed, would say more afraid of freedom than of slavery. We yield our power to glamorous, sometimes unscrupulous authority figures or invest big bucks in the promise of Enlightenment Made Easy or search for a spiritual family to lavish us with the love we desperately crave. Now controversial author... Alan Clements reveals [his] own longings and crises of the soul while challenging Americans to wake up and grow up.

A man of distinction and paradox, Alan Clements was the first American to become a Buddhist monk in Burma. His new book, *Instinct for Freedom: Finding Liberation Through Living*, is a journey into his spiritual life, with sections on witnessing the oppression and genocide in both Burma and the former Yugoslavia.

Today, having left the monastic life behind, he no longer defines himself a Buddhist, he says. "I'm a lover of freedom. Just open the window and see the face of life unfiltered! We don't need anyone telling us the meaning of beauty."

Clements totally rejects the guru and enlightenment models. "They are anachronistic paradigms out of Asia, mostly about selling lies for profit and fame...and book sales, too, of course. Hard to be enlightened in America today without a best seller and a good publicist."

When his own book tour brought him to New York, he pressed his iconoclastic message into an Open Center talk and workshop. But his spoken-word performance *Spiritually Incorrect* remains his preferred method of insurrection, melding socio-political views, anarchistic spirituality, and a personal rawness that can be felt across a room. Aspiring to the lofty company of Lenny Bruce, Noam Chomsky, and Alan Watts, Clements says he uses his improvisational performances to "question the systems that birthed me and challenge my own conformity to those comfortable little lies that tell me who I am supposed to be."

*Spiritually Incorrect* is also "my way of saying how hard it is to be true to yourself, especially in a world addicted to conformity, where success is often defined by how well one sells their discomfort and is able to convince others it's freedom. One must be vigilant against all forms of propaganda, political, spiritual, religious, or otherwise."

"Authenticity trumps happiness—you know, that thing that Americans feverishly pursue. We have to have a healthy respect for remorse, guilt, shame, worry, judgment and anxiety," Clements asserts.

"To be awoken in today's world is pretty maddening simply by function of having your eyes open. And if you open your heart as well, its tantamount to a daily dose of existential

terror.

“But these are signs of health, to me. We must learn to love them...allow them to stay and see them as the emergence of compassion itself.”

To excerpt “Instinct for Freedom” or “The Voice of Hope”  
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Additional books by Alan Clements  
The Voice of Hope - Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi,  
Burma's imprisoned Nobel peace laureate (Seven Stories, NY).