

**An Interview with Alan Clements by Mandy Nolan  
Entertainment Editor Byron Echo, Byron Bay, Australia  
May 2018**

**Alan Clements Uncensored Spiritually Incorrect  
FRIDAY MAY 25 – 7:30 PM ONE SHOW ONLY  
THE BYRON THEATRE, Byron Bay**

**Mandy Nolan:** What does it mean to be spiritually incorrect? Do you think all the great spiritual leaders probably would be deemed incorrect?

**Alan Clements:** To me, spiritual incorrectness is not a dogma – a thing. It's a way of being, free – a courageous act of conscience, a liberated personal choice of shameless authenticity. It's also having the bravery to resist servitude, conformity, and collusion – and all manner of *numbing down*. Why contort ourselves into an image of Anything – God, Yoga, Oprah? Why subjugate our voice to sing in the choir of *ism*? Spiritual incorrectness is not a practice, it's who we are when we own our flawed human wholeness.

As for great spiritual leaders? Remember the Monty Python comedy, *Life of Brian*, when the crowd gathered and chanted to Jesus, “Speak to us. Show us the way, Messiah.” And Jesus responds, “You've got it all wrong. Don't follow me. Don't follow anyone.” And they chant back, “Tell us how. Show us the way.” And Jesus shouts back, “ No! Nobody can show you the way. You've got to work it out for yourselves.”

A very spiritual moment, don't you think? Jesus must have been Buddhist.

**MN:** Who sets the standards? I take it there's no regulatory body?

**AC:** The New Testament of spiritual correctness today is pretty much determined by what sells and market share. The commercialization of consciousness is big business. Meditation is the new Prozac. And mindfulness is the panacea for pretty much everything, from guiding drone attacks in Afghanistan, to the performance enhancing drug of choice for the likes of Google, Facebook, and Goldman Sachs and almost every other climate killing corporation on the Fortune 500. Even compassion has become a cash cow.

Who sets the standards? CEOs, publishers, agents, publicists, and even ghost writers for wanna-be spiritual authorities hoping to translate their India experiences into best sellers. Corporations and their clogs determine who gets known and who doesn't, what gets published and what doesn't, what's authentic spirituality and what's not, what's true and worthy of notice and what isn't. They control fame and fortune.

And the regulatory body is determined mostly by profits, driven by mind share, essentially how many followers you have on social media, that like, love, share, tag and tweet you. It's about the analytics of attention. It's about commerce. Now that they are multi-millionaires, imagine if Tony Robbins, Oprah, and Eckhart offered their gigs on a voluntary contribution basis? It's about what the market can bear. It's about capitalism. It's about money (and power too). It's about greed (cloaked by altruism).

**MN:** Can you give me an example of maybe what it means to be spiritually correct?

**AC:** I was just in Melbourne where the infamous Archbishop George Pell will stand trial for his decades of “historical sexual violence,” mostly to children. Horrendous acts of cruelty in the

name of God. Mind you, Pell is just one among 3,000 or more other Catholic priests accused of predatory sexual violence. An example of spiritual correctness would be for Pope Francis to break lock step with his complicity with pedophilia and close all Catholic Churches, worldwide, declaring: “Something is gravely wrong in our understanding of the Holy Spirit. Our priests have failed their mission and will undergo a mandatory period of soul searching, before offering others a place of safety to commune with the Sacred.”

No joke intended. I'd suggest that all 3,000 priests come to Byron and enter into a long term meditation retreat, interspersed with MDMA psychotherapist-assisted trauma release work. That concludes with a heroic dose of Ayahuasca facilitated by a circle of the most enlightened Mothers in the Shire. Give those priests a chance at redemption by awakening their divine feminine and return honor to their devilish souls. Otherwise, chemical castration.

Oddly, pointing this out is so spiritually incorrect that it's almost criminal. But imagine if 5 percent of all teachers at Waldorf Schools were accused of sexual violence towards their students? Then what? I'm reminded of R.D. Laing's famous words, “Insanity is a perfectly rational adjustment to an insane world.” And we wonder why so many people turn to anti-depressants as their savior?

**MN:** What is the most spiritually incorrect thing you have ever done?

**AC:** Ironically, after years of not smoking anything, from the day I entered the monastery in Burma and ordained as a Buddhist monk, I started smoking opium-laced Burmese cigars. Why? It was all I could do to survive – going cold turkey after a two year cocaine, alcohol and pharmaceutical drug addiction in LA, where I had been living. I did my last line of coke five minutes before I ordained.

The list goes on. I'll save the best – most spiritually incorrect stories for my show.

**MN:** Do you ever feel dirty? Get a sense of guilt?

**AC:** For God's sake, I choose to be celibate for four years as a monk, during prime time, no less, from age 28 to 32. And this was a when many of my contemporaries – most of Byron at the time – where off with Osho at the Ranch getting enlightened through sacred sex. But guilt? Not really. Occasionally, I do find myself slightly annoyed that I didn't profit from my meditative background – enough so to buy a nice homestead here in Byron to hopefully avoid the collapse of industrial civilization over the coming years.

**MN:** Sexuality has turned into a 3 day non orgasming marathon of spiritual engagement – are we making sex too complicated?

**AC:** Indeed. And who among us can tell another of the 'right way' or the “spiritually correct” way to Be. No two of us will hold hands in the same way, or kiss or make love in the same way. Who can tell us that an orgasm or a sustained non-orgasm is better? Should it be transpersonal or personal? Should it be Buddhist or Jewish? Should it be self-involved or should it be absent of self? Should I worry about mine, or my lack of one, or should I see myself as natural? Should I be thinking during orgasm or should a real one take me beyond thought? Am I being spiritual when I restrain having an orgasm or am I avoiding my higher self? The ways in which we discriminate between this or that are endless. Seeking perfection is a full-time job, and a thankless one. You will always be graded by a lie: your own unwillingness to be you — human. Perfect has to be reinvented every moment.

**MN:** What's your favorite Noam Chomsky quote? What about Lenny Bruce?

**AC:** I wrote a book based on one of Chomsky's quotes. It's titled, *Instinct for Freedom*. He says, "If you assume that there is no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom, that there are opportunities to change things, then there is a possibility that you can contribute to making a better world." For those interested, I'd be happy to send a digital copy of my book to anyone who emails me after attending my show.

As for Lenny Bruce, there are many, but one stands out "If Jesus had been killed twenty years ago, Catholic school children would be wearing little electric chairs around their necks instead of crosses." And if killed today, with lethal injection, imagine Catholics wearing syringes around their necks? Or with the Trump in the White House, the next generation, post extinction, may be wearing miniature nuclear bombs.

**MN:** Is being spiritual about mindfulness, multiple orgasms and vegan food? Why don't we associate engagement with our world and issues around social justice and the environment as 'spiritual'?

**AC:** People, by and large, need to feel some sense of meaning from the choices they make. Meditation, yoga, veganism, low-dosing, therapy, Qigong, buying local, chanting and singing and dancing and walking the beach, are all beautiful. But to include the issues you mentioned, in a courageous and realistic way, is to face an existential crisis: we're on the brink of self-annihilation through nuclear war, irreversible atmospheric warming, habitat loss and food production. The question then becomes, what does it mean to be spiritual when the odds of human survival are close to nil? My show addresses these issues head on. I do not offer answers but I do encourage laughter and tears and howls along with a deep and sustained existential cathartic release.

Frankly, I feel as Gandhi felt when he said, "If I didn't have a sense of humor I would have committed suicide long ago." And that was nearly 100 years ago, when the world population was less than 2 billion, and of course, long before nuclear weapons, etc etc.

**MN:** We have a cult around this area at the moment which surprises many because how many 'intelligent' people are so easily indoctrinated. Why is it so easy to indoctrinate people to belief systems? Is critical thinking without a doctrine really that hard?

**AC:** My friend, the anti-nuclear activist Dr. Helen Caldicott, gives us the answer in her new book, *Sleep Walking to Armageddon*. The title says it all. Denial is a psychological opiod. It numbs conscience. The pressures to deny reality and belong to the cult of quo are so high today that to break the trance of consumer fetishism – escaping life in the hunger-tunnel of my lifestyle – is to risk becoming aware of just how programmed we are. This is why I have often said that stress and anxiety are good news. It means that you are fed up and can't take anymore. It's the soul's cry to come home to your heart, embrace your voice, own your soul, and follow your instinct for freedom.

But let us not give up, regardless. Let us remember great acts of courage and conscience. I have a photo on my wall at home of Giordano Bruno, the 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian astronomer and philosopher, who was burned at the stake by the Church for refusing to recant his findings that the universe was infinite, and to affirm that the Church's box-shaped world was Absolute Truth. For seven years they tortured him and for seven years he resisted.

**MN:** Why do we have this sense do you think of being ‘unfillable? Whether its yoga, or shopping... it seems like we are all trying to fill the gaping quarry of our hearts...why do humans struggle to understand what makes them feel ‘connected’?

**AC:** Sometimes when I am meditating or doing yoga I break from my mindfulness and dissociate a bit from the trance of being present and try to imagine a future when us spiritual beings wake up to the fact that the dopamine pump in the palm of our hands is actually making us dumb, disconnected, and fatally sick.

**MN:** Does anyone ever get upset about what you say? People don’t like having their cages rocked...

**AC:** Part sermon, part stand up, part improvisational theater, part dharma talk, and very psychedelic, my shows are a soul cleansing. They are a safe environment to reveal to ourselves both our darkest most sacred secrets and a chance to re-enchanted our wildest dreams. In so doing, I take aim at my own life, not others. I am my own voodoo doll. But projection and blame are to be expected, especially among such a highly developed spiritual audience as we will have here in Byron. So when I feel judged, I will try my very best to take it on - access my repressed inner Christian - and remember the words of our beloved Jesus, when he said, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Somebody has to do the dirty work.

**MN:** What should we expect on the night?

**AC:** I first came to Byron in 1982 and led a meditation retreat at Bodhi Farm, after being thrown out of my beloved Burma as a Buddhist monk by the dictatorship, with no reason given. The place and the people blew my mind and opened my heart. Back at least 30 times since '82, I have grown more in love with the place (no place like it on earth) and adoring of the many close friendships I've developed. We've grown together – celebrated life's beauties and cried over her horrors. I hope both my friends and people new to my life will come out to rejoice in the true, the good and beautiful, and laugh at the rest with a night of comedic satire. And stay for the after party too. Namaste.

"Blend Noam Chomsky, Lenny Bruce, and Terrence McKenna and you get Alan Clements, the most spiritually astute humorist in America today." Jon Woodhouse, Entertainment writer, Maui News

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**BUY TICKETS ONLINE [www.byroncentre.com.au](http://www.byroncentre.com.au)**

**OR PHONE the Box Office: 6685 6807**

**Byron Theatre, 69 Jonson Street, Byron Bay**

**Byron Theatre box office open 10 am-1:30 pm Monday – Friday**