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YOGA FOR MENTAL HEALTH + THE JOURNEY FROM CLARITY TO EMBODIED RESILIENCE + 7 KEYS TO A SUCCESS MINDSET + MOTHER AND SON'S CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE + PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS + TRANSPOSITION TO TURN YOUR LIFE RIGHT-SIDE-UP AGAIN + ACTIVEWEAR BY EBURU EVRIM

The journey from **Clarity** *to Embodied* **Resilience**

Words: Melanie C. Klein

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Photo Credit- Diana Feil



It was in a dingy college sociology classroom in 1994 that I first committed my life to exposing and declaring the truth. In this moment I was absolutely certain and compelled to move in a clear direction without question or hesitation. I made a silent declaration inside myself to seek and speak the truth to the best of my ability. I made a promise that I would share my truth without shame or guilt and I committed to sharing the tender, dark, beautiful yet sometimes painful journeys of others who'd healed their wounds and overcome the limited expectations projected onto them.

After working as a professor of Sociology and Gender/ Women's Studies for seven years, I began taking the experience and study of social justice and liberatory work I'd engaged in since that powerful day in 1994 to emerging online wellness and spiritual spaces through my writing and commentary. Very quickly, it became depressingly clear that "spirituality" lacked a sense of critical consciousness.

Oh, the resistance and backlash!

Spiritual bypassing and a general "leave it up the universe" way of thinking made many privileged people feel exempt from concerning themselves or taking action on issues of injustice, as online engagement with and dismissive comments on several of my articles on

yoga, body image and feminism to the sexualization and objectification of women made clear. It was apparent that for many people, their spirituality allowed them to opt out of social action and consciously creating social change. Mostly, it was obvious that writing about existing systems of oppressions and the intersectional -isms popped the feel-good positive-vibes-only bubble of a lot of online "spiritual," "wellness" and "yoga" people at the time.

Upon meeting Anna Guest-Jelley online in 2010, I experienced the second of what would become increasingly frequent clear and doubtless moments leading to compelled and unquestioned action.

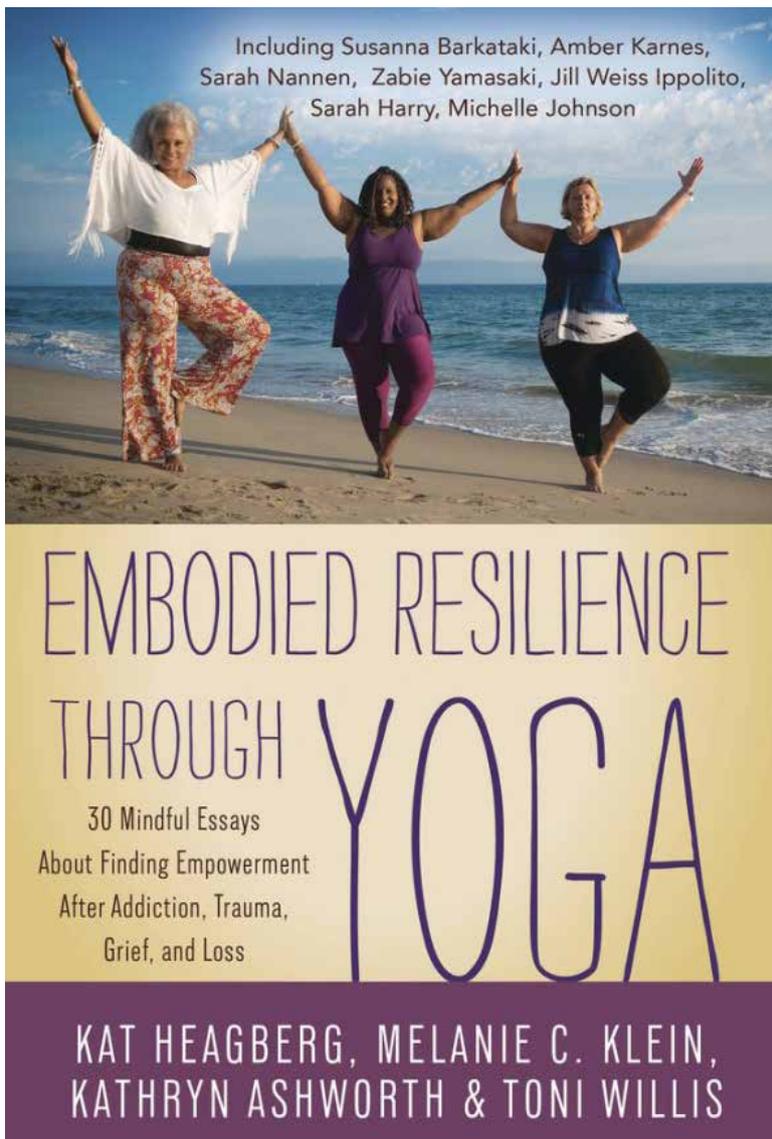
There weren't a lot of people writing publicly about the intersection of spirituality and social justice at that time. When I ran across Anna's article, "Welcoming the Curvy Yogini" on the same platform

Using the hashtag #whatayogilookslike, we offered examples of everyday yogis without stylists, professional make-up and hair artists practicing yoga in every body in every way imaginable.

I'd been writing for, I knew I'd met a kindred spirit. After our first phone conversation, the electricity between us from Los Angeles to Nashville was palpable and I was struck by the idea of writing a book together... and she was on board! That vague vision for a book eventually became compiling an intersectional anthology on yoga and body image.

Neither of us had been published before or even had an agent, but the vision was so clear that I didn't remotely doubt the two of us bringing it to fruition. Step-by-step, we were drawn forward by the clarity and certainty of this call to create. As with that initial moment in 1994, I was compelled and absolutely driven to serve this call even when I felt tired, drained and overwhelmed from teaching a full load of university classes and caring for my toddler son, and began curating and editing this collection of 25 writers with Anna. *Yoga and Body Image: 25 Personal Stories About Beauty, Bravery & Loving Your Body* was demanding space to make its way into the world and into reader's hands.

Yoga and Body Image, an award-winning collection of stories, was published the same year I co-founded the Yoga & Body Image Coalition, a community platform devoted to aggregating and amplifying the increasing number of activists, yoga and meditation practitioners and teachers



that were doing deep and meaningful work around the world, often in isolation and with little community support or solidarity.

As much as *Yoga and Body Image* centered on the transformational and healing aspects of a committed yoga and meditation practice for each contributor's body image and body relationship, it also confronted and challenged the more toxic aspects of yoga culture and the yoga industrial complex.

The coalition was the action arm of the book's themes, meant to disrupt the dominant representation of the "yoga body," yoga practice, accessibility and the homogenous status quo as well as create community and shine a light on those not landing on the covers of yoga magazines.

Using the hashtag #whatayogilookslike, we offered examples of everyday yogis without

stylists, professional make-up and hair artists practicing yoga in every body in every way imaginable, not just in lithe, white, young, able-bodied, cisgendered, toned bodies in bikinis on beaches, the emerging and overwhelming industry standard at the time.

Our next book, *Yoga Rising: 30 Empowering Stories from Yoga Renegades for Every Body* was released in early 2018. It focused on how fearless yoga renegades from every background harnessed and used their newfound sense of personal acceptance and peace to become agents of change.

After nearly 10 years of working with writers and tending to their heartfelt stories, I vowed I was taking a break after *Yoga Rising's* manuscript was complete. But as I read through the submissions for *Yoga Rising* it became clear that another collection of personal narratives was revealing itself.

Stories centered on loss, grief, addiction, assault, and various ways their yoga practice supported their healing from adversities and trauma of various kinds.

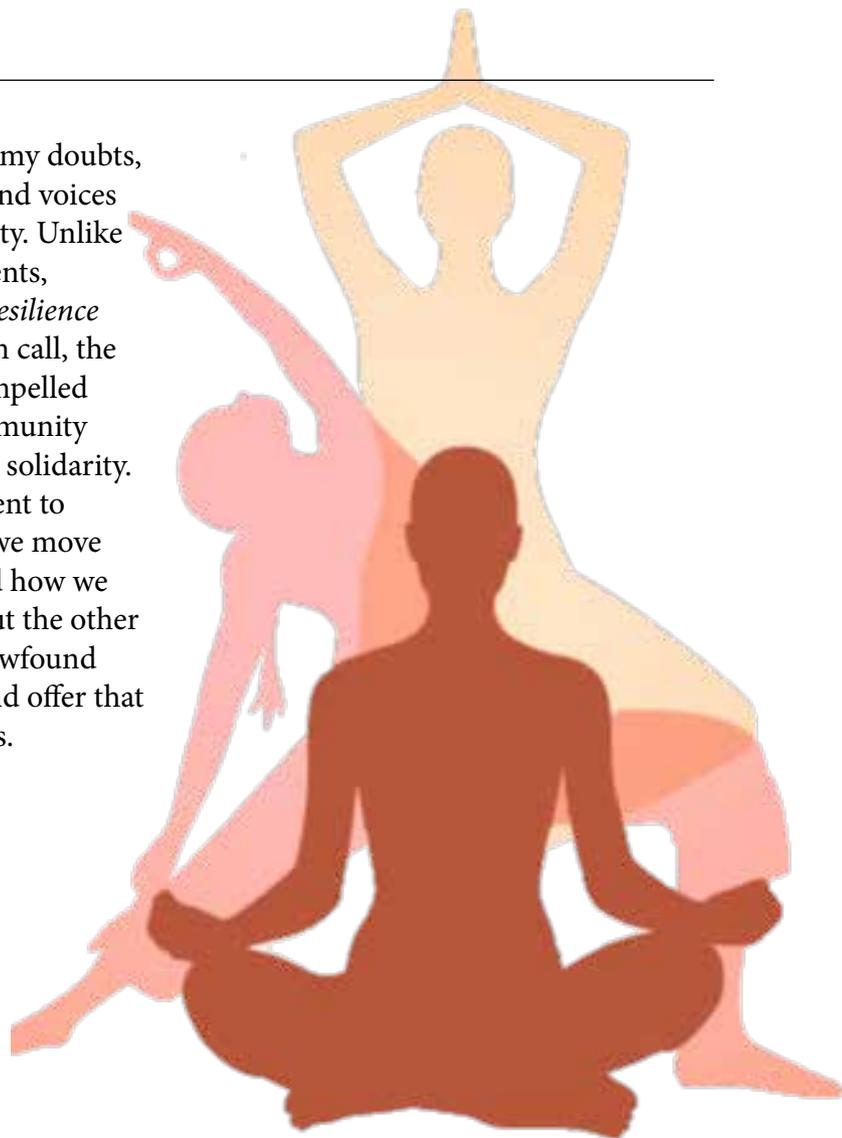


Here it was, a new book was clearly meant to take form and once again I felt compelled to bring it to life.

A diverse array of voices emerged, sharing the ways in which their yoga, meditation and mindfulness practices had allowed them to embody resilience and heal materialized organically. Those personal narratives initially meant for publication in *Yoga Rising* gave shape to something new and timely. As I completed that manuscript, I began to make plans for another anthology.

Embodied Resilience through Yoga: 30 Mindful Essays About Finding Empowerment After Addiction, Trauma, Grief and Loss wasn't a question or a choice I made. I felt compelled to meet a need that made itself known. Kat Heagberg, Kathryn Ashworth and Toni Willis agreed to get on board in order to take what would eventually become 30 voices and experiences from their nascent beginnings to completion. We tapped educators and leaders known for their trauma-informed work as well as other writers we came into contact with through a snowball effect and combined their stories with those writers who'd moved their stories over from *Yoga Rising* to this new collection. Little could we have known when we began two years ago that 2020 would be the ideal time to offer *Embodied Resilience* to the world.

I've had my doubts, challenges and voices of uncertainty. Unlike those moments, *Embodied Resilience* was a clarion call, the result of compelled action, community support and solidarity. It's a testament to everything we move through and how we can come out the other side with newfound resilience and offer that gift to others.



Melanie C. Klein, M.A., is an internationally recognized and sought-after empowerment coach, thought leader, and influencer in authentic empowerment, body confidence, and visibility. The latest in her body of work, *Embodied Resilience through Yoga*, was published in September 2020.

A successful speaker and professor of sociology and women's studies, Melanie co-founded the Yoga & Body Image Coalition in 2014, challenging the yoga industry

to expand representation of the practice and its people with #whatayogilookslike.

Melanie's empowerment and advocacy work have been widely featured in Ms. magazine, mindbodygreen, Yoga Journal, Mantra Yoga + Health, Om Yoga Magazine, and on the Yoga International, Gaiam, and the National Eating Disorders Association websites.

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