

Wisdom of the ages culled for the future

A father's attempt to enlighten his daughter serves as a template for a better tomorrow



A FUTURE TO BELIEVE IN
108

Reflections on the Art and Activism of Freedom

By **Alan Clements**

World Dharma Publications, 262 pages, \$24.95

TRACY SHERLOCK
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Vancouver author Alan Clements wrote *A Future To Believe In* for his daughter, Sahra, who is five. Clements, 61, wanted to leave her with some of the knowledge available today.

He started gathering what he calls "transformational intelligence," quotes and ideas from artists, activists, authors and leaders from around the world, just after Sahra's birth.

He searched the Internet on various topics, wrote down and commented on what he found and the result was a mammoth 3,000-page collection of wisdom. He distilled it down into a 262-page book that includes 108 reflections on freedom.

Clements said the book is meant to be a timeless handbook, that really speaks to the era's greatest minds. It's meant to be a collection of values that can be read a page, a reflection or even a quote at a time, he said.

"I wanted to create a synergy and use the Internet and the instantaneous access to the global mind and see where it took me," Clements said. "I just entered the great infinity of historical consciousness and past and present time realities and I've learned a lot in the process."

He says he also wrote the book for Aung San Suu Kyi, who he calls a spiritual friend.

Clements spent nearly a decade living in Myanmar as a Buddhist monk. He met Suu Kyi in 1996 and was inspired to write a book, *The Voice of Hope*, based on his conversations with her.

"As long as my people are not free," Clements quotes Suu Kyi as saying, "none of us are free. Freedom is indivisible. Either we are all free together or we are unfree together."

Freedom is a central theme of



Alan Clements's daughter Sahra served as the inspiration for his latest book.

A Future To Believe In. Here's an example of the writings Clements has gathered, from the 37th chapter Original Existence.

The three-page chapter begins with a quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Either you think — or else others have to think for you and take power from you, pervert and discipline your natural tastes, civilize and sterilize you." From there, Clements writes about challenging assumptions to find the truth, living your dreams while caring for the freedom of others. "Find your zero gravity, your weightlessness, your most free flowing sense of freedom, and imagine: there is nothing that you cannot do."

This is the chapter Clements says he most wants his daughter to read.

"I'd love that girl's mind to dream, so No. 37 is the one I'd most want her to read," Clements said. "I want her to know that whatever original idea that you have, you should play it against the edge of how does it affect others. How do your decisions impact others? How do your spending habits impact

others?"

How do your choices of dreams impact the future of your children's children?

"What would it be like to feel the existence of 50 generations from now, rather than just numbing out and thinking it was just a rhetorical question?"

Clements said after his daughter was born he was struck by the fact that he was responsible for the creation of his daughter's existence. "As time goes on I have to pinch myself because I don't know that it's appropriate to be this deeply in love," Clements said that seeing beyond the child-parent relationship is today's spiritual imperative.

"If President Obama and Prime Minister Harper could see the innocent civilians in Afghanistan or Iraq or in the Downtown Eastside, as sister, brother, son or daughter, I don't think they would be behaving the way they are."

He said the Internet made his research possible, and it's also changing our notion of "now."

"The world is infinitely now, at the same time that now is obsolete from a new future,"

Clements said. "Today's vision is going to be tomorrow's normalcy."

"We need a Magellan, a Galileo, a Bruno, who burned at the stake for saying the universe was infinite. What are we willing to literally burn for? Not my freedom alone, but the freedom of the future. Unless we set sail into new forms of thinking and feeling, there's no hope and my daughter will have no hope."

For more musings along these lines, check out *A Future To Believe In*. Clements is also the author of several other books and is co-founder and director of The Burma Project USA and the World Dharma Online Institute.

Clements has two events coming up. First, a public presentation and book signing at Banyen Books (3608 West Fourth Ave.) on March 29 at 6:30 p.m. (free and open to the public) and a companion video course based on the book with date to be announced. Details and registration from March 24 at www.AlanClements.com.

Sun Books Editor
tsherlock@vancouver.sun.com