

**Mabel Cai**

Member ▪ Human Being



CDP Official Events + News

We Have Been Chosen

Dear friends of CDP,

It is an era calling for leaders; and **we have been chosen**. We have known it deep inside our body and we only need to find the courage to say it out loud to ourselves and to each other, and to answer the urgent calls for leaders we are hearing everywhere. Such calls have been so poignantly expressed in [Clarissa Pinkalo Estes' writing shared by Aimee](#), **"Do Not Lose Heart, We Were Made for These Times"**

And now is the time. Across borders, skin colors, religions and many other barriers between us humans, never have we been more informed and connected than now, never have we been able to feel so keenly how events unfolding in different parts of the world affects the pulsation of our shared home, this dear earth, and our collective future, and never have there been a greater need calling for our collected effort to "stretch out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach" and our readiness to answer the call as leaders.

Right here, we have so many leaders in the MSC community, and our dear CDP community, without whom, the chances are, I might not be living right now. I have been inspired to be a leader in my own immediate communities where I can make a difference, and I have felt the urgency to work towards my aspiration.

But first, there are some pertinent questions that need to be answered. **How on earth have I been chosen to be a leader? And in what capacity could I lead?** The reality is I do not have a job, I am not a teacher or a specialist of any sort, I have family issues to worry about on a daily basis. Life has felt really hard and I have been on medication to help with my depressive symptoms for the past year. In my limited capacity, I write and share poems and I organize meditation and writing circles, however, my readership is

small and the attendance of the circles is few. My questions are real and urgent, and they need my immediate attention. If you will, please allow me the indulgence of your time to share what I have come up with so far.

A couple of weeks ago, I had a brief discussion with my son who is turning 18 soon. My son doesn't talk much, and neither do I, although he most likely will disagree. During one particular silent moment with him, I decided to ask what he was thinking. He said he was wondering how a person chooses values. Eager to help and point a direction for him, I kept my silence for a while as my mind got busy. And then it dawned on me that we do not choose values, instead, the values choose us, and this is what I shared with him. I said our body knows, deep from our guts, what feels right from situation to situation. I shared with him that I used to hold on to many values, and gradually it felt like I was being strangled by them, especially when conflicting values are demanded. And now I no longer intentionally hold on to any particular value, and the only value that I need to remember is kindness, which can only ripple out from within. When I feel kind to myself, all the other values will just come to me, such as honesty, justice, equality and fairness.

What I did not tell him was how hard it has been for me learning to be kind to myself, and that I have been programmed to be doing exactly the opposite. And I also did not tell him what I have come to realize really gradually and I had not been able to put into words, until now, that compassion has been, ironically, the gift of depression for me. When living feels so hard and nothing else seems to help, compassion has been the only thing that kept giving me hope and helping me make some sense. The faith of self-compassion, love, has helped me hold on to life, to give myself the gift of time and rest, making a point to be in nature regularly, seeking professional help, reaching out for support in different communities, finding new ways of making friends and calling my local SOS helpline when I was feeling overwhelmed and needed assurance urgently.

It became clear to me that compassion chooses me and not the other way round, and it also became clear to me that suffering is the only way through which my faith of love could have deepened.

My questions have been answered. Love chooses me, I am in love's hand to be whatever love wants me to be, and it is with whatever capacity that love has given me I will lead.

I will be haunted by the shadows of self-doubt, I will be crushed by the weight of my grief, I may never be able to stop feeling powerless with my worry for my children. And I will keep “stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach”. Yes, my vulnerability is the part of the world that is within my reach. No, I will not be able to mend my vulnerability; I could only come back to this part of me that needs assurance, again and again. Vulnerability is not supposed to be mended, and we can not mend it no matter how hard we try, because vulnerability is the only way leading to love.



Meet **Mocha**, my new vulnerable little friend whom I recently adopted and brought to Singapore all the way from Shanghai. Since his arrival, he has been the steadfast force leading me deeper into love. Please enjoy the following Mocha inspired poem.

Let Me Lead You

Mabel, Cai Lei

Let me lead you
With my smallness
Doubt no more
This is exactly from where you are to be led

Watch me trot forward eagerly
And let my senses guide you
When to stop and sniff and
Where to leave your mark

I will be startled
My enthusiasm will appear to be too annoying for some
And I glance back from time to time
Just to make sure I am in the right hand
That I have grown to love

I will encounter peers
Who are much bigger and louder than me
Still, I spin at the door merrily for every single adventure awaiting
Not being held back by a single thought of worry

I had my dark days
And I have no idea if there will be more
I have made it through arduous journeys
I have been terrified and confused
I have growled and whimpered
I have learned to be cautious with enclosed spaces
Potential traps into prisons of loneliness
And I have grown to be more confident when I bark

Make no mistakes
I am not your cute little teddy bear
I have teeth that can puncture and rip
Look under and beyond my wooly curls
And let my intensely beating heart lead you
Into the dawn, into the dusk,
Into adventures, into mischiefs,
Into wonders of living, into the fearsome unknown,
And, into the formidable world of love

Where no apology is needed for our brokenness and still wanting to love
Where we lick, we wrestle, we cuddle with no restraint of shame on our neck
Where we laugh so hard that friendship is all that matters
And where when we have enough
We do not hesitate to say "Stop!" and walk away
And to pick up our sticks if ever necessary

It is true that I am small
It is true that I am insignificant
It is true that my vulnerability subjects me to forces of violence

But still
Do you dare to let me lead you
Where you are to be thawed by my urgent heat of love
Little by little
Subject yourself to the seismic forces of the crashing waves in your chest
Again and again
Drowning you, ripping you apart, splitting you from what is dearest and
most precious to you
Over and over
Breaking up your tightly, deeply, painfully entangled, glamorized facade,
becoming
A little more bare and a little more bare
And submit yourself to the wild hand of love that tosses you up, threshes you
down and churns your stomach into a rough sea
A little more violent and a little more violent
And then in the brief reprieves hear what has been always waiting for you to
hear
A little louder and a little louder
The sound of wildness
Quietness
You are mine

My dear friend, thank you for having allowed me to share my journey of vulnerability with you. Your journey and my journey are different. By the very fact that we are both in this community, a community of self-compassion, we are chosen. By the very fact that we are both breathing, it is evident love has deep faith in us, regardless of our circumstances and how deep our respective shitholes are. Forgive my language.

Being a leader might be simpler than we thought. We just need to allow vulnerability to keep leading us into love; we just need to bear witness for the wonders and suffering of our vulnerable world at large, and the wonders and sufferings of our vulnerable small selves, and be moved into actions. And it is a lot to ask from ourselves, precisely because we have been chosen. Here I am inviting you to join me for [my circles](#); a road less travelled is a road less lonely when it is traveled with friends.