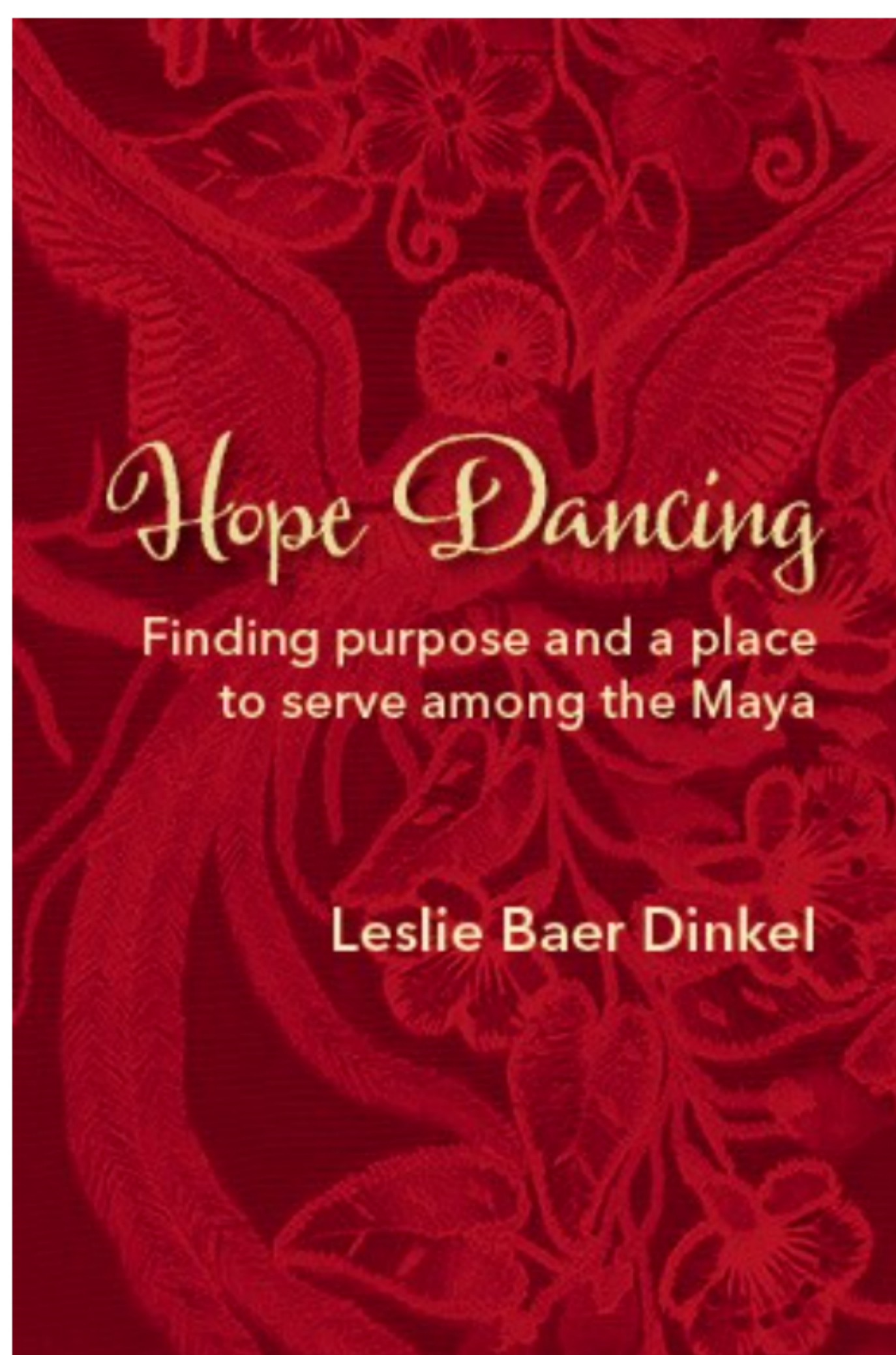


Book Review

Discovery Awards



# HOPE DANCING: FINDING PURPOSE AND A PLACE TO SERVE AMONG THE MAYA

By Leslie Baer Dinkel

★ IR RATING:

5.0

HOPE DANCING: Finding purpose and a place to serve among the Maya is a thorough, sometimes harrowing, always thought-provoking memoir about Leslie Baer Dinkel's adventures in helping to bring 'a hand up' rather than 'hand out' relief where it is needed. Even by the last page, readers will not want this story to end.

★ IR Approved *Memoir, Nonfiction*

Posted by IR Staff | October 25, 2019



When author Leslie Baer Dinkel heads for Central America her intent is to learn Spanish. Unlike memoirs where women alone venture to far-flung locations to savor good food and heal broken hearts, HOPE DANCING: *Finding purpose and a place to serve among the Maya* could have been titled 'Help, Love, Learn.' Having already collected and distributed food in her home area's Skid Row, it's not long before Dinkel is bringing food supplies, medicine, and volunteer doctors to war-torn Guatemala regularly, and—as years go by—helping to build homes and schools too.

HOPE DANCING lifts into the extraordinary when it begins taking a look at why so much poverty and violence exists in this region. Though disinterested in politics, the author's innocent ideals about her own country take a turn when she is asked whether she wants to see the real Guatemala, a country where 15-year-old boys with guns kill, rape, plunder, and U.S. military helicopters with no official reason to be where they are fly over villages randomly shooting at women and children. There was a time in Guatemala when prices were down, wages were up, and everyone had hope. But then other interests got involved, overtly and covertly shaping the region by replacing leadership via illegal coup while disappearing 200,000 – 300,000 Mayan people.

What other interests? The United Fruit Company for one, an American company on Latin American soil that preferred access to cheap labor. The CIA, for another. Utilizing the concept of 'soft power' which is "part of the one-two punch of American foreign policy," America provides/allows humanitarian aid as a means of advancing self/business interests...interests that have no compunction about trying to demand a cessation of aid whenever manipulation of circumstances in favor of these interests feels warranted, as Dinkel and her growing band of Xela AID volunteers discover.

HOPE DANCING: *Finding purpose and a place to serve among the Maya* is a thorough, sometimes harrowing, always thought-provoking memoir about Leslie Baer Dinkel's adventures helping to bring 'a hand up' rather than 'hand out' relief where it is needed. Even by the last page, readers will not want this story to end.

~C.S. Holmes for IndieReader

Publisher:  
N/AISBN:  
N/APublication Date:  
N/ABinding:  
PaperbackCopyright Date:  
N/AU.S. SRP:  
N/A

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