

## P R E F A C E

This is a book about joy. Thus, I must first acknowledge my positionality, and not just as a privileged White, male, heterosexual, cis-gendered academic from the United States. For a study of joy I must also confess that I have strong affinities with the famous tail-less one, the joyless Eeyore from the Winnie the Pooh tales.

“Good morning, Pooh Bear,” said Eeyore gloomily. “If it is a good morning,” he said. “Which I doubt,” said he.

“Why, what’s the matter?”

“Nothing, Pooh Bear, nothing. We can’t all, and some of us don’t. That’s all there is to it.”

“Can’t all what?” said Pooh, rubbing his nose.

“Gaiety. Song-and-dance. Here we go round the mulberry bush.”

Yes, I am one who frequently dwells in “Eeyore’s Gloomy Place: Rather Boggy and Sad,” or at least I have for most of my adult life. I tend to wear my personal tragedies on my sleeve and focus my energies on the tragic and the macabre, like many human rights folks. I am quite a surprising choice to write a book on joy, as my friends and family have often reminded me. While I might be beyond redemption, I hope this work will encourage others, especially my students, to avoid the “Gloomy Place” and explore a new joyful landscape of human rights. From this place of great beauty, they will find enormous energy to counter those “boggy and sad” forces that sap our positive energy, loving-kindness, and sympathetic joy.

My positionality also thankfully does not include immediate incidents of extreme violence and victimhood. I live in a relatively stable country, and as musician Pete Townshend wrote years ago, “I’ve known no war.” Like many academics, I write of human rights from something of a detached position.

Looking at human rights through the fresh lens of joy has proven to be fascinating and illuminating. I had traversed the human rights landscape as a scholar, teacher, consultant, and activist for a quarter century and now I see my fellow workers, students, and human rights education in a new light. Seeing how discussions of joy resonate with survivors, scholars, and practitioners, I now hope this work has such an effect on its readers. More than that, I hope it opens up new vistas in human rights; that it causes a disruption in current human rights thinking and practice and leads us to explore the foundations of human rights afresh. Such a disruption in conventional thinking is not without controversy. Many colleagues have viscerally opposed my considerations of joyful perpetrators, joyful martyrs, and human rights winners. Such explorations radically challenge sacred cows in established fields as do several other parts of the book.

This was not necessarily always a joyful book to write. Human rights is sobering. Wading through works on the Holocaust, the Rape of Nanjing, torture, sexual violence, and suicide bombers is not particularly joyful. Sitting through Joshua Oppenheimer's shocking documentaries about the mass killings in Indonesia during the mid-1960s does not elicit joy, instead they overwhelm in a horrifying manner. Writing, teaching, and being active in human rights requires engaging in tragedy; and working as an activist, I have sometimes felt like a fraud while writing this book. How can I write about joy and human rights when friends are facing prison time for their activism, when others are facing threats from despotic governments, when the Syrian humanitarian crisis grinds into another year, when millions of sub-Saharan Africans are on the move and extremely vulnerable, when thousands of migrant children from Central America are warehoused in my home state of Arizona, when large swaths of neighboring Mexico are aflame in an endless "war on drugs," when racism, misogyny, Islamophobia, and xenophobia are rampant in the United States, when transgender women of color are killed in large numbers?

During the times of self-doubt, I have found sustenance in human rights activists and scholars who assured me this was an important project. So many practitioners and survivors shared their own tales of the importance of joy in their human rights journey. Most of the new guard of human rights scholars shared my enthusiasm for the project. The old guard, alas, often did not know what to make of what one paternalistically, and with the requisite placing of his hand on my shoulder, called "such a unique project." The excitement for the project sustained me, and pushed me into new frontiers as did the old

guard's reticence to even countenance the idea. They spurred me to show that it was a topic worthy of study.

One of the easiest critiques to make of a book on joy is that it is not very joyful to read (e.g. Minzesheimer 2007). I have tried to balance theoretical rigor and firsthand accounts, as well as walk the fine line between lively prose that provokes and glibness that trivializes. My humble wish for this book and for human rights workers and victims in general, parallels that of the Hopi clowns: "When the clowns leave the kiva on their way to the plaza the last request by each is a prayer something to the effect, 'If it be so, may I gain at least one smile'" (Sekaquaptewa 1980, 211).

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