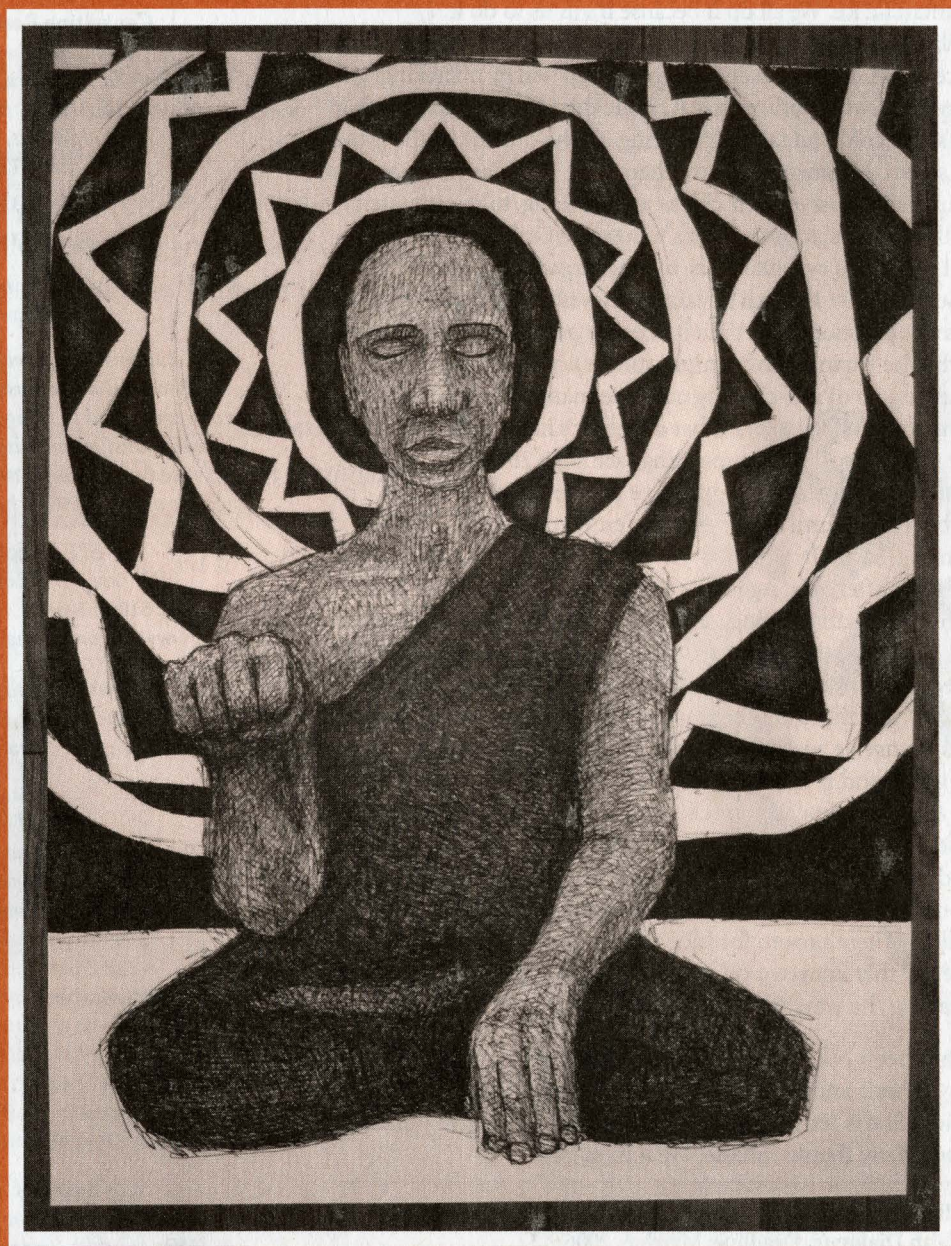


# TURNING WHEEL

*The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism*



## BUDDHAS AMONG US

*Thubten Chödrön • Jiko Linda Cutts • Choyin Rangdrol and others*

A Publication of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship • Fall 2005 • \$5.00 • [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)



## From the Editor

There are, indeed, Buddhas and bodhisattvas among us. I'm sure you know a few yourself. Perhaps some live with you, or you meet them on the bus, or at the gas station. Suddenly a stranger, for no particular reason, seems to care about your well-being and lets you go ahead of her in the checkout line. And *you* might be a bodhisattva, too. Some of the time, anyway. After all, it takes one to know one.

This issue of *TW* is full of bodhisattvas. Linda Cutts speaks of her trip to Colombia as part of a human rights delegation, where she put herself in some danger, and where she met local people who constantly risk their lives—and sometimes lose them—because of their work for peace. Choyin Rangdrol, Thubten Chödrön, and Justine Dawson all share stories from their lives of devotion to serving others. Poets and artists bring themselves forward in awareness, struggling toward compassion like salmon in the falls, like Emperor Penguins marching across Antarctic ice. We all do it because it's in us to do it.

I just saw the film *The March of the Penguins*. After the mothers lay the eggs, the fathers balance them on their feet and keep them warm unceasingly, for two dark winter months, with nothing to eat, while the wind howls. They huddle together against the cold and take turns being on the outside of the group, their backs to the storm. Meanwhile, the mothers walk 70 miles to the sea, eat, and return with full bellies just as their chicks are hatching, to regurgitate paté of polar fish into their babies' mouths. Let's follow their selfless example!

The individual penguins are like cells of one organism. And so are we humans. But because we have the rich advantage as well as the complication of our egos, it takes more practice for us than it does for penguins to let go of self-clinging. That's why the examples of compassionate action in these pages are so encouraging. Letting go of self-clinging can take many forms. It could even be a mother finding the patience to braid her daughter's hair into a "billion tiny braids" before she goes to work in the morning (see page 29).

Bodhisattvas understand that nobody is free until everybody is free. They keep choosing to be reborn until all beings have entered nirvana. (As they say in AA: "Keep coming back! It works!") At the threshold of nirvana, they pause, saying, "Oh, no, after you. Age before beauty!"

The penguins remind us that letting go of self-clinging is not just about getting into nirvana, it's about the survival of the species here on this side. We human beings need to learn to behave ourselves, too, if we want our species to survive. You could say that that's another form of self-clinging, but in order for the human species to survive, we also need our one and only planet to survive, along with its air, water, and interconnected life forms.

Sometimes as the penguins are marching across the ice to the breeding ground they pause, lost in towering ice sculptures that weren't there the year before. They stand around in a group, looking confused, not knowing which way to go. Then one of them simply chooses a direction and boldly sets forth, and the others follow. There's room for individual initiative among penguins and humans alike. In this issue we celebrate the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who take turns leading the way. ❖ —Susan Moon

Shane Snowdon has been our wonderful book review editor for the last six issues of *Turning Wheel*, and her lively columns have kept us abreast of Buddhist publishing. She is retiring from this labor of love to give more time to her own writing. Many thanks, Shane. We'll miss you!

*Turning Wheel* Deadlines: Spring '06: No Theme. Deadline: January 3, 2006. Summer '06, **Interfaith Dialogue**. Deadline: March 6, 2006.

We accept essays, poetry, and artwork year round.

NEW: Send us your stories of the people who give you the courage to work for peace and justice! (See page 47: "Bodhisattvas We Have Known.") Letters to the editor are also encouraged. Send all submissions to: *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703, with SASE; or to <turningwheel@bpf.org>.

# TURNING WHEEL

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# Contents

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## Departments

Letters/5

Indra's Net/6

Family Practice/9

History/10

Ecology/11

BPF Military Guide/13

In Memoriam/14

BASE News/37

The International Advisory Council/39

Prison Project Report/40

Executive Director's Report/41

Announcements & Classifieds/46

Bodhisattvas We Have Known/47

## Features

*Practicing the Eight Awarenesses*, by Jiko Linda Cutts/15

An Interview with Choyin Rangdrol, by John W. Ellis IV/18

*Holi*, by Ahna Fender/22

A Conversation with Justine Dawson,  
by Donald Rothberg and Sara Schedler/25

*Marketing the Dharma*, by Thubten Chödrön/30

## Book Reviews

John W. Ellis IV on *Dharma, Color and Culture*/34

Colette DeDonato on *The Wisdom Anthology of  
North American Buddhist Poetry*/34

Rhoda R. Gilman on *An End to Suffering*/36

## Poetry

Page Hill Starzinger/24

Polly Trout /29

Elsa Marley/33

George Gott/35

## Art

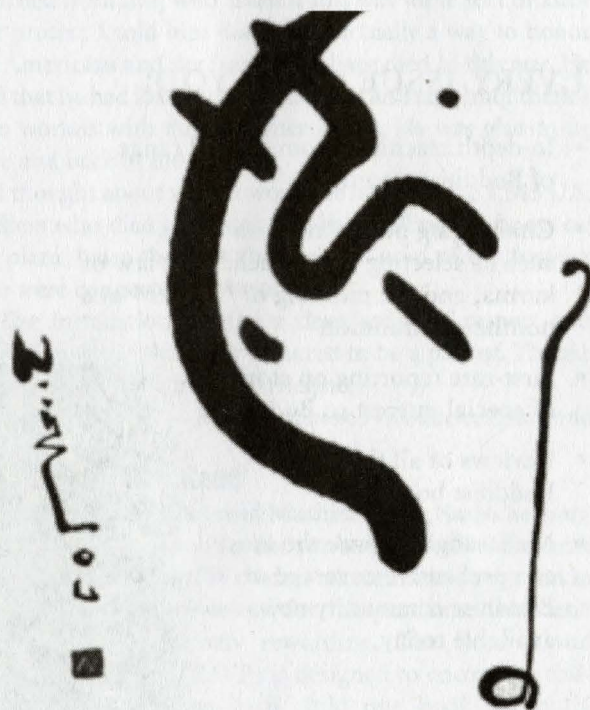
jesse maceo vega-frey/cover

Roberta Pyx Sutherland/21

Hamlet Mateo/23

Elsa Marley/33

Ninsho Kakinuma/this page, 36, 45



Ninsho Kakinuma

*jesse maceo vega-frey (cover) is an artist, writer, activist, BPF Board member, and Buddhist practitioner. He lives in Holyoke, Massachusetts.*

*Ninsho Kakinuma is an artist, cook, and Zen teacher living in Hokkaido, Japan, where he founded his own temple. He spreads the teachings of Buddha in Japan through art exhibitions, cooking demonstrations, and lectures.*

# Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche: Teachings and Tales

The Fall issue of *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly* features a teaching by one of the great meditation masters of the 20th century, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche. Plus an interview with Erik Pema Kunsang, editor of *Blazing Splendor*, Tulku Urgyen's memoirs.

ALSO IN THE ISSUE: A DISCUSSION OF MIND TRAINING (LOJONG) WITH KEN MCLEOD, JUDITH LIEF, AND B. ALAN WALLACE. A REPORT BY TODD STEIN THAT EXAMINES THE INNOVATIVE METHODS THAT SANGHAS ARE USING TO RESOLVE CONFLICT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. TENSHIN REB ANDERSON PUNCTURES OUR NOTIONS ABOUT ZAZEN, AND GIL FRONSDAL PRESENTS A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE CLASSIC DHAMMAPADA.

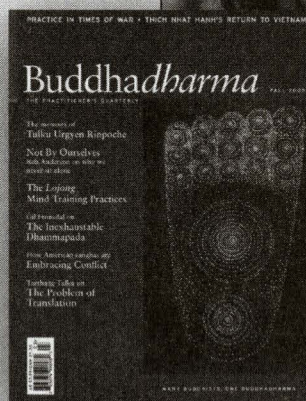
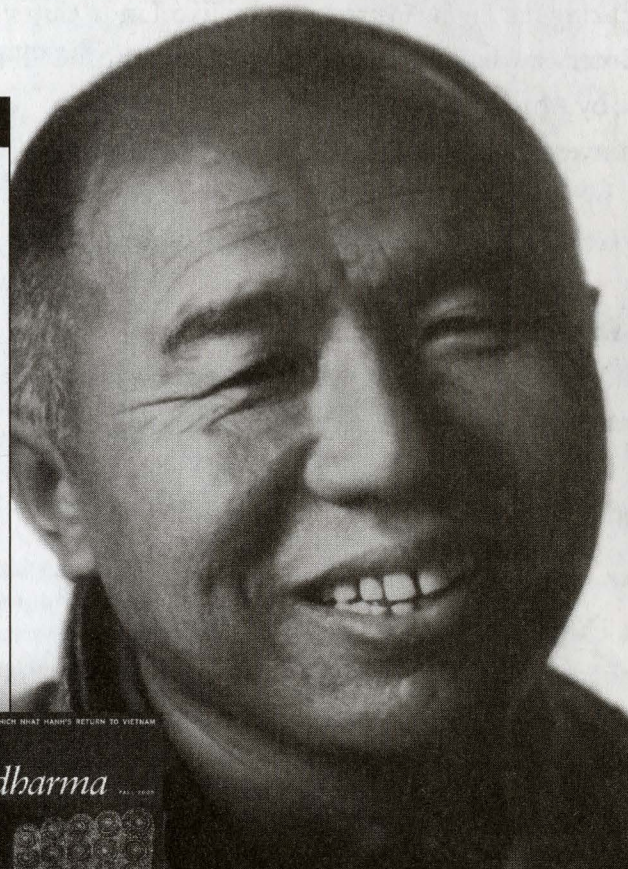
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## Letters

We welcome your responses to what we print. Write to Turning Wheel, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703, or send us an e-mail at <turningwheel@bpf.org>. Letters may be edited.

### Interfaith Brotherhood

As a contemplative Christian, I enjoy the benefits of spiritual practice drawn from many traditions. I've been receiving and enjoying *Turning Wheel* for more than a year now, but I've never been as touched by an article as I was when I read my old cellmate William Tyler's feature, "What Should I Call Myself?" (Summer '05).

I'm the "Mike" in the story, and I wanted to tell you that I am blessed to see Will make strides that not many convicts have the courage and compassion to make. And while he catalogued the support I gave him, he failed to mention the many ways he challenged me in my faith. He showed me the benefits of meditation, the blessing of interfaith brotherhood, and introduced me to a little orange book called *The Teachings of the Buddha*.

Will, I love you, brother! May peace and blessings accompany your journey, and may it be always a beginning and never an ending.

—Mike Owens, High Desert State Prison, Susanville, California

### Practicing with Disability

Thank you for the articles by Clay Taylor and Naomi Weissman in the Spring '05 issue of *TW*. The similarities between their experiences with disability and mine brought up many feelings. After suffering a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in a car accident seven years ago, I lost the ability to think, to understand others, and to express myself. TBI, at its most intense, is impossible to imagine: No past, no future. Even without words, I knew I was fortunate to know the difference (afforded by years of meditation) between thinking and awareness. Knowing this gave me a rock to stand on in the midst of a wild new ocean.

There are still difficulties, and I haven't let go of hoping that tomorrow I'll function better. Zen Master Seung Sahn taught that a good situation is a bad situation; a bad situation is a good situation. Everything is always changing. Although my brain cells aren't reliable or fast enough for me to continue my work as a therapist, I've developed new skills as a street vendor. I've lost an identity, but I've created a new one.

—Ruth Klein, Rego Park, New York

We read with interest the article by Naomi Weissman (Spring '05) describing Zen meditation for people living with pain and disability. Six years ago we started a similar group here in Santa Cruz called Refuge. In addition to the types of health conditions Weissman cites, we include people living with multiple chemical sensitivities and people with severe depression.

Refuge has evolved into two groups that practice vipassana and metta (mindfulness and lovingkindness). The

Friday group is led by visiting Buddhist teachers who have training in and/or personal experience with chronic pain, illness, or disability. The newer Wednesday group is a wisdom circle, drawing equally on Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings. Because feelings of isolation are common among us, Refuge members socialize instead of observing noble silence before our meditations. Some of our members have established phone relationships with one another.

We have a need for more volunteers from other sanghas to help us in our daily lives with transportation, grocery shopping, and handyperson tasks. If anyone would like more information about our Refuge groups, please call us at 831/423-3156 or 831/763-7649.

—Cynthia Adams and Fran McBrien, Santa Cruz, California

### Sitting with Eyes Wide Open

I sat with at least 10 other people from midnight to 3:00 AM at the Eyes Wide Open vigil [an installation of boots and shoes representing the soldiers and civilians who have died in Iraq] in March 2005, which was very profound for me. I spoke to a young man who was looking for the boots of his brother, one of the first Americans to be killed in Iraq. As he left, I cried for his loss, and for my uncle, who was killed in the Korean War. I also talked to a young man who had just returned from Iraq who asked if this was some sort of anti-war protest. I told him that it was actually a way to honor the Americans and the Iraqis who have died in this war. He said that he had lost friends in his unit and also Iraqi friends who worked with them as interpreters. He was glad to be alive and back in the U.S.

I thought about what it would be like if all the 1,545 U.S. soldiers who died were standing there filling the boots on the plaza. I also thought about all the grief of the families who were connected to those boots.

The installation created a deep sense of respect and interconnection that I felt honored to be a part of. Thanks to BPF for inviting me to participate!

—Karen Gutowski, Woodacre, California

### Teaching Kids to Read

It was interesting to read Mushim Ikeda-Nash's account of her volunteer work in her son's school (*TW* Summer '05). I'd like to bring *TW* readers' attention to a program in which I have been involved for the past nine years and which I find extremely rewarding. The Read Aloud Volunteer program (RAVP) is designed to encourage children to read, sending each child one book a month. Program volunteers read for 30 minutes to students during regular school hours. Over the last nine years, the program has expanded to five schools. I enjoy it so much that I volunteer two hours a week. If you are in the San Francisco Bay Area and would like to find out more, contact me at <gtyndall@pacbell.net>, or visit [www.ravp.org](http://www.ravp.org).

—Gordon Tyndall, Oakland, California

# Indra's Net

Compiled by Annette Herskovits

*In the image of the "jeweled net of Indra," found in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels, each of which reflects all the others. All our lives touch each other, as symbolized by Indra's net.*

## Quest for the Sleeping Buddha of Bamiyan

When, in March 2001, the Taliban blasted the world's tallest standing Buddhas into dust, it seemed that, after 25 years of bloodshed and destruction, Afghanistan had indeed become the nation "where God only comes to weep."

Afghanistan's foremost archaeologist, Dr. Zemaryalai Tarzi, who had spent years in the 1970s restoring the Buddhas and many of the 10,000 painted grottoes in the adjacent cliffs, was distraught when he learned of this loss. He sat powerless in France, where he had fled in 1979 when the Soviets invaded his country.

But Dr. Tarzi did not succumb to despair. As soon as it was safe, he returned to Bamiyan and began to dig for the reclining Buddha he is certain lies in that lovely valley on the old Silk Road, where the Chinese scholar monk Xuanzang walked 1,400 years ago. Xuanzang wrote of seeing large monasteries, the two standing Buddhas—then painted bright colors—and a thousand-foot-long statue representing Buddha lying down, passing into Nirvana.

Supported by the French government and private donations, Dr. Tarzi employs students, local laborers, and volunteers. He is certain he is digging on the correct site, and he has already found numerous small Buddhist statues for the Bamiyan museum he dreams of founding. Dr. Tarzi speaks movingly of the Afghans' needs for safety, food, and medicine—but also for the preservation of the ancient culture that is their greatest treasure, and without which their deepest roots will be cut.

The website of the Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology ([www.apaa.info](http://www.apaa.info)) includes an essay by Dr. Tarzi. The site also describes his work and the continuing danger to Afghanistan's precious artifacts, and tells how to make a donation. —*Melody Ermachild Chavis*

## Explosive Remnants of War

President George W. Bush called the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq "one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history." Iraqis might disagree, having lived through "shock and awe" bombing and the use of cluster munitions in civilian areas—with "devastating and utterly predictable consequences," according to Amnesty International.

Intended for use on "broad" targets such as airfields or massed troops, cluster bombs may contain up to 700 bomblets that spread over several acres when the bomb hits the ground. But 5 to 23 percent of the bomblets fail to explode on impact, and lie there waiting to explode later, like landmines. Human Rights Watch claims such "duds"—unexploded bomblets—from the 1991 Gulf War killed 1,600 civilians and injured 2,500 through April 2003. Sixty

percent of the victims were under 15.

In 2003, U.S. and U.K. forces sprayed Iraq with 2 million bomblets, mostly targeting Iraqi troops in residential neighborhoods, killing more than 1,000 civilians directly and violating the Geneva convention, which bans attacks that fail to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Each bomblet combines antipersonnel "capability"—a cylinder that explodes into 300 jagged metal pieces—with antitank and incendiary effects. So horrifying were the photographs taken by Western reporters in the village of al-Hilla after cluster bombs killed 33 civilians and injured 300, most of them children, that U.S. television networks refused to broadcast them.

Besides this unexploded and abandoned ordnance, landmines are scattered throughout Iraq. Rehabilitating the land is slow, expensive, and dangerous work, requiring trained staff to survey and mark all explosive devices, and, if possible, defuse or destroy them.

Afghanistan was already heavily mined from the 1979–1989 Soviet occupation when the United States used cluster bombs against the Taliban. Subsequently, the Afghan teams of the UN-run mine clearance program had to be retrained to deal with unexploded cluster bomblets. In all, 42,000 acres were added to the 260,000 already contaminated, and half of that acreage is "high-priority" land sorely needed for irrigation, farming, grazing, or transport.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, spurred 152 countries to sign the 1999 Ottawa Treaty prohibiting the manufacture, trade, and use of antipersonnel mines. The United States did not sign, claiming landmines were "a needed military capability." Instead, the U.S. is paying corporations billions to develop mines that would self-destruct within a preset time.

No treaty forbids the use of cluster munitions as yet. The United States again opposes any restrictions, chasing instead after another technological fix: reducing duds to 1 percent. But 1 percent can be a great many unexploded bomblets—1 percent of those used in the first Gulf War would amount to several hundred thousand.

It is humbling to learn that the greatest asset in mine detection is not human technology but dogs. Dogs can detect mines four times faster than any metal-detecting device. They can find explosives that are encased in plastic and as deep as three feet underground. And they can work on difficult terrain such as rocky hillsides. The danger to dogs is minimal—their skill at detection allows them to navigate minefields safely.

You can help by supporting the Mennonite Central Committee ([www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org)), one of the many excellent organizations providing landmine and unexploded ordnance assistance. MCC has an extraordinary record of devotion to peacemaking, and is still at work clearing Laos of cluster bombs the United States dropped there in the nine years of unceasing bombing that ended in 1973. MCC also works for a ban on cluster bombs. For more information on landmines and unexploded ordnance, visit [www.icbl.org](http://www.icbl.org). —AH

## Aung San Suu Kyi's Birthday

Aung San Suu Kyi spent her 60th birthday with her two housekeepers. She received no congratulatory calls because Burma's junta had disconnected her phone months before.

In 2003, when she was campaigning for the National League for Democracy (NLD), Suu Kyi drew large and joyful crowds, until May 31, when soldiers and thugs attacked her convoy, killing about 100 supporters. The junta blamed the NLD for the violence and imprisoned its leaders. Suu Kyi was put under strict house arrest.

Two months before her birthday, supporters across the world had launched a "60th Birthday Campaign" asking that Suu Kyi be freed. But the junta remained deaf.

Last October, Senior General Than Shwe, said to be the most ruthless member of the junta, tightened his hold on power, jailing the prime minister. Some thought this was part of a fight between the army (controlled by Than Shwe) and military intelligence (controlled by the prime minister); others that it was more of a conflict between business interests, as the various armed forces control the economy, with officers doubling as businessmen.

In any case, the "roadmap to democracy" leading to "free and fair elections" that was announced in August 2003 by the now jailed prime minister has been forgotten.

Next year, Myanmar (Burma) is scheduled to take its turn chairing the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Other member nations have called for Suu Kyi's release—the first instance of ASEAN

rebuking a member state. Both the United States and the European Union vowed to boycott ASEAN's meetings, which they attend as key ASEAN partners, if Myanmar is chair, and both have imposed economic sanctions.

But Than Shwe is unfazed. Both India and China are competing for the junta's favors, and provide loans, arms, and markets for Burma's oil and teak.

With Burma's military as entrenched as ever despite the West's sanctions, the international Burma solidarity movement has become divided. Dr. Zarni, founder of the Free Burma Coalition, now calls for "constructive engagement," asking that sanctions be lifted, allowing the country ("yes, the evil regime as well") to "integrate into the trans-Asiatic current of change through trade and security, cultural interactions and intellectual cross-fertilization." Sanctions cannot succeed as they did in South Africa, he argues, because Burma is flanked by China and India, both ready to overlook human rights violations for economic advantage.

Others, by contrast, ask for stricter economic sanctions. European sanctions currently exempt the oil and gas industry because of pressures from France, which is anxious to protect French-controlled Total Oil, the largest foreign investor in Burma.

Almost all proceeds from foreign investments go into the junta members' pockets or to arms purchases. So it is hard to picture how constructive engagement might help free Burma's people from the military's horrendous human rights violations, including systematic use of slave labor,

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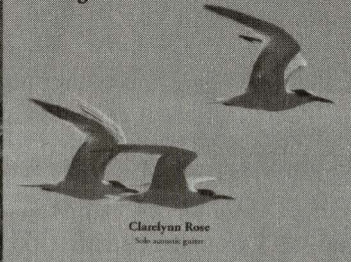
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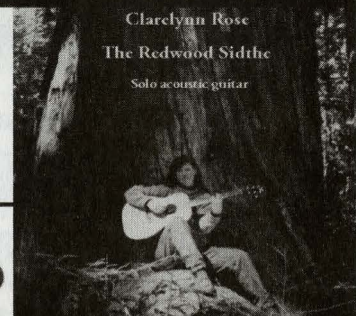
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drafting of child soldiers, ethnic cleansing, rape, and torture. Suu Kyi herself has always supported sanctions.

Though Suu Kyi could not know, her birthday was celebrated around the world. Supporters showed up at virtually every Burmese embassy, bringing cakes and balloons. There were even celebrations in Rangoon, Burma's capital, where members of Suu Kyi's party released doves and Buddhist monks held special prayers. —AH

### An Amazing Life

Marla Ruzicka was killed in Iraq on April 16, together with Faiz Ali Asalim, the Iraq director of CIVIC (the Campaign for Innocent Victims of Conflict), the organization Ruzicka had founded. They were traveling on the Baghdad airport road when their car was hit by a bomb aimed at a U.S. military convoy. Ruzicka was 28.

Ruzicka led a one-person campaign to document civilian victims of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and to seek compensation for them from the U.S. government (TW, Fall 2003). She went to Afghanistan in November 2001 with other activists to observe the bombing campaign, and, according to a friend, came back a changed person, driven to alleviate the suffering of war. She returned to Afghanistan on her own, "finding people who were hurt, finding what they needed—an artificial limb, a skin graft, a new roof. She would find a way to fill the need directly." She also began compiling data on casualties from U.S. attacks.

A few days after Baghdad fell in April 2003, Ruzicka showed up in Iraq. She began building a network of volunteers who went door to door to document civilian casualties.

She carried the stories of these civilians to Washington, D.C., where she won some funding for war victims. In 2003, Senator Patrick Leahy added \$20 million to an appropriations bill for civilian victims of U.S. military actions. After Ruzicka's death, Congress passed a \$10 million victim relief bill in her name.

Friends of Ruzicka recalled her as "innocent"—she saw straight through thickets of words to the truth: the immense suffering caused by war and the urgent need for relief. She treated everyone with kindness, hugging guards at military checkpoints and charming her way into congressional offices.

Rakan Hassan, age 12, lost his parents when a U.S. military foot patrol fired on the family's car. A couple of weeks before her death, Ruzicka met Rakan and his seven siblings; he remembers that Ruzicka helped him change his clothes, as bullet splinters in his spine made it painful to move.

Ruzicka secured a surgeon in San Francisco to perform for free the operation Rakan needs to recover. She was killed before she could obtain visas for the family. Rakan told journalist Jamie Tarabay: "I say to her parents: God bless her soul, God give them strength to endure this tragedy. I lost her, they lost her, and every poor Iraqi has lost her."

CIVIC's work continues. To contribute, visit [www.civic-worldwide.org](http://www.civic-worldwide.org). —AH



## Family Practice

### What We Need to Succeed: On Mentors and Mentoring

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

It's moldy and dog-eared, yet I can't bear to throw it out. Did Grandpa give me this book on *sumi* brush painting? I don't know. I remember being 13 and sitting in his little house in back of Cane Street, in Wahiawa, Hawai'i, feeling a little awkward and embarrassed because my Mainland speech and manners separated me from my Hawai'i-born aunts, uncles, and cousins. Grandpa didn't speak much English, so I didn't have to try to make conversation with him. He spread out some newspapers on the floor and took out a small black stick, a grinding stone, and a brush with a bamboo handle. To my surprise, when the stick was rubbed on the stone with a little water, it became lustrous black ink. I liked the way it smelled. Grandpa showed me how to hold the brush, and he made some marks on the newspaper, then gestured to me to do the same. Press, lift, drag. A thick, blobby line. I was thrilled.

"Your name," Grandpa said. He had given me my Japanese middle name when I was born: Yoshiko. He calligraphed it for me on cheap paper. I spent the next hour or so practicing brush strokes on newspaper. Grandpa seemed happy that I was having fun. He didn't nag or correct me; he didn't seem interested in "teaching" me anything at all.

During the time he and I sat together, Grandma came in and lit some Japanese incense, rubbing her hands together and muttering what I later realized was the name of Amida Buddha. She didn't seem interested in teaching me anything, either. I knew nothing about Buddhism (or Islam, Judaism, or African religions) at this point in my life, because the public schools I had attended in Bible-Belt Ohio didn't teach world religions. My mom's parents didn't seem anxious that I had grown up with a group of West Virginians who had migrated to Ohio to work in the tire factories near Akron. They accepted me as I was, and shared parts of their world with me. They were my first mentors.

Did you have mentors as you were growing up? If you have children, do they have mentors? It's something worth thinking about, in my view. The more safe and caring adults around, the better! My spiritual lineage, the Zen Buddhist tradition, is full of stories of students who hung out with their teachers for years at a time, while their practice and understanding slowly matured.

Those of us lucky enough to have had nonparental adult figures who enlarged our worlds as children know how valuable those relationships were. Some mentors are part of our extended families: aunts, uncles, grandparents, older cousins. And some are neighbors or family friends or schoolteachers or coaches. The special thing about mentors is that they like and respect you in a way that your parents, who know what the contents of your diaper looked like,

usually cannot. And it might be easier to accept constructive criticism from a mentor than from a parent. After all, the mentor is less likely to be attached to forming you in his or her image.

We all need models and guides, at any age. "Titch," my son used to say when he was a toddler, pointing at objects near or far. "Dis. Dat. Titch." After a while, I figured out that what he was saying was, "Please teach me about this thing or that thing." I gave him the names: Pine tree. Irrigation spigot. Rotting pumpkin. When Chris, who eventually became his adoptive father, entered Joshua's life, he carried him everywhere in a backpack, chatting with him constantly. Chainsaw. Kazoo. Huckleberry. Unified field theory. I heard those guys talking about all sorts of things.

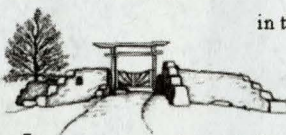
Luckily, now that Josh is 16 and becoming a young adult, he has mentors to show him the way as he learns to repair and install computers. And prior to this, he's had adult friends who have mentored him in everything from looking at an abstract painting or layering a tiramisu, to sharpening a knife so that it can razor the hair off your arm. Bruce, José, "Uncle" Byll, Harley, Kevin, Dangerous Dan (you can guess who the knife-sharpener is), and others—I pay homage to all my son's mentors, past and present. They've taken up the slack where Chris and I left off. They've led our son in the series of next steps he needs to take beyond our nuclear family life and culture.

I never did pursue my interest in Japanese brush painting and calligraphy, but that's OK. What mattered was that Grandpa cared enough to voluntarily spend time with me, overcoming the barriers of our different languages, generations, and cultures by simply spreading out some newspaper and picking up a brush. It's all I've needed to remember those hours as being among the happiest moments of my life. ❖

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*Buddha-nature requires no additions. One does not have to memorize sutras, recite prayers, or accumulate virtues to create it. All one needs to do is unveil it.*

—B. Alan Wallace



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## History

### Tetsugen and Buddhist Priorities

by Diane Patenaude Ames

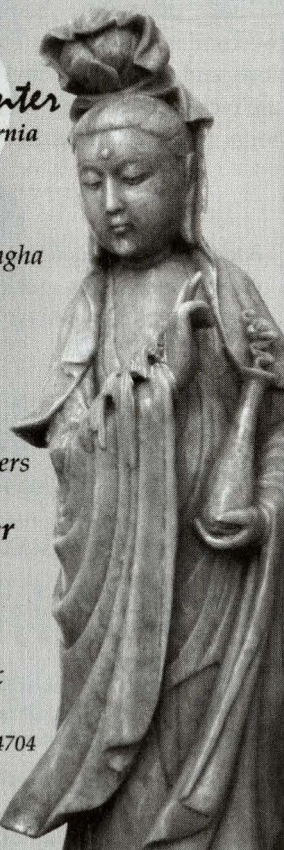
**T**etsugen Doko (1630–1682) originally intended to become a Shin priest. (“Shin” refers to the Jodo Shinshu, a Japanese Pure Land school founded by Shinran in the 13th century.) However, while studying at the Shin seminary in Kyoto, he decided that the Shinshu had become fossilized and riven by nasty internal politics. It was thus not surprising that when he met Yin-yuan (also called Ingen), the founder of Obaku Zen, he enthusiastically converted to the new school. Many of his former Shin colleagues never forgave this defection.

Yin-yuan was a renowned Chinese Zen master who had been imported by the government to reform Rinzai Zen. Though he never intended to found a new school, it was predictable that, in sectarian Japan, his followers immediately formed one. Obaku Zen, as this new school was called, differed from other Japanese Zen schools by combining meditation with Pure Land practice, using Chinese rituals, and emphasizing good works. At this time, the school also made a special point of requiring monks to adhere strictly to monastic precepts. When Tetsugen began to preach on this theme, many Shin followers interpreted it as a thinly veiled attack on Shin clergy, most of whom were married (Shin doctrine allows clergy to marry).

Tensions boiled over in 1674. Tetsugen was preaching on the *Surangama Sutra*, which has many passages about observing monastic precepts. Shin clergy asked to debate Tetsugen, but the request was refused by the authorities, as doctrinal debates were illegal in Tokugawa Japan. Consequently, a mob of Shin priests and peasant believers gathered to march on the town. At this ominous development, the provincial authorities asked Tetsugen to flee the province at once. He complied, explaining later that it was his duty as a Buddhist monk to do all he could to avoid bloodshed. Later two Shin priests were sentenced to death for inciting the riot. Tetsugen, in an effort to quiet sectarian passions, successfully pleaded for their lives.

However, Tetsugen is chiefly remembered for having printed the first Japanese *Tripitaka* (complete collection of Buddhist sutras and commentaries). Although his eloquence made him a very successful fundraiser, this project took 20 years because of his Buddhist priorities. Twice he raised the necessary money. Twice one of Japan’s frequent famines struck the land, and he spent the money on food for the poor. Only after the third round of fundraising was the *Tripitaka* printed.

In 1682 Tetsugen died of an illness he contracted ministering to the victims of yet another famine. To this day, Japanese tell their children that Tetsugen made three *Tripitakas* and the first two are the most beautiful. ❖



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## Surviving Harsh Conditions

by Stephanie Kaza

Religious pilgrimage is an age-old practice for venerating the sacred and generating humility. One can go on pilgrimage to holy sites such as Mt. Kailash or Mecca or Jerusalem, or join a peace walk across the United States, or hike the entire Appalachian Trail. We walk to be inspired by something much bigger than our own small views of the world. We walk to get tired, to be brought low, to gain perspective, to be transformed.

It is somewhat fashionable among Western Buddhists to undertake pilgrimages to the country of origin of their practice lineage. Buddhist tours are offered to India, Bhutan, Japan, Thailand, Tibet—remarkable opportunities to see shrines, temples, the physical history of this religion we hold dear. I have yearned for this opportunity myself. *If only I could go to Japan and see Eihei-ji! Then I would really know something about Dogen's tradition.* It looms large in my imagination as a must-do, life-transforming experience.

As it turns out, I was given the opportunity, in a small way, for another sort of pilgrimage. Let's call it the darker side of Buddhist history in America. A participant in the Seventh International Buddhist-Christian Conference in Los Angeles, I was invited to visit the Japanese-American National Museum. This museum tells the story of the unconstitutional incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II: how 120,000 U.S. citizens were interned in 10 concentration camps across the West and Midwest. In the stark black-and-white photos and videos the story unfolds—one week a family is enjoying the snow at Yosemite, the next week they have packed their bags and are crossing the desert by train. There in the museum is a reconstruction of one of the cramped family units, cracks in the walls, a small potbelly stove to ward off the freezing cold of Wyoming winters.

Among those interned were 4,000 Buddhist ministers of Japanese descent. Only a very few were allowed to remain in their communities. But even then, their temples were closed and used for storage, and signs were posted saying, "no congregating." Practicing Buddhism was a threat to society. In the camps, the ministers did what they could to maintain religious life for the residents. Life was very hard—the endless blowing sands, the primitive communal bathing, the segregation by gender and age in the dining halls, and most of all the terrible questioning of Japanese American loyalty to the U.S.

At the panel discussion that followed our museum tour, we listened to four Japanese American ministers, two Buddhist and two Christian. Two of them were Nisei (second generation) who had been in the camps, and two were Sansei (third generation) who were trying to make sense of their life as descendants of those who had been interned. As one elder explained, "What the son or daughter wants to

forget, the grandson or granddaughter wants to remember." They spoke of the role of religion in the process of acceptance and recovery from this assault on their constitutional liberties. Many families lost everything they had before the war; people with college degrees could not get jobs because of hateful discrimination. The most senior elder on the panel, Paul Nagano, author of *Triumphs of Faith*, explained how, out of trauma and difficult conditions, one develops deep faith. And I thought to myself: I have no idea what this really means.

It occurred to me that a Buddhist practicing in America could make a pilgrimage based on these internments, in order to understand something about our Buddhist inheritance. It would be a sobering journey to the sites of the camps, to the museum, and to the Japanese communities still affected by this shared memory of injustice. This history of the abuse of Buddhists in the United States is not pretty to look at. For a generation of Western converts in love with Zen and all the other rich lineages that have come to the U.S., we would prefer to protect our romanticized versions of Buddhism. But a pilgrimage to acknowledge this painful piece of history would be very useful, I thought. The museum was a place to begin, a place to remember what some other Buddhists have gone through to keep their religion and communities alive under harsh conditions. ❖



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# THE DHARMA AND THE MILITARY

A New Online Resource Guide  
from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

“Not to kill, but to cherish all life.” —The First Precept

What does it mean to be a student of Buddhism and to serve in the military? What do those of us who are Buddhist parents with sons nearing the age when registration with the U.S. Selective Service is required by law think about all of this?

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship website ([www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)) offers some resources for those who are wondering what an appropriate response is in relation to dharma practice and serving one's country, both for those already in the U.S. armed forces and for those who will soon be or are of Selective Service registration age.

BPF acknowledges the excellent work that has already been done in this area by our colleagues at the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO), the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and numerous other peace groups. Our intention is to guide you to many of these already existing resources, to offer some perspectives unique to Buddhist communities, and to let you know how BPF can be of help.

Traditional dharma teachings and practice lead us to seek a path of nonharming. “Not to kill, but to cherish all life” is the first precept, a guideline for living ethically and spiritually for many Buddhists. Yet we live in a world of complexity, and there are no easy answers. There have been many Buddhists the world over who have served in military forces in their countries, and there have been Buddhist institutions that have not protested and have supported the

## Did you know?

- There are now more than 50 U.S. citizens who refuse to fight in the war in Iraq and are seeking asylum from the U.S. military in Canada.
- Under the “No Child Left Behind” legislation, public high schools in the U.S. are required to submit names and addresses of their students to the U.S. government. However, parents can sign a waiver saying they do not want their child's information to be released. Schools not in compliance with “No Child Left Behind” may be refused federal funding.
- The U.S. Army and Navy Recruiting Commands are deploying a powerful recruiting weapon, and they're using America's schoolyards and classrooms to do it. The Army Cinema Vans, the Army Cinema Pods, the Army Adventure Vans, and the Navy Exhibit Centers are crisscrossing the country, with high-tech educational shows that glamorize military life.

use of military force by their nation.

We live in a society where many young people, because of poverty, lack of access to higher education and job training, and/or their desire to serve their country, choose to enlist in the military. There are about 2,500 identified Buddhists presently in the military. In April 2005, the first of these, a young Tibetan American man, died in combat in Iraq.

Historically, there have been reasons why Buddhists or young men from Buddhist families might have enlisted in the military, as in the case of some Japanese Americans during World War II. Against the backdrop of the Japanese American internment, they enlisted to prove their loyalty as U.S. citizens.

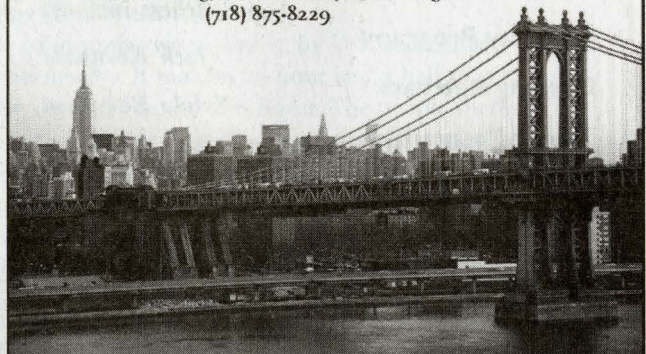
BPF encourages all of us to look deeply and thoughtfully into our own and our families' relationship to service in the military in terms of our real-life experiences, both past and present, in order to better understand the many dimensions of participating in or resisting military training and service. We advocate informed and compassionate dialogue, and urge Buddhist individuals and groups to consider how they might prepare for possible reinstatement of a draft in the U.S. ❖

For more information, see BPF's online guide:

- [www.bpf.org/html/current\\_projects/peace\\_pages](http://www.bpf.org/html/current_projects/peace_pages)
- Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO):  
[www.objector.org](http://www.objector.org)
- GI Rights Hotline: 800/379-2679
- Center for Conscience and War: [www.nisbco.org](http://www.nisbco.org):  
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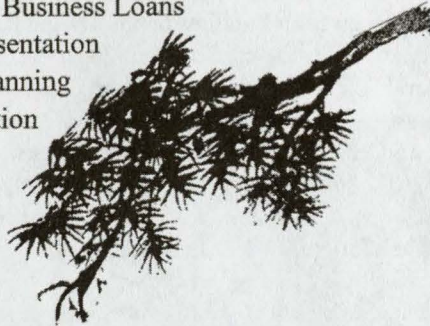
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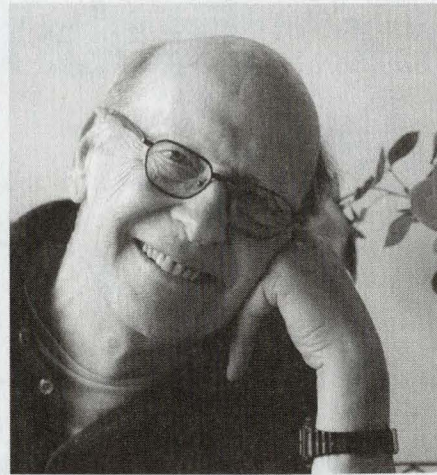
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## In Memoriam

### Bernard J. Somers, 1926–2005 Psychologist and Peace Activist



**B**ernard Somers was a longtime member and supporter of BPF. He died June 18 in Los Angeles due to complications of cancer after a short illness. He is survived by his wife, Virginia Mullin, as well as two children,

one step-child, two grandchildren, and three siblings.

Somers was a professor of psychology at Cal State Los Angeles, and a practicing clinical psychologist. He inspired two generations of students and others to lead lives of compassion and social change.

Well known for his skill as a group therapist, Somers specialized in groups for men and adult mixed groups. He wrote numerous professional articles, including contributions to the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

Somers was active in the social justice and peace movements all his life. He marched on Washington with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., rallied for fair housing in Watts, and offered his services pro bono to the Southern California Counseling Center. He volunteered as a draft counselor during the Vietnam War, headed the Los Angeles organization of Vietnam Summer, the nationwide antiwar movement led by Dr. King and Dr. Benjamin Spock in 1967, and later joined in the antinuclear movement of the 1980s.

In his later years, his activism focused on environmental issues, particularly the work of Earth Island Institute, a nonprofit incubator of community-based sustainable environmental projects around the world. And until his death, he worked to bring an end to the war in Iraq.

In 1990, he made Buddhist pilgrimages to Thailand, India, and Nepal.

I didn't know about Bernard Somers until his obituary was sent to us at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship office. I can be sad that I didn't know of such a wonderful life until after it was over, but I can also be grateful for Somers's life, and glad to celebrate it. In fact, I think it's important to celebrate such lives. They remind us that there are countless people beyond the realm of our acquaintanceship who are working hard for peace. This was a beautiful human life, and not only did we at BPF benefit directly from Somers's contributions, but everyone in the human family benefited indirectly from his actions for peace and justice. ❖ —Susan Moon

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# Practicing the Eight Awarenesses with a Peace Community in Colombia

by Jiko Linda Cutts

I've been looking at and reflecting on a body of teaching called "The Eight Awarenesses of a Great Being." This particular teaching was given by Shakyamuni Buddha right at the end of his life, supposedly while on his death bed. Because these are said to be Buddha's last teachings, they are held in very high regard.

I will tell you what these eight awarenesses are, and then I will speak about a trip I made to Colombia, to visit a peace community. I want to speak about the practice of a humanitarian delegation in the light of these teachings.

The Eight Awarenesses are:

- having few desires
- knowing how much is enough
- enjoying tranquility and serenity
- exerting diligent effort
- not neglecting mindfulness
- practicing meditation
- cultivating wisdom
- avoiding hollow speech

The humanitarian delegation of which I was a part was sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). One of the main reasons I wanted to join this delegation was that my daughter Sarah was co-leading it. She has been in Colombia for a couple of years as a human rights worker. She's now based in Bogotá, but she lived for a year in the peace community of San José de Apartadó in the Urabá region of northern Colombia, one of more than 50 peace communities that have declared themselves neutral in the ongoing civil war. [See "Life in a Peace Community in a Colombian War Zone," by Sarah Weintraub, in *Turning Wheel*, Spring 2004.] One of the projects of the FOR Colombia Program focuses on supporting the people of San José de Apartadó, the community we visited. They have taken a stand against violence at the very center of a war zone, refusing to support any armed group. The community has suffered terribly from political violence, mostly by paramilitary groups supported by the Colombian Army. I wanted to see for myself what the situation was.

Although our delegation was not Buddhist, the trip was very reminiscent of a Zen sesshin. We followed a demanding schedule. For our own safety and

the security of the people we were visiting, we had to follow various admonitions. We had very little free time. Our meals were provided, and we were together most of the time. We experienced the bonding that happens when you're going through something difficult together. The application for the delegation said: "THIS IS NOT A VACATION. Are you ready for very little sleep and scorpions and malaria? Please be very sure that you want to go on this trip."

## Having Few Desires

San José de Apartadó is in a corner of Colombia that is extremely fertile, and rich with minerals and oil. Many atrocities and human rights abuses have been perpetrated against the indigenous people, the *campesinos*, because they occupy this land. Multinational corporations and others want to get people out of the way so they can get at the resources and do what they want with the land. So the *campesinos* have asked for help from the international community, and that's why my daughter and others are doing accompaniment work there, and why human rights delegations visit. The presence of international peaceworkers and delegations brings some measure of protection to the local people, and delegates can bring back to the North the news of what's really going on there.

## Knowing How Much Is Enough

The community we visited is, by U.S. standards, a poor community. It took us an hour and a half to get there by mule. It's in the rain forest. The people there say, "*Que bonita La Unión!*"—that's the name of the little village—"How beautiful our village is." And it is very, very beautiful. The people live in small wooden buildings with dirt floors. They have only recently gotten running water and toilets, thanks to a donation from a Swedish foundation. And they say, "We have everything we need." When the mangoes are ripe, there are so many you can't keep up with them. You can't give them away! And when the avocados are in season, there are so many that they feed them to the pigs. They brought us big baskets when we arrived. You can't make enough guacamole! They were shocked to hear how much we pay for one avocado in the store.

They also know where things come from. When we arrived, they made us delicious corn cakes called

**When the avocados are in season, there are so many that they feed them to the pigs.**

*arepas*. To make them, they have to plant the corn, and take good care of the corn, and harvest the corn. Then they strip the dried corn from the cobs and grind it by hand. They make the corn meal into a patty and fry it. "And here's an arepa!" they said, offering us the fresh corn cakes as welcoming gifts.

The Buddha said that one who is constantly led by the five desires is pitied by those who know how much is enough. In the village, they have lots of animals. They have sows with little piglets who run in and out of the houses, and lots of chickens. The villagers asked Sarah if she had pigs at home in California.

No, she said, we don't have pigs.

And they asked, "Do you have a cow?"

"No, we don't have a cow."

"Chickens? Do you have at least chickens?"

"No, we don't have chickens."

"Do you have to buy everything from a store?"

She said, "Pretty much. At Green Gulch we have some crops, but pretty much, you have to buy everything."

And they said, "Oh. *Que pena!* That's too bad. You have to buy everything from a store. Oh! Such poverty!"

So these people live in a beautiful place and they know how beautiful it is, and they know they have enough.

### Enjoying Tranquility and Serenity

Buddha said, "If you want to have the joy of serene non-doing, you should be away from the crowds and stay alone in a quiet place." You can take this literally, as an encouragement for monastic practice. But I don't think it means that everyone should quit their jobs and go into the Los Padres National Forest. I see it as finding tranquility and serenity each day of our lives.

In Colombia, many, many people are working for human rights. But as soon as I said I was going to Colombia, people here said, "Oh, that's where everyone is trafficking in drugs." That's how the media portrays Colombia. There are hardly any tourists there. But there are thousands of people working for human rights in all different ways. These are grassroots efforts.

One of the groups we met with was a women's group called Ruta Pacifica, the Peaceful Way. They were working with women who face terrible situations in their neighborhoods, and they had created a safe space of tranquility and serenity for these women.

### Exerting Diligent Effort

If you're finding places of serenity and tranquility, your diligent effort can flow right from there.

Thousands of Colombians are exerting diligent effort in choosing to work for human rights—lawyers, doctors, teachers, nuns, priests. They could be doing other things, but along with the human-

rights workers from other countries, many Colombians are risking their lives for peace.

To meet with these people—dedicated, clear-thinking, and unwavering—was to be in the presence of heroes. With a bodhisattva spirit, they are living for the benefit of others, at great danger to themselves. The number of assassinations and disappearances and massacres and kidnappings in Colombia is among the highest in the world.

And why, as an American, should I be concerned with Colombia? Colombia is the third largest recipient of U.S. military aid, after Israel and Egypt. We are increasing the numbers of our troops there too. So we in the U.S. have a great deal to do with what's happening in Colombia, and yet we know very little about it.

### Not Neglecting Mindfulness

Our mindfulness practice—doing that which is before us with a true heart and taking care of each thing as it comes—is enormously important. According to Dogen, "When your mindfulness is solid, you will not be harmed." Once you put the armor of mindfulness on, fear drops away.

In Colombia, there are three armed factions: the army, the paramilitary, and the insurgents. The paramilitary and the army are connected, and the paramilitary commits human rights abuses with the sanction, in many cases, of the army. This is well documented. The third group is the guerrilla leftist insurgents. The human rights workers, even though they are nonviolent, are lumped with the leftist insurgents and seen as internal enemies by the army and the state. Everything they do puts them at great risk.

One of our delegation's activities was to meet with a man who was in the army. The Seventeenth Brigade is charged with protecting the peace community of San José de Apartadó. We met face to face with a colonel in the brigade, a person who has been accused of human rights abuses, including torture. My practice at this time was, "Can I hold to my intention not to abandon any being?" One of the practices of the delegation was just to listen. How could I stay open to this person, in spite of my judgments, and just listen? It was a very interesting and very difficult practice for me.

The colonel started the conversation by telling us how proud he was of his brother, who was at the School of the Americas in Georgia. I could feel a jolt go through our group of peace delegates. There was a group effort to be respectful, to listen, and to realize that this person is the way he is due to causes and conditions: his past, his upbringing, how he was indoctrinated, what happened to him. I reminded myself that with the same conditions, I might be in the same situation. I practiced not neglecting mindfulness while face to face with someone who thinks very differently from the way I think.



### Practicing Meditation

As Zen students, we notice that just sitting, daily or weekly, and making this a focus of our lives helps us find stability in these times of great instability.

I saw that the people in the peace community had a kind of stability in their farming work—the meditation of taking care of cacao, banana, and plantain. Farming is a meditative act, I feel. You have to be gathering your mindfulness and abide with all things as they arise and vanish in order to take care of plants and animals.

### Cultivating Wisdom

There are three kinds of wisdom: the wisdom of hearing, the wisdom of contemplating what you've heard, and the wisdom of incorporating your understanding into your own practice and life.

The listening aspect of cultivating wisdom was a big part of our practice in Colombia. There is great power both in listening and in being heard. I can't emphasize enough the healing effect of knowing someone has listened to you. So listening to people was part of our practice while we were there. It was as if they were testifying for truth and reconciliation. They told us stories of unspeakable things that have happened—stories of disappearances, torture, and massacres. It was difficult to listen to these testimonies and not shut down. As I heard certain things, I could actually feel my body begin to close. But the practice was just to keep on listening. This is what Avalokiteshvara does—she who hears the cries of the world. So the sixth awareness means, first, to listen to your own self and others; second, to reflect on what you've heard and clarify it; and third, to make it your own life and act from there.

We don't need to attain the full, end-of-the-line wisdom, whatever that might be, before we act. Imagine bamboo shoots. There's an inner part of the bamboo shoot that's used for wrapping food. The bamboo can be used before it is full grown. You don't have to wait to act in the world even if your wisdom is a little shoot. You can act on little-bamboo-shoot wisdom.

### Avoiding Hollow Speech

There is a distinction between what I call friendliness or "small talk," which is about getting to know somebody, and idle chatter just to hear yourself talk. Sometimes people overdo this practice of avoiding idle talk: they don't say *anything*, they just stand around in a meditative posture and look mindful! But if you live according to conditions, then when it's time to have a friendly discussion, you have a friendly discussion. Friendly discussions often build friendships.

We had to practice this—avoiding idle discussion—when we were in Colombia; it was one of the admonitions of our delegation—we couldn't speak

freely. In Colombia, you can't just talk about whatever you want on the bus or in a minivan or in a taxi or on the street or at a restaurant, because you never know who might be overhearing you. If you mention a name, you could be putting someone in danger. But as Americans, we are used to speaking any time, with anyone, at the top of our lungs, about anything, and so it was very hard. We would come out of a meeting with a lot to talk about, wanting to debrief, and we'd start in—chattering, chattering, and using names.

We had to help each other not to do that when it wasn't safe for security reasons. So we had a way to remind each other: when one of us went overboard with talking, we'd say, "I think you need some chocolate. Would you like some chocolate?" And we'd give the person a piece of chocolate to put in their mouth. We'd often have to say, "Anybody want some chocolate? I've got some chocolate here." And even so, sometimes people wouldn't catch on, and they'd say, "No, no, I don't want any chocolate," and they'd keep right on yapping! "Chocolate! Chocolate!" we'd say.

We learned something about the power of speech. We met artists, writers, and people doing street theater at great risk to themselves. We met people who talked about disappearances, and about what was really going on. It's powerful to hear someone speak the truth when you know that they could be endangering their life by doing so. With the freedom of speech we have in the U.S., most of us are not up against that.

We felt the power of art and poetry, and the power of all the young people who are using street theater and costumes and all kinds of other ways to bring out the truth. It was so powerful! And we in the U.S. take for granted that ability to express ourselves.

So we practiced not being engaged in idle discussions. The Buddha taught that you should speak only when what you say meets four conditions: it's true, it's beneficial, and the time and the place are right.

We had to work with that. The delegation was not a Buddhist delegation, but that's what we had to work with: was it true, was it beneficial, and was the time and place right to speak? Practicing in that way for those two weeks made me want to take this practice on, and continue.

The work in Colombia continues. On February 24, 2005, there was a massacre in San José de Apartadó. Eight people were killed, including one of the founders of the peace community and three young children. Volunteers for the FOR Colombia Program are needed. Please contact FOR at 415/495-6334. ♦

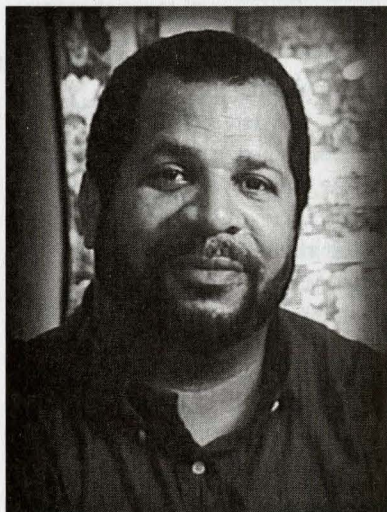
*Jiko Linda Cutts is co-abbess of San Francisco Zen Center and lives at Green Gulch Farm. She leads practice periods there and at Tassajara. She is a past president of the BPF board. In September 2005, she's co-leading a women's trip to China, to visit temples to Kuanyin.*

**You can't just talk about whatever you want on the bus or at a restaurant because you never know who might be overhearing you.**

# Centered in the Dharma

## An Interview with Choyin Rangdrol

by John W. Ellis IV



*After pursuing a career in psychiatry, Choyin Rangdrol was called by a vision to Vajrayana Buddhism. Today he is a teacher in the Tibetan tradition and the founder of Rainbow Dharma in Oakland, California. In 2002, he was awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award For Community Service for pioneering Buddhist teaching in Oakland. He is author of Buddhist Meditations for African Americans and Black Buddha: Living Without Fear. John W. Ellis IV talked with him in his home in the spring of 2005.*

**John W. Ellis IV:** So tell me a little bit about this place. My first thought was

that this was your house. Then I walked in and thought, "Oh, it's a center."

**Choyin Rangdrol:** It's both. We opened this place in June of 2004, but I've been teaching here in Oakland for about five years. I felt it was important for me to first circulate in the community and get a feel for what's going on. As you know, Oakland is a very diverse place and the black community here has a deep tapestry of belief systems and faith practices. In Oakland we have international people and black people from all over the world.

I practice Tibetan Buddhism, but I volunteered at Spirit Rock [a vipassana center in Marin County, California] and Bay Area Zen centers, just to be in the area. I also worked with the Order of Interbeing, Thich Nhat Hanh's Northern California sangha. Last year I was the first teacher who was not one of Thich Nhat Hanh's students to be invited to that sangha to teach at a retreat. This was a big honor because they have a legacy of Buddhist social and political activity. Thich Nhat Hanh asked his sangha to be more open to other traditions and particularly to have a connection with teachers of color. I was very honored and privileged.

I came to Oakland because of the diverse community here—within Oakland you will find almost all of the sufferings of the world. There are human beings suffering in Africa; their relatives live here. There are people suffering in Southeast Asia; their relatives are your neighbors. You find Europeans suffering; their loved ones work at City Hall. And so on and so forth.

By coming to this microcosm of humanity it's possible to connect Buddhism with almost all the various aspects of suffering that we find in the world.

**John:** What are some of the challenges of being here?

**Choyin:** The big challenge everywhere is that people see themselves as separate. When I say *separate* I am not talking about the conspicuous aspects of separate: the kind of hair we have, skin color, eye color, etc. I mean the separateness that arises from self-cherishing, thinking of yourself as special and different from another human being. Look, for example, at the black community. You might think they have had a common history in America, and yet, in the black community, skin color, gender issues, who's gay, who's lesbian—these are still divisive issues. So within the sameness there is a lot of diversity that fuels the conflict that arises out of the belief that we are separate. Even within the same family you can find a mother who hates her husband, children who hate their mother, or a son very angry at his father.

You can't be that way and be happy. Happiness is a great marketing campaign, you know. If you are a happy person, people want to know what you are so happy about. Perhaps I don't mean just happy, but stable. We live in a very unstable world. We are afraid to walk places at night in our own community. We have an unstable world, an unstable community, unstable families, unstable religions. Really look at the world. Who is safe? Are Christians safe in this world? No they're not. Are Muslims safe? Are Jews safe? No they're not. Atheists? No they're not. Nobody is safe. We are all together in this—it is a very difficult world.

That doesn't mean don't engage. In fact Buddha said that's where we should be. Anybody can be stable on a beautiful day. What about when the thunder rolls and rumbles on the horizon? What about when there is trouble in the air? Can you be stable then? Forget about Buddhism—it's not important. The world does not need to be Buddhist, it needs to be stable. Then we are all safe.

For me, this is an important point. I'm a wrathful guy. I'm a Trinidadian. I have my nature, which can sometimes be very aggressive. I know that—that's why I need to be a lama. I didn't start out wanting to be a lama. I mostly wanted to tame this thing called *me, myself, and I*. And when I got down to the skills I really

needed, I realized that I needed to become a teacher because I was so obstructive. I really had to learn how to keep *me* in check—not binding me with my hands tied behind my back, but making me into a human being.

To me the highest practice is to be a decent human being with integrity on the inside. Then, radiate that as best you can in the world and perhaps the world becomes better. If people ask you how you do that, you don't talk about Buddhism, you talk about your spiritual life, because most people have one. How is your Christianity? Is it good for you? Is it creating stability for you? If it is, then you and I have something in common. Your Judaism—is it making you feel comfortable? Then you and I have something in common. Does Islam make you a better father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, community member? Then we have something in common. Then we are having what I call a concentric relationship with people of different faiths, and our wisdom is converging.

**John:** Tell me about the center.

**Choyin:** I think that this “center” idea can be a problem. The problem with human beings’ separateness is the boundaries they create. A center has boundaries, a philosophy, a mission statement. It has revenue streams and a stated objective. Sometimes the idea of a center makes us separate. We have separate in our minds and we imbue everything with it.

I bring people to my *house*. I really think people have a different feeling about coming to your house rather than your center. They have a different expectation about their conduct and their sincerity. Sometimes centers try to make money off of the students: how many seats, how many people coming to retreat—that’s your revenue stream. That’s not good for my practice. I’m not saying that other people shouldn’t do it. I’m simply saying that for me that’s not right, because I need to tell my students what they need to hear. Sometimes the teacher needs to be ugly with a student. I cannot always be their friend. Sometimes teachers are your worst enemy, because we point out your faults and tell everybody. The teacher needs to have that authentic ability to engage without being concerned about damaging revenue streams. This is why I don’t have a center.

This raises another issue: I am a full-time teacher, but I don’t make a living off of my students. So how do I live? My wife works and she helps, and I have some students who are able to give donations, and we try to make ends meet each month. But it’s very difficult.

What I am more concerned about is the quality of heart my students have—and how much money is that worth? How much money is it worth to have two adults talking about divorce who then change their

minds because their dharma teacher helped them through it? How much money is it worth when long-term animosity between people is finally resolved and healed? Maybe I am poor in money, but I am very rich in dharma activities, and that is my choice.

When you look at other cultures—for example, Tibetan culture, pre-Chinese invasion—you find a level of peace over centuries that we have never known in this country. Their income per capita, per individual, is pennies on the dollar to what we make. And then ask yourself how many people jumped off the bridge this year? Why are our prisons so full of people? Why are our mental institutions still booming? Why is the medical industry making so much money off of stress-related illness?

There is a level of unhappiness in our individualism that is not only damaging to others but that it is lethal—fatal even—to us as well. And so when you look at the discrepancy between those who are poor and happy and those who are wealthy and miserable and who also create misery in the world, you have the portal from which an important discussion can begin.

Why are we like this? Let’s talk about the war going on inside your mind, the war about who you are and what you aspire to be, and whether you believe you can make it. Let’s talk about your self-esteem and what misunderstandings and misconceptions you have about yourself and this world that cause you to be dangerous to the people you love. What is it like to love you? Do people survive loving you or are they harmed by it?

I can speak personally about this: it’s hard to serve your ex-wife who hates you. It really is, but you have to do it, if you can. But, if you can and you don’t do it, that is worse. My dharma teacher helped me do this. I have a family now; it’s my second family. But he kept asking, “Where is your first family? Where are your children? How is your ex-wife?” He kept bugging me. He was trying to tell me that I had to go back and rewrite the narrative of my life, and rework the relationships that I had destroyed. Because there are certain things that only a father can tell a child, I had a big mess to clean up.

I think that as a Buddhist if you are really concerned about your karma you have to go the extra mile. You have to think, “I may have been part of the problem and maybe it was my fault.” And then, as my students will tell you, you have to be willing to say the three most powerful mantras known to humankind. The first mantra is, “I’m sorry.” The second mantra is, “It was my fault.” You don’t say you’re sorry because it was your fault or you were to blame, you say it because it needs to be said. Because if “I’m sorry” can heal the situation, then you can take responsibility for something bad that happened

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even though you don't deserve it. The third mantra, the *coup de grâce*, and the final thing that really makes it work is, "What can I do to make it better?" You can take action to make it better. Even though it wasn't your fault, and it's not your responsibility anymore, as a Buddhist you can be big enough to take the blame.

**John:** How does your teaching of Buddhism heal the pain caused by racism?

**Choyin:** Remember Ronald Reagan? His Republican administration said "I'm sorry" to the Japanese for the internments. The Clinton administration asked the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to apologize to the indigenous people of the U.S. for the way they were treated. The BIA admitted that white settlers had committed crimes, including giving Native Americans blankets with smallpox. The healing was unbelievable—just the admission of the wrong was one of the most powerful moments in U.S. history. That's real power, when you can say, "I'm sorry."

Certainly there is a bigger issue of reparations that we can't take on here. These areas need resolution. We don't have to think that it has never been done, and as a Buddhist I think it is fair and good to point out that it has been done.

**John:** So where did your idea of Rainbow Dharma come from?

**Choyin:** Rainbow Dharma was created for the diversity of humanity. We are a lineage of family householders and so we don't have a monastic set-up or center where people come. I think the center for every student is called your living room. It's called where you go to work. We don't really need dharma centers, we need people centered in the dharma.

Rainbow Dharma is the place where people who feel that they are different can come and have a sense of what it means to be free in your mind. I teach my students to be Buddhonauts, like astronauts—to step out of the boundaries and go into the Buddha-space, where they can take another look at what's going on. Take a look at the victimization of people all over the world! How do we heal that? How do we heal divisiveness?

It goes back to the issue of how human beings think. We have different hair and different noses, but that is not how we are different. We're more different in the things we believe. And even with people of color, racism is not an issue of pigment. In my view, racism is an issue of resource hoarding. Resource hoarding is my term for who's got it, and how they keep it, and who they are going to use to make sure that it doesn't go away. For example, when you look back at slavery, there were the slaves in the field and there was the overseer, who was black, too. Why?

Because he got some material benefit—maybe a wood floor instead of a dirt floor. He was always going to be a slave, but at least he was one step up from the other ones. To think that it's one race-group against another race-group is naive. Sometimes the most damage a race endures is from its own people.

Look at the murder rate in the African American community—who's doing that? They are killing each other. It's a result of some psychosocial, economic circumstance, yes, but it's not a different race coming in and killing black people. Sometimes people of color can be obstructive to people of color.

But it's not just race; it could be money that makes the division. Sometimes you have an affluent sangha and they don't want to be in the company of the poor sangha. These are problems that teachers and leaders have to work with.

**John:** All that separation seems very antithetical to the teachings.

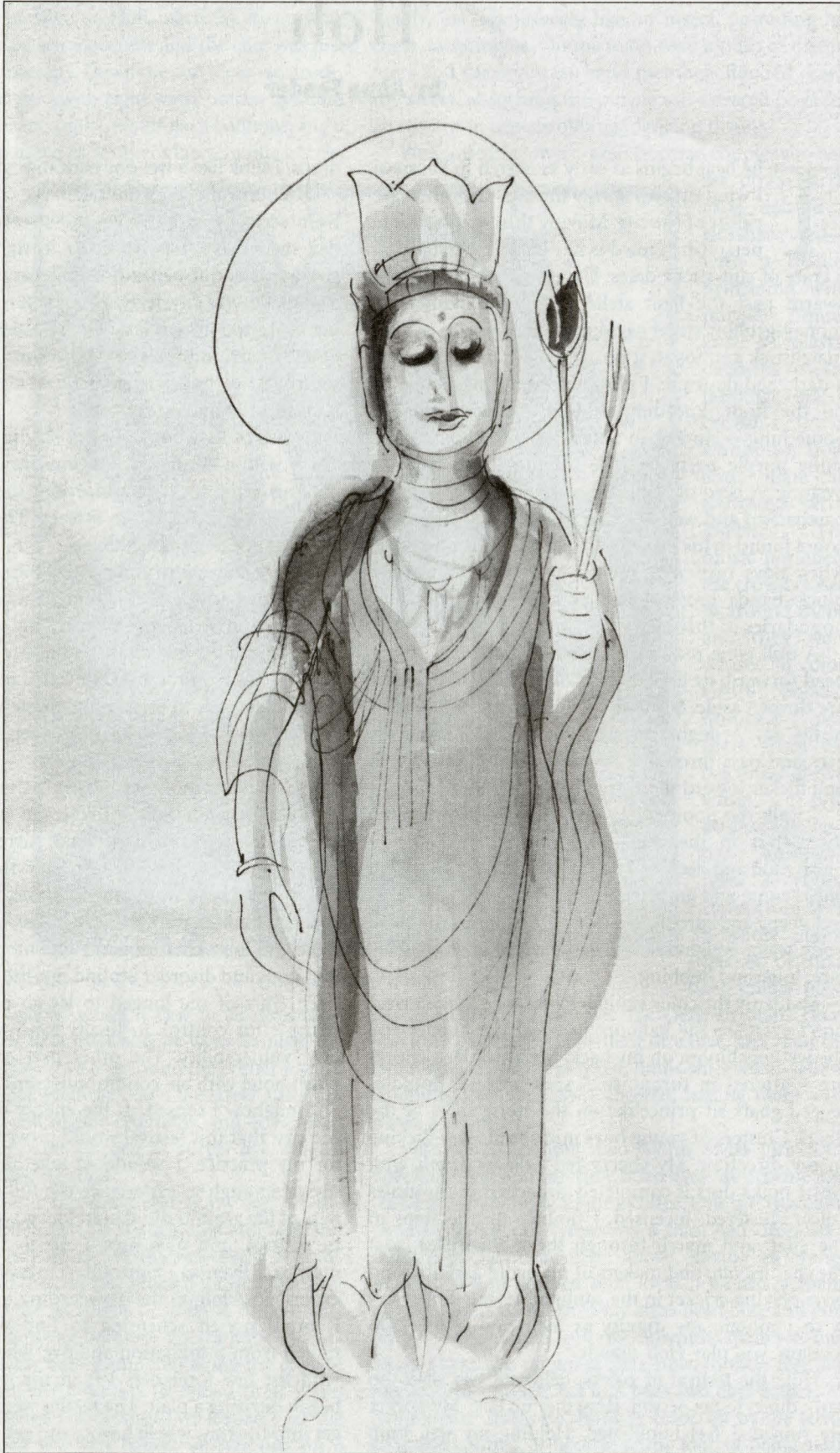
**Choyin:** Not really, because Buddhism is the antidote—a problem manifests and then you let Buddhism work with it. A Buddhist environment is not purified. You need troublemakers and enemies. Troublemakers will stir you up when you are too comfortable. And that's good, because then you really have to look at yourself. Enemies are really great because they will tell you about yourself and they don't care what you think.

**John:** You just defined *teacher* and *enemy* as the same thing.

**Choyin:** Actually in our tradition a teacher is called "a dangerous friend." They can love you and tell you about yourself, too. They can give you everything they possibly can to make your life better and also tell you that you need to straighten up. That's real love. Buddhism does not need human beings; human beings need Buddhism. Teachers are in a position to remind students why they came.

You asked me about Rainbow Dharma, and in essence, I should say it is my attempt to create a place where people can learn about the blind spots within themselves. My service is seeing deeply and helping others do that too. This is the real work. It's not just the individual who is hurting, it's whole societies. The world is hurting. Our mission is to help people heal, to help them not be that person who is both hurting and causing harm to others. ❖

*John W. Ellis IV is a freelance writer, martial arts instructor, and member of the East Bay Church of Religious Science. He lives in Oakland with his wife and five-year-old son.*



*Kuanyin*  
Roberta Pyx Sutherland

# Holi

by Ahna Fender

The heat begins as early as March in Varanasi. I wind my way slowly through the inner corridors of the city. Moving through the dense, perspiring crowd is like being pressed inside a crate of sun-sticky dates. Dynasties of flies rise and swarm past the fruit stalls and grimy edifices. A money-grubby street vendor cleans his ear with a matchstick and tosses it onto the pavement. Through a darkened doorway, I glimpse several men kneeling on the floor, kneading mounds of white dough. Something is stirring in Shiva's city: the boatmen in shiny purple party hats tie up their boats for the evening. A herd of boys run to the river's edge. One, barebacked and wet, in clinging lilac briefs, releases a cobra found in his mother's kitchen. This is the season when boys turn into men—push through crowds, quick hands groping mango-soft breasts, test the boundaries of their sex.

A bull gone mad in the narrow grotto thrusts its head forward, its body a mass of bucking muscle. We are thrown aside. Something wild rises with the fever of the day. At night, the street fires burn. I lower my eyes and pass through the crowds; lean arms stretch and flicker toward me. Something wild is still rising.

I walk the noon-still *ghats*. Water buffalo cooling themselves in the shallows tread underwater over plush mud and decomposing flowers. The orange-clad *babas* come and go beneath the enormous blue sky. I feel sleepy and surreal, like the water buffalo, my whole body water-weightless, only my head above the surface, huge and bobbing.

Suddenly the color explodes over me from above. I don't even see the balloon, just feel the impact and the wetness bloom on my back. My arms, feet, cheeks are spattered in turquoise. I spin around. Spindle-legged goats sit princelike on the stone steps of the *ghats*. Clusters of young boys mill about, eyes flicking in my direction. My cherry-red *salwaar kamis* with white polka dots is completely drenched in turquoise color. Flustered, incensed, I flounce up the steps of the *ghat*, and march through the marketplace, past the *chai wallahs* and makers of marigold garlands and boys playing cricket in the sunlight, trying desperately to maintain my dignity as men caw at me: "Oh madam, you play *Holi* already?"

Holi: the festival of colors, delivered two days too early, direct to my person. Have they no tact? My clothes are ruined. I feel humiliated. Holding my wet, limp *dupatta* in my hands, my cheeks spattered with blue

drops, I slink like a wet dog back into my guest house.

The festival energy has taken the city. Music blares from scratchy speakers on the streets, and the boys flail their arms, hips gyrating in tight circles. Little girls strut about beneath bright parasols. Many foreigners flee the city, feeling the friction in the air, having heard the stories: last year a Danish tourist left his hotel for five minutes on the morning of Holi, and returned two hours later, stripped completely naked and smeared in cow dung.

Those of us who choose to stay in Varanasi come down with a strange, contagious strain of agitation, making us jumpy, paranoid, eyeing the high balconies as we duck through the streets. The hotel owners warn us not to go outside.

Before coming to India I was barraged with well-intentioned advice on the myriad ways I would need to protect myself. From filtering my water to pepper spray and baggage locks, from lice treatments to money belts and rabies shots, I received copious counsel on how to establish my defenses against foreign elements. There were, I had been assured, ways to manage the chaos.

After several months of living in this country, I realized that what I had really come here for was to *unlearn* my defenses—to practice surrender. I watched how my mind wanted to keep everything under control, to be spared from any discomfort or irritation. I soon learned the impossibility of this way of functioning in my new environment. The more I fought with the chaos and disorder around me, the more miserable I felt. Part of me longed to let go of the desperate struggle for control, to finally touch the core of my own vulnerability. The other part of me wanted a plush hotel with air-conditioning and a bathtub.

Somehow I sensed, as the energy rose throughout the city, that this festival would prove to be a crucible for my practice. I wondered whether I could open myself enough to experience the full chaos and rawness of life around me. Could I let go of my need to be in control, and give myself up to the play of the moment? Even as I committed myself to stay, and to experience Holi, in the days leading up to the festival I found myself scheming to find ways to protect myself from humiliation and overwhelm. I linked up with the few foreigners left in my guest house and began devising a plan. The tactics were classic: how to get into the fray, wreak havoc, and get away while sustaining as little damage to our persons as possible.

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We rose before dawn on Holi, when the streets were still bathed in blue semidarkness and the chai was just boiling on the stovetops. Down the corridors we strode, a pack of four, armed with eight water bottles of liquid color (red, green, and pink), handfuls of balloons, and a pump gun. We painted each other's faces, military-style, with stripes of brilliant red powder. My uniform consisted of the ruined red salwaar kamis, still patterned with turquoise splotches. With a swimming cap-type hat fashioned out of a plastic bag, bug-eyed sunglasses, and my soiled dupatta draped over my head, I looked like some bizarre, tattered 50s film-star.

On Sonapura Road, bands of men were beginning to assemble. As we sped along, one man pushed himself right up into my face, hissing, "Madam! You are fool to go out!"

Then the color was let loose: it flew in all directions, from us and at us all at once and we were running, my back soaked purple as we tore round the corner toward Harischandra Ghat. Halfway down the street a fire still smoldered from last night's ceremony, and boys caked in ash and silver paint, doused in purple dye, danced wildly, flailing, flinging color.

We cut through the mass and burst out on the other side, purple liquid in our mouths and ears and running down our arms. We ducked inside a hotel. The man behind the counter greeted us with a smirk. We bounded up the six flights of stairs to the rooftop. Below, a gang of young barefoot rascals in purple and green party hats scampered along the edge of the building into their houses to reload their water pistols. With spirited ruthlessness, we leaned over the side and dropped the first round of balloons on a cluster of them. A little boy in a gold mask danced

madly, his legs jittering like an insect, pounding his chest, taunting us. On the main road a train of drummers and sundry brass-band members flooded down the street, absorbing the purple ash-covered boys for an instant in one throbbing, dancing throng.

We spotted below a crazed German couple who had

set up a barricade behind a rickshaw, and—with a bucket brimming with purple liquid, and a plastic bazooka—were fending off a crowd of whooping boys and men in spattered white *kurtas*. The music pounded, the crowd closed in around them, and they were doused in color, entire buckets dumped over them from the balconies above, while they poured out purple ammunition. A young Indian tore open a whole plastic packet of brilliant yellow powder

and emptied it all over the German man. There was a single, shocked moment of pause, and then the two men suddenly embraced, limbs smeared in yellow, laughing, and the crowd cheered, hailing them with waves of water.

Meanwhile, upstairs, two blond Swiss girls with porcelain skin and carefully lined eyes sat pristine and pastel in the sunlight, sipping coffee. One girl was complaining about how yesterday a man had dropped a balloon on her head from above, leaving an orange skunk-stripe in her platinum locks. I looked at them, and then glanced down at my arms dyed blue and purple, my soggy pants legs, my clownish, spattered uniform. There was no going back now. In their fear and disdain I saw myself as I had been two days before, hit by that first turquoise shock of color, hit by the terror of losing control, of becoming the fool, of being swallowed up into the wilds of that insurmountable energy.



Hamlet Mateo, *Festival*

*Hamlet Mateo grew up in the Dominican Republic and now lives in Sonoma County, California. He has practiced Zen meditation since 1998.*

page hill starzinger  
*if it comes to nothing*

throw salt  
 over your left shoulder

remember that zero  
 shattered  
 the framework of logic

consider the moment just  
 after  
 the blackbird whistles

*Page Hill Starzinger grew up in Vermont and now lives in Manhattan with two big cats. She started practicing insight meditation a year ago.*

I took a deep breath, and with friends Byron and Pascal, and two sacks full of rainbow-colored water balloons, plunged downstairs, joining the bazooka-wielding Germans. At once the color began to fly, splashing on the street. Suddenly a shiny-eyed Indian with silver paint on his hands locked his gaze on me and barreled my way. I threw one and then two red balloons that exploded over him, but he was unstoppable. He tackled me and smeared his silver-caked palms down my cheeks. By the time I broke free, another small boy had already latched onto my back like a mad koala bear, reaching from behind to smear motor oil on my face, in my mouth, on my teeth.

Just then, out of nowhere, appeared a pack of lank Italians from our guest house. The tough, raspy, brown-haired girl—drenched head to toe in color, face smeared like a muddied rainbow—emptied a bottle of blue water over my head and we screamed and hooted and doused each other. The street had gone mad, pulsating. A drunk *sadhu* with a splotched bushel of gray hair raved in his rainbow-dyed *dhoti* and kids flung cow patties, while a frazzled, tie-dyed group of Japanese tourists straggled by. And all the while, chanting packs of mourners in a funeral procession carried bodies on bamboo stretchers down the street to the burning ghat, the corpses covered in metallic gold paper and draped in red patterned cloth like garish gift-wrapped packages. Colored balloons exploded mercilessly on the hood of the white funeral car and upon the white-clad mourners, while stray dogs wrestled and tore scraps of gold paper in the alleyways and a toothless grandmother rocked contentedly on her door-stoop to the deafening music.

We ran home along the ghats, to the sound of breaking glass on the streets, past color-spattered policemen standing about, past cows, goats, and dogs splotched with color. We had come face to face with our fear, and with that potent, wild energy we had felt building in the city's core all week. I knew then that I had come to Varanasi for this purpose, to be immersed in the marketplace, bathed in the wildness, absorbed in the elements—the water, the dung, the ash. I knew that I had had to let go of everything for the transformation to occur. Something inside me had opened: in letting go, I found myself full of a boundless freedom. Wet, limp-limbed, shaking from exhaustion, heart throbbing, I returned, having broken through layers of fear and dirt and ego. I returned, having touched something deep down in myself, something uncontainable. ❖

*Ahna Fender lives in a silo overlooking a llama farm in central Massachusetts and works at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre.*



# Enlightenment Means an Appropriate Response

## A Conversation with Justine Dawson

by Donald Rothberg and Sara Schedler

**H**ow do we bring our spiritual practice into the work of service to those in need? What are the particular challenges of this mode of engagement in the world?

*Justine Dawson is exploring these questions, in a life that connects a traditional Buddhist practice with direct service work for women and children in need. In the following conversation, she speaks of the joys and difficulties of this path. She finds the heart of direct service in learning, moment-to-moment, about the nature of an “appropriate response.”*

*Justine has served in a diverse number of social change organizations over the past 10 years. At the time of this conversation, she was working as a resident volunteer at Elizabeth House, a transition house for women and children in the San Francisco Bay Area. Elizabeth House offers housing, meals, educational programming, and a supportive living environment for families moving from homelessness and poverty to independence. At the house, Justine was involved in daily resident support, development of children’s programs, and coordination of volunteers. A young dharma practitioner with considerable retreat experience and a graduate of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship’s 2003 San Francisco BASE program, Justine was also facilitator of the 2005 East Bay BASE program. Currently she is on long-term retreat in Massachusetts.*

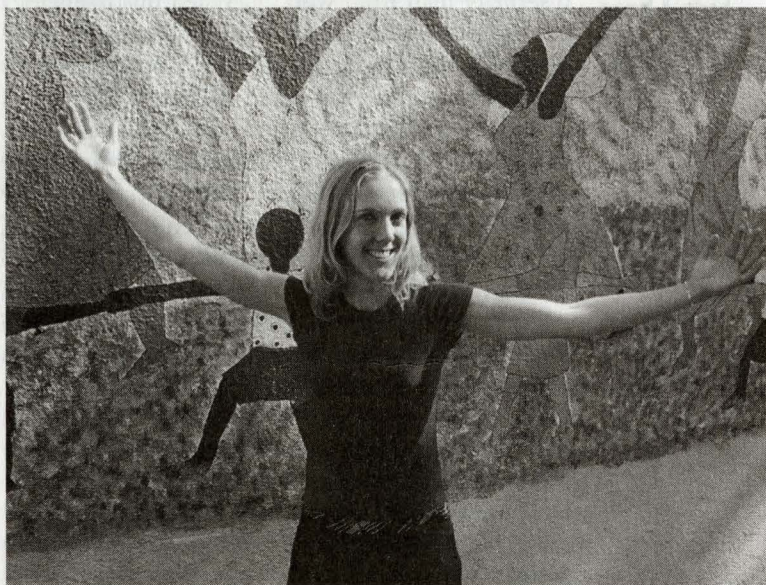
### Connecting Social Change Work and Spiritual Practice

**Donald Rothberg:** How have you brought together social change work and Buddhist practice?

**Justine Dawson:** Until recently, most of the activist work with which I was involved had a secular bent. There was little talk of us as “spiritual beings”; in fact, this sort of talk was often looked down on as “bourgeois.” There also wasn’t much room for discussing our personal growth in the context of social change. The irony was that many of the groups I was engaged with had an enormous amount of conflict and anger. I would often hear statements such as, “Kill the rich! They’re bringing us down.” This didn’t seem very insightful!

For a long time activism and spiritual practice felt

very separate from each other, as if they were two different sides of myself. I didn’t feel comfortable talking about spirituality with most activists, and, since my spiritual practice was done primarily on my own, I didn’t have a chance to speak about activism with spiritual practitioners! There was no conversation from either side about the connection of the two.



Then I found out about the Buddhist Peace Fellowship’s BASE program. BASE was the main pull for me to come to the Bay Area. When I came, I began working with a Catholic Worker community in San Francisco, the Martin de Porres House of Hospitality. [The Catholic Worker movement maintains a network of over 180 “Houses of Hospitality” for those in need.] “Martin’s” is a cooperative household that supports a soup kitchen for the homeless. Many people who live there have a spiritual orientation—whether it’s Catholic, Jewish, pagan, or Buddhist. At Elizabeth House, where I currently work, the staff members also emphasize their own spiritual growth. So spiritual practice and direct service are becoming more and more integrated in my life; now it’s difficult to imagine dividing them.

**Mindfulness Practice in the Daily Life of Direct Service**

**Donald:** How does your practice manifest in your daily life at Elizabeth House?

**Justine:** First of all, the Buddhist insight meditation retreats that I've done in the past couple of years have really grounded me and given me patience, stillness, and a degree of insight that lets me ride the waves of direct service work with more ease. The silence of last winter, when I was in retreat for five months, has made possible a certain fullness of action that I experience now. Such action, furthermore, is supported by the knowledge that a time of retreat will come again. I can go back and forth between stillness and action and let the two inform each other.

For example, retreat time has helped me to develop the mindfulness to see more clearly when I'm getting reactive. I can be aware of the tightness welling up within me, and of the impulse to react more from insecurity than from wisdom. When this happens, I can say to myself, "Oh, now I am becoming reactive." With this awareness, I have more spaciousness to work with the reactivity than I did before.

It is still a great challenge to be mindful day to day, in the midst of my work. Yet increasingly my whole life feels like practice now; my practice is not just my time of retreat or formal sitting. When I'm at my desk, am I just being with the present task? Am I present to my body? When I'm with the women at Elizabeth House, I try to be aware of how I'm interacting with them. I ask myself: "Am I living in a way that is authentic and that has integrity, or am I not?"

**Sara Schedler:** Can you think of any particular moments when you've felt your practice clearly informing your work with the women and children?

**Justine:** Recently, I was meeting with a woman with whom I work closely in the house. She became very agitated when I brought up some of her recent behavior; she immediately began deflecting attention and blame toward the other women. She was speaking harshly and I felt myself, in turn, becoming agitated with her. Yet I had enough space in my mind not to identify with that agitation. I felt the tension in my body and the increase in my breath rate, but I did not become absorbed by it. I asked myself, "Why is this person reacting so strongly?" It became obvious that she was incredibly sensitive to what others thought of her and was terrified of being seen in a negative light—even if she knew she wasn't behaving appropriately. Thanks to practice, I was able to respond to her with more spaciousness and skill, with less reactivity, but also with honesty about my own experience. I said, "You know, I'm feeling really agitated with the way

you're speaking right now." I helped her to see that the way she sometimes communicates may not align with her intention to be a peaceful and valued member of the house. So skillful communication is central to bringing my practice to relationships.

There are also moments when I'm working with the kids, when they are not listening to me at all and sometimes putting themselves in jeopardy. One recent Monday night, a child ran away from a program at the house. When something upsets him, he often just goes crazy and doesn't know how to look after himself. So he ran outside and started swinging off the branches of a tree—very, very high up. I noticed the panic rising in my body, and I remember thinking, "OK, I'm feeling panicked." But I was *aware* of the feeling of panic, and this awareness allowed me to not react further. I was able to talk to him calmly and not go crazy with *my own* reactions.

**Sara:** What do you do on a daily basis to support this quality of presence in your work?

**Justine:** I try to do yoga every morning. Then I usually read some poetry, and do sitting meditation. There are mornings when all this doesn't happen but generally it's been happening! This morning practice is very valuable; establishing my intentions soon after I wake up really helps me to reconnect to equanimity throughout the day. Even if I have only three moments of mindfulness in my whole 45 minutes of meditation, I still feel that setting the intentions for the day makes a difference; for example, I'll be sitting at my desk and suddenly I realize that I'm aware of my body. The moments of mindfulness during the day can arise naturally, as the result of seeds planted earlier.

**Being with Suffering and Conflict**

**Donald:** You must encounter much suffering among those living at Elizabeth House.

**Justine:** Yes. Because I live as well as work here, I am really close to the suffering of the house. I wake up in the morning and I hear people yelling at their kids. I hear the kids crying. I see the women's frustrations, especially around parenting. There is no escaping the environment, even when I am in my room at night, or in the early morning, or on weekends.

**Donald:** Do you work with metta (lovingkindness) practice?

**Justine:** Yes, I often do this practice in relation to the people in the house, especially when I am struggling with them. And as frustrated as I get with the kids sometimes, I can easily do metta for them.

**Because I live as well as work here, I am really close to the suffering of the house. I wake up in the morning and I hear people yelling at their kids. I hear the kids crying.**

I also practice forgiveness a lot, and often for myself. In my work here, I am intensely involved with the families. I tend to have very high expectations of myself, and the women here have very high expectations of me as well. If there is ever a problem, the women often perceive it as the staff's fault. I've had to remind myself that their perspective is only one perspective. I've also learned to be open about my own limitations. When I think that I've made mistakes in a given situation, I say something like, "I'm still learning and I'm open to learning. I really appreciate your feedback, because I need it." At the same time, when others speak to me with strong emotions, I've learned not to take it so personally.

I feel a growing tenderness towards the women and children in the house, especially when I reflect on why they are here. I'll see the suffering of the grandmother who is yelling and try to imagine what causes her to do what she does. What has happened to her in her life, such that this is her way of trying to make things work? When I hear her yelling, it also comes with an awareness of her suffering and her struggles. Knowing people's stories makes all the difference.

### Balancing Care of Self and Care of Others

**Donald:** Could you talk about the importance for your work of taking care of yourself?

**Justine:** The intention to care for myself is huge for me. It's hard to wake up and not immediately rush out my door because someone is knocking. This is particularly important for me because I have found that there is not commonly a focus on self-care among those doing direct service work—the emphasis is on "serving others." In fact, in the communities in which I have lived, self-care has even been seen as selfish, as if we should be out there serving, night and day! So it feels radical for me to say that *self-care is as important as doing the service work*, since it ultimately allows me to do this work in a meaningful and sustainable way.

There are so many people working in activist or social change circles who are not living in healthy ways. Many are workaholics. Others are chronically sad or angry. But I'm interested in living *now* with the same kind of balance and well-being that I want to bring about in the world. There is a continuity of means and ends; if I live out a particular value, I reinforce that value in the world.

**Sara:** How do you stay open to the suffering around you *and* take care of yourself?

**Justine:** To do both has really been my ongoing challenge here. There are definitely times when I just shut

out everything that's going on. I go to my room, close the door, and focus on something else because I feel my own exhaustion and limitations.

For instance, sometimes I'll come home at 11 o'clock at night and feel really tired. I'll see all the kids still up, running around, having fun, yet they have to go to school the next day. Some nights I think, "OK, I have the focus and energy to respond to the situation." I'll go say something about it being bedtime. At other times, I recognize that I'm not going to be able to respond appropriately. I reflect, "That's just how it is right now and I'm going to bed!" I really need this second option, or else it's just too crazy. When I first came here, I was a kind of response machine—Respond! Respond! Respond! Now I feel more at peace when I can't respond right away.

### Equanimity and Action

**Donald:** One of the fruits of spiritual practice is the combination of a deep commitment to act with a grounding in equanimity, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. How do you find equanimity in your work?

**Justine:** I work with the formal equanimity practice, from the *brahmaviharas* [the traditional Buddhist practice of cultivating the "divine abodes"—lovingkindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity], using phrases that resonate with me, like "May I be present with things just as they are," or "I wish you well, but I can't control your happiness and unhappiness."

I reflect at times on the limits of what I can do, given the forces at work. This reflection helps bring a certain amount of equanimity. For example, there have been times when I've felt a deep urge to protect the kids. I've wanted to take them all into my bedroom and hide them away. Yet there is only so much I can do, and things are as they are right now for everyone. Sometimes I realize that the things that are going on in the house are really old patterns that are playing themselves out; if I intervene, it might have an effect in the moment, but it's not necessarily going to change the underlying behavior. Cultivating equanimity helps.

Sometimes equanimity is the fruit of mindfulness—noticing something and saying, "OK, this is what is happening right now." I'll walk into a room to find a total circus—the kids are going crazy. I'll say to myself, "Oh, here's the circus." Then I try to be aware of my own tendencies, like "I have this great need to change and control the situation." I often go through a kind of internal debate: "Well, on the one hand, I'm legally responsible for these kids. And there is a standard in the household that we want to maintain. On the other hand, it's just a circus."

**There are definitely times when I just shut out everything that's going on. I go to my room, close the door, and focus on something else.**

### An Appropriate Response

**Sara:** You spoke earlier about learning that it is sometimes appropriate *not* to respond. Can you say more about responsibility and how to respond when there is such a great need?

**Justine:** A lot of social change work, especially direct service work, is about developing an *effective* response. It's about choosing what to respond to, how to respond, and when to respond. Last spring, when I was on retreat, I heard a story about a Zen master who was asked, "What is enlightenment?" He replied, "An appropriate response." I think that is so wise.

But often my first response to a difficult situation can be reactive. So now when I enter into a charged situation, I just ask, "OK, what's going on?" I've learned a lot about how to work with different people, and about different ways to respond. One person who is yelling may want me to come up to her right away and say, "Can I talk to you in the hallway?" Another person may need me to talk to her about it later.

I ask myself, "What is triggering me in this situation? What is it bringing up personally? How do I need to work with the 'internal' material that is coming up in order to respond more appropriately to the 'external' situation?"

Ironically, direct service work can sometimes become very egocentric; it can center on *me* as the responsible one, the one who responds. I can believe that I always have to do everything. I always have to do this. I always have to do that... I, I, I! I've learned to ask, "What is really essential?" For example, we have an emergency on-call phone for the women who live in the house to use to call the staff. When someone calls, I have to determine whether it's really an emergency that requires a response. The caller might think that there is an emergency—someone didn't take the garbage out—but it really might not be an emergency, given the overall picture. I have learned to work with my feelings about not responding to everyone's emergency. This goes back to sustainability. If I want to work in social change for a really long time, I need to be living in a sustainable way.

I'm also interested in some of the paradoxes of appropriate response, especially in terms of Buddhist practice. In the house, there is sometimes the question of when to let a resident go. We have had women in the house who are very difficult to work with, who break house agreements and do not respect staff requests. There are often debates among the staff members about what our limits are with these women. Do we ask them to leave, with full knowledge of their limited options? Or do we allow them to stay, even if their behavior doesn't change and affects oth-

ers negatively? The appropriate response can be unclear in these situations. It depends a lot on how you see compassion. Do you see it as giving people ongoing chances to change? Or do you see it as modeling healthy boundaries and reasonable consequences? There are no easy answers.

I also think about the meaning of appropriate response on a broader, *systemic* level. In direct service the focus can often be too limited. It's important to look at the whole picture. For example, if we're trying to create social change by housing and feeding people, and yet we're cleaning the house with chemical detergents and eating factory-farmed foods, then what is the nature of that change? Is it fully beneficial?

In North America, there is often a focus on getting people more and more *things*, to "cure" their poverty. But even with more things, people are not necessarily getting any happier, not treating their kids any better. This is another way that my spiritual practice informs my social action. I ask, "What is really creating happiness and what's really *not* creating happiness?"

### Socially Engaged Buddhist Service

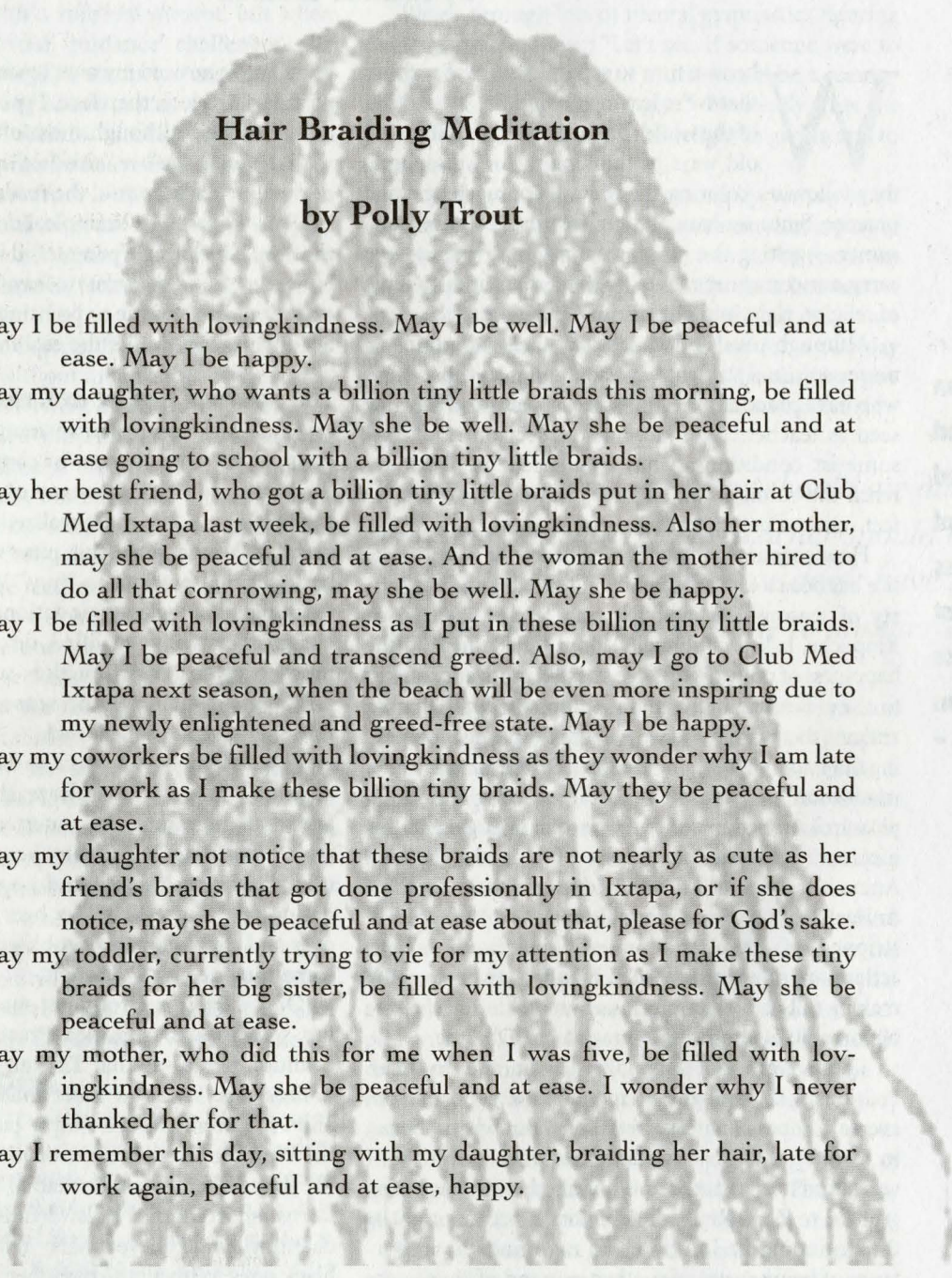
**Donald:** If you could design a Buddhist version of a house like Elizabeth House, what would it look like?

**Justine:** I would love to wake up in the morning, do yoga and sit with about five people, and then work with those same people all day. I would love to share collective intentions and relate to each other throughout the day with a common language—a language of authenticity, mindfulness, and compassion. A strong interest in both personal and social change would be central, expressed through commitments to spiritual practice, skillful communication, a healthy lifestyle, and sustainability, among other components. It would be an integrated community where cultivating insight and compassion would go hand in hand with direct service. ♦

*Donald Rothberg writes and teaches classes and retreats on meditation and socially engaged Buddhism at Spirit Rock, in Woodacre, California, where he is a member of the Teachers Council. He also teaches elsewhere in the San Francisco Bay Area and nationwide. In addition, he directs a program in Socially Engaged Spirituality for Saybrook Graduate School. He has worked with the BASE program since its inception and was a BPF board member for almost 10 years. He is currently completing a book on connecting individual and social transformation.*

*Sara Schedler is a young dharma practitioner who is a recent graduate of the BASE program. She works with Donald on a number of collaborative projects, including a training program to be sponsored by BPF and Spirit Rock called the "Path of Engagement." She dreams of starting a Buddhist Worker House that connects meditation, community, and socially engaged work.*

I've felt a deep urge to protect the kids. I've wanted to take them all into my bedroom and hide them away. Yet there is only so much I can do.



## Hair Braiding Meditation

by Polly Trout

May I be filled with lovingkindness. May I be well. May I be peaceful and at ease. May I be happy.

May my daughter, who wants a billion tiny little braids this morning, be filled with lovingkindness. May she be well. May she be peaceful and at ease going to school with a billion tiny little braids.

May her best friend, who got a billion tiny little braids put in her hair at Club Med Ixtapa last week, be filled with lovingkindness. Also her mother, may she be peaceful and at ease. And the woman the mother hired to do all that cornrowing, may she be well. May she be happy.

May I be filled with lovingkindness as I put in these billion tiny little braids. May I be peaceful and transcend greed. Also, may I go to Club Med Ixtapa next season, when the beach will be even more inspiring due to my newly enlightened and greed-free state. May I be happy.

May my coworkers be filled with lovingkindness as they wonder why I am late for work as I make these billion tiny braids. May they be peaceful and at ease.

May my daughter not notice that these braids are not nearly as cute as her friend's braids that got done professionally in Ixtapa, or if she does notice, may she be peaceful and at ease about that, please for God's sake.

May my toddler, currently trying to vie for my attention as I make these tiny braids for her big sister, be filled with lovingkindness. May she be peaceful and at ease.

May my mother, who did this for me when I was five, be filled with lovingkindness. May she be peaceful and at ease. I wonder why I never thanked her for that.

May I remember this day, sitting with my daughter, braiding her hair, late for work again, peaceful and at ease, happy.

*Polly Trout is an educator, activist, and mother living in Seattle. She practices in the vipassana tradition and is also active in the pagan and Unitarian Universalist communities. She is the founder and executive director of Seattle Education Access, a nonprofit that provides scholarships and free academic advising, career counseling, tutoring, and advocacy to homeless youth who want to go to college. Visit the website at [www.seattleeducationaccess.org](http://www.seattleeducationaccess.org).*

# Marketing the Dharma

by Thubten Chödrön

When we turn to spirituality, we may think that we're leaving behind the corruption of the world for higher purposes. But our old ways of thinking do not disappear; they follow us, coloring the way we approach spiritual practice. Since we have all been raised to be good consumers—getting the most while paying the least—we carry our consumer mentality as teachers and students of religion right into our spiritual practice.

Although much of what is said below pertains to newer spiritual students, it also applies to those of us who have practiced the Dharma for years and are now seen as teachers. We, too, must reflect on how consumerist conditioning has influenced us. Until we reach the culmination of the path, we remain imperfect sentient beings and Dharma students.

How consumer mentality influences spiritual practice has been a topic of ongoing interest to me for a variety of reasons. My first Dharma teacher, Ven. Zopa Rinpoche, talked continually about “attachment to the happiness of only this life.” He stressed motivation as key to the difference between an action that was Dharma and one that wasn't. Did we act with the thought of seeking the happiness of only this life? Or did we act with a motivation that looked beyond our own temporary pleasure? An action seeking only our own gain in this lifetime resembles the actions of animals, he said. Animals help their friends and harm their enemies. Animals want to be comfortable and to be “top dog.” If, stripped of rationalizations and justifications, our actions are motivated by such thoughts, then we aren't making full use of our precious human life and the rare opportunity it affords us to practice the Dharma.

These were not easy words for me to hear. Previously I'd thought of myself as a good person, even a compassionate, spiritual one. But when I began to meditate and was honest about my motivations, I was alternately shocked and horrified. But I have been grateful to Zopa Rinpoche ever since, because right at the beginning he imprinted in my mind the importance of being aware of motivations and of consciously cultivating beneficial ones. This is not to say that I have been able to do it. Far more often than not, my mind is overpowered by thoughts of “my happiness now...or at least my happiness as soon as possible.”

Consumer mentality, in which most of us in the West have been well schooled, is clearly rooted in attachment to the happiness of only this life. As a Dharma student and a so-called teacher, over the

years I have noticed my own tendencies in this area. In writing this piece, therefore, I speak as both a student and a teacher. Although most of the essay is written with the inclusive “we,” this “we” is amorphous. It may or may not include you, the reader, or me, the writer, in all its usages. (For example, I don't have children, so the “we” meaning “parents” doesn't refer to me.) However, I didn't want to say “they,” as if I were excluding you and me or pointing the finger at others. So, as you read “we,” if the cushion fits, sit on it.

## The Spiritual Seeker as Consumer

How does consumerism manifest on the part of the student? One element of consumerism is seeking the best product. Thus many of us shop around for the best group, the most realized teacher, the highest practice. We go from this place to that, seeking the best spiritual product to “buy.” We want the highest teachings and neglect foundational practices. Viewing ourselves as fully qualified disciples, we don't see much need for basic practices such as ethical discipline and restraint of the senses. Instead, we jump into the most advanced track.

As consumers, we want to be entertained. We'll attend a center as long as the teacher is entertaining—and a teacher must be entertaining these days to attract students. We like to hear interesting stories, told in an amusing way, and we want new and fascinating teachings. When we hear the same teachings over and over again, we get bored and set out to find something new and different.

Our practice environment should also be interesting, so we seek out exotica. Practicing in the Tibetan tradition, I can say that Tibetan Buddhism certainly obliges this. While in Tibet many of these practices and accoutrements are simply part of the culture, in the West they have become exotic lures. High thrones for the teachers, brocade seat covers, and robes, long horns, short horns, bells, drums, processions, deep chanting, and, oh yes, hats! Yellow ones, red ones, black ones. With all the paraphernalia, how could one ever get bored practicing Tibetan Buddhism? Yet after a while we become jaded and are left with just our own minds, our own suffering. Having little endurance or commitment to practice or to teachers, we move on, seeking something more interesting. We neglect to see that repetition may be just what we need or that exploring the reason for our boredom could bring fresh insights. We also fail to notice that

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our teachers still do foundational practices and attend elementary teachings given by their spiritual mentors.

Consumer mentality insists on instant gratification of our desires. In spiritual life, we say we want a close relationship with a spiritual mentor, but when that mentor's spiritual guidance challenges our desires or pushes our ego's buttons too much, we stop going. At the beginning of our practice, we profess to be earnest spiritual seekers, aiming for enlightenment. But after the practice has remedied our immediate problem—upset from a divorce, grieving the loss of a loved one, and so forth—and we are happier, our attention shifts once again to seeking happiness from possessions, romance, technology, or career, and spiritual interest fades.

Today's consumer expects things to be easily available and obtainable without much effort. In past ages, spiritual aspirants underwent difficulty to meet teachers. Tibetans traversed the Himalayas to meet wise mentors in India; Chinese crossed the Takla Makan Desert and Karakoram Mountains to attend monasteries and bring back scriptures from India. But nowadays we think, "Why should we have to travel to attend teachings? The teacher should come to us! We have such busy lives we don't have time to go across the country, let alone to another continent." Forgetting that the seeker's very effort and struggle opens him or her to the teachings, we'd prefer that spiritual practice not disturb the flow of our life.

Receiving lengthy teachings or doing complex spiritual practices takes time that modern consumers don't have. Our time is taken up with families, jobs, hobbies, and sports; spiritual practice should not impinge on those pleasures and responsibilities. So we ask our teachers to "modernize" the teachings and practices—to shorten and simplify them—so that they will fit conveniently into our lives. As consumers functioning in a world of supply and demand, we take our business elsewhere if our wishes aren't satisfied.

### The Dilemma of Dana

Asian Buddhists traditionally make offerings, or *dana*, to the monastic community to accumulate merit or positive potential that will bring a good rebirth. Looking at them, some Westerners say, "They're doing spiritual business. They are giving to get something for themselves." Thinking that Westerners are superior to Asians trapped in old traditions, we don't give to the monastic community. Instead we hold to the American work ethic and think monastics should go out and get a job.

When we do give *dana* (or donations), what is our attitude? At the end of a retreat, someone gives a "dana talk," explaining to everyone that *dana* is generosity freely given. "Think of all we've received from our teachers during this retreat. They have families,

cars, mortgages, credit card bills, and for them to continue to teach us, they need our financial support." Hasn't *dana* then become another way of paying for a consumer service we've received?

We go through lots of mental gymnastics figuring out how much to give: "Let's see, if someone were to charge for this retreat, how much would be a reasonable price? That's what I'll give." We totally miss the point of *dana*, which is to take delight in giving and to give from our hearts.

According to the consumer mentality, we pay as we go. But *dana* is a long-term commitment that is part of our practice. We give because we want to be free from the hindrance of miserliness; we offer *dana* because we appreciate the teachings and practitioners. When we give *dana* properly, we don't offer less for a two-day retreat than for a four-day retreat. Instead we give because we want to support practitioners who live sim-

*Nowadays we think, "Why should we have to travel to attend teachings? The teacher should come to us! We have such busy lives we don't have time to go across the country, let alone to another continent."*

ply and devote their time to spiritual study and practice. We give to make the teachings available to new people.

Consumerism breeds self-centeredness. Spiritual practice often becomes centered on "me," my needs, my wishes, what is convenient for me, what works for me. A dharma center, temple, or monastery becomes a place where we go to receive, not to give.

I regularly visit an Asian temple in Houston where they hold summer camps for kids. Working in the kitchen, cooking food for a hundred people, are parents, students, grandparents, single adults, and couples without kids. Many people who don't have children are willing to spend four or five days cooking or running children's programs. Why? Because they enjoy being part of a community. They care about children and the future of society. Giving is part of their spiritual practice, and they relish it. They enjoy giving, in contrast to consumers who enjoy receiving.

Why do Westerners have trouble creating community? After all, most of us feel a deep longing for community, but still we keep our distance and maintain our autonomy. My guess is that this has to do with the *c* word, the word we are very frightened of. No, it's not *cancer*, although that undoubtedly is frightening. The *c* word we mistrust is *commitment*. If we commit, our shopping around ceases. We have responsibility not just to others but to ourselves. We commit to a daily practice; we commit to attending regular dharma classes in

order to nourish our hearts; we commit to attending yearly retreats. We commit time to plan activities at the dharma center, monastery, or temple. We commit energy to plan the Sunday school program instead of just dropping our kids off in the hope that someone else will teach them the dharma. This cuts into our time to be with family, watch TV, go to the gym, talk on the phone, do e-mail, browse catalogs, frequent the mall, and go on vacation. In short, it requires that we divert time that ordinarily goes toward worldly pleasure into time leading to dharma happiness.

Somehow we mistakenly think that commitment

*Being close to a famous Dharma teacher uplifts a student's spiritual status. Having that teacher stay in our home, ride in our car, and so forth gives us something to display to others.*

means being trapped. In fact, when we make wise well-thought-out commitments, they free us. They enable us to enter deeply into our practice and shed our defenses before our teachers and fellow practitioners. We develop trust in others and ourselves and learn to be fearlessly open. And most of all, we stick with a teacher and a practice long enough so that the dharma can actually transform our minds. As one student said, "We keep showing up, whether we're happy or unhappy, whether we understand the teaching or not. We keep coming, instead of getting discouraged or distracted." Only with commitment can we actually taste the dharma.

### **The Enchantment of Status**

In a consumer society, people derive status from using certain products. Similarly, being close to a famous Dharma teacher uplifts a student's spiritual status. Having that teacher stay in our home, ride in our car, bless our religious objects, sign a photo, and so forth gives us something to display to others. These days one of the best ways to become close to a teacher is by being a big donor, thus obliging teachers to see you in order to show their appreciation. We wouldn't want to give anonymously and miss a possible reward.

We also gain status by possessing valuable spiritual items. We buy beautiful statues and exquisite paintings of religious figures, which we display on elaborate altars in our homes. On the altars, too, are photos of ourselves with various spiritual masters. When dharma friends visit, we make sure they admire our collection of artifacts, but when relatives visit, we discreetly cover them to avoid their inquiries.

In addition, we collect spiritual events. We proud-

ly rattle off a list of retreats we have attended or initiations we have taken and advise new students about which events and teachers are mediocre and which they must not miss. As experienced connoisseurs, we critique retreat centers for newcomers. We boast of attending large teachings by famous teachers and mention that as a teacher was making his way through the crowd, he stopped to greet us, or while he was sitting on the Dharma throne, he smiled directly at us. Meanwhile, we pat ourselves on the back for being such sincere practitioners.

Similar to the status-seeking attitude is one that idolizes great figures. In consumer society we worship movie stars, sports stars, and political leaders, thinking that everything they do is wonderful. As teenagers we wanted to emulate them; now, as semicyclical adults, we idolize them for a while and buy the things they advertise. But later, when we see their human failings, we blame them and become discouraged.

The same happens with our Dharma teachers. For a while we are in love with our guru: He's so wonderful; his compassion makes the room shine. She's so humorous and warm. He's an incarnation of a very high yogi. She's clairvoyant. We sit around and drink tea and talk about our teachers, telling stories about cute incidents, reciting tales of their great qualities. Sometimes there is subtle competition over who has the highest teacher or who can tell the greatest stories. We revel in newcomers' wide-eyed fascination as they listen to us; we're jealous of those who have better stories.

When our teachers do things we don't agree with, or worse yet, when their behavior appears all too human, we feel betrayed. We are disappointed or indignant, just as when we discover politicians' scams, movie stars' mental illnesses, and sport stars' greed. But we don't realize that our previous attitude was a setup for our present feelings.

What is it in us that makes us seek someone who is perfect? And what does "perfect" mean, anyhow? Does it mean that the person does what we want when we want him to do it? Does it mean she agrees with all our opinions and ideas and lavishes praise on us? I believe this tendency toward idolization relates to the consumer mentality that seeks "the best, or your money back." We have a steady diet of advertisements that condition us to become enthralled with grand expectations of happiness when we buy *this* product, vote for *this* candidate, see *this* film, or attend *this* game. We bring our unrealistic wishes for perfection and satisfaction into our spiritual practice, projecting them on teachers and meditation practices. ❖

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Elsa Marley  
Nomads

1.  
A solitary man leads a brown pony.  
Yellow and blue lupine line a hillside  
of wild mustard. In the thin air  
sharp-elbowed white peaks pierce  
a cobalt sky. Over the vastness  
none other is in sight.

2.  
Wild, raging waters, black piglets,  
vultures hunched by the road.  
A small boy greets us holding a tiny  
bird in his hands. The mother  
birds lay their eggs in gerbil holes.  
When the young birds are big enough  
they are said to carry a baby gerbil  
on their back to a new location.

3.  
Descending from a summit we stop  
near a tent made of black yak wool.  
An old man carries a pail uphill.  
A startlingly beautiful young girl, long  
black hair waving in a stiff wind, comes  
to check us out, followed by her mom.  
Mom is 43 but with lost teeth and  
weathered face looks ancient. A shy  
12-year-old, her head shaved, joins them.  
"She is becoming a nun," Mom proudly  
tells us. And her vivacious 18-year-old  
sister will be married three days from now.  
We haggle over a jewelry swap. I give  
the bride-to-be a ring and the watercolor  
I did of her and wonder what she will  
look like at 43. Mum gives me  
turquoise and yak bone prayer beads  
from around her neck. With wide smiles  
all around I get back on the bus.



Painter and poet Elsa Marley teaches Chinese brush painting at City College, San Francisco, and conducts yearly art tours to China and Tibet. In the 1980s, she spent four years living in China. She has shown her paintings and collaborations at numerous international venues. In 2004 she published *Tibet Poems*, a collection of watercolors and poetry done in Tibet. The work on this page is from that book.

## Book Reviews

### **Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism**

Edited by Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín  
Parallax Press, 2004, 240 pages, \$16

**Reviewed by John W. Ellis IV**

Where does the story of Buddhism in North America begin? Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín introduces *Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism*, a collection of essays from people of color, by stating that it is important to reach back further than the white Americans who studied Buddhism in the 1960s.

“When speaking of the history of Western Buddhism in general—and its presence in the United States, in particular—it is imperative that the point of origin not be located in a white, European American context,” Baldoquín writes. “The story of how the Dharma reached the shores of the United States is embedded in the history of immigrants of color.”

*Dharma, Color, and Culture* witnesses Western Buddhism through the eyes of an array of authors, including Lourdes Argüelles, Viveka Chen, Gaylon Ferguson, Thich Nhat Hanh, Charles Johnson, Marlene Jones, Alice Walker, Jan Willis, and Larry Yang.

Maxine Hong Kingston starts the collection with a memory of the 1991 firestorm that reduced the Oakland Hills to ash. Although Kingston seems to get the book off to a slow start because there are no direct references to color or culture, the essay is full of dharma. Readers walk with her through the experience of letting go of her house, her belongings, and even a treasured book manuscript.

This is an important point that shouldn't be missed. Beyond discussions of ethnicity, class, and social status, authors share their experiences walking in the dharma. Many authors tell stories through the lens of their culture, but their tales have universal appeal. Mushim Ikeda-Nash intertwines struggling with a Zen koan and dealing with a teenage friend who suffered a car accident, and José Luis Reissig reflects on his choice to be unaware of his own surroundings in order to live an affluent life.

Yet *Dharma, Color, and Culture* does offer teachings for those readers who are interested in the changing dynamics of color and culture in this country. Near the beginning of the book, Earthlyn Marselean Manuel sets the tone for receiving the teachings within: “What is the suffering often felt by people of color? There is no one answer.”

At times, readers could easily slip into thinking this book gives them a sense of what all people of color think and feel about life in the dharma. Unqualified phrases like “the worldview of people of color” are common.

“With the same sword we can either cut through people's hearts and cause them suffering or cut through our

own ignorance and be the cause of emerging love and compassion,” Eduardo Duran writes. “There is always a gap between the purity of the dharma and the inexactness of expressing it.”

*Dharma, Color, and Culture*, then, is more of an appetizer platter. Baldoquín offers us a wide range of flavorful bites of Buddhism as it is experienced by people with ethnic roots that extend throughout the world.

“With this anthology,” Baldoquín writes, “the Dharma wheel continues to turn in the West, and specifically among those who physically resemble most closely the original practitioners who followed the Buddha Shakyamuni.”

*Dharma, Color, and Culture* is also a signpost, pointing the way to voices that will likely inspire more perspectives, more storytelling, more discussion, and more freedom from one of this country's greatest challenges—race.

“If Buddhism is to really make a contribution to Western society,” writes contributor Sister Chan Chau Nghiem, “it must use the insights of the Dharma to heal the suffering of racism.”❖

*See page 20 for a biographical note about John W. Ellis IV.*

### **The Wisdom Anthology of North American Buddhist Poetry**

Edited by Andrew Schelling

Wisdom Publications, 2005, 397 pages, \$22

**Reviewed by Colette DeDonato**

Welcome this diverse collection of 30 poets, both young and old, Buddhist and non, known and unknown, experimental and narrative.

Writer and teacher Andrew Schelling, in his introduction to *The Wisdom Anthology of North American Buddhist Poetry*, provides a noteworthy if abbreviated history of poetry and Buddhism's intersection. The two, it seems, have always been intertwined. In Buddhist traditions throughout history, theories about the power of poetry abound. Schelling himself asserts that through poetry we might be able to “scour the six realms of existence.” Both mantra and *dharani* (repetitive sutras), he reminds us, are “potent strings of sound” that carry those who utter them into other realms of experience. This makes for an excellent introduction to some of the difficult-to-navigate contemporary poems—and some that appear in this collection—that we might be tempted to claim don't “make sense.”

The Japanese poet Basho's poems were thought of as the workplace for *satori*, or “deep realization.” Classical Chinese poems, which greatly influenced many 20th-century poets, took up what we might call socially engaged subjects: life in war-torn times, injustice, poor social condi-

tions, and the problems of everyday existence. But today we might have a harder time understanding what many poems are “about.” (In fact, many poets are even reluctant to answer this question about their own work.) The radical ideas embedded in the poems are often so veiled by experimental language that they elude the reader.

The classic Zen understanding of poetry, that the practice of writing poems is not so much to make a thing but to “trace the way the mind moves,” seems a helpful map for the sometimes difficult terrain of contemporary Western poetry. It’s crucial that Schelling makes the Zen understanding—poem as chronicle of altered or awakened consciousness—clear to us at the onset. Yet for readers not schooled in the ways of poetry, a problem arises: one is not always compelled enough to follow the mind as it is laid out on the page. Readers sometimes feel left out. Worse yet, as Huang T’ing Chien remarked hundreds of years ago, “Reading poems can seem like gnawing on withered pieces of wood.”

This anthology sets out to do away with the withered wood of poetry by including work that is certain to engage readers. A good variety of poems, from the narrative, lyrical, and accessible to the more collage-like language-based poems that juxtapose images to work more like “sound-magic,” make this an inviting and intelligent pastiche of spiritual insights.

For those inclined more towards socially engaged narrative, what poet Kenneth Rexroth would call “the poet as agent of counterculture,” there are some gems to be found here in the poems of Dale Pendell, Harryette Mullen, Sam Hamill, and Diane di Prima, which are equal parts social revolution and lyrical reverie. Sink your teeth into some of the more magical work of Cecila Vicuna, or Shin Yu Pai’s lucid articulation of poems as art installation:

#### *Sheep Piece*

*Borrow a herd of sheep,  
one hundred in number or more  
spray paint their fleece  
with your favorite words.  
Watch from a distance as the sheep  
arrange themselves into poems.*

Many of these poems are specifically about Buddhism, with Tibetan lamas, zendos, and Sanskrit making frequent appearances in the work. Some, like di Prima’s “I Fail As a Dharma Teacher,” may be of particular interest to those who traverse the Eightfold Path. Other poems only wink at Buddhist ideas, but ultimately give the reader an interesting question to ponder, as I did frequently: What makes this poem Buddhist? But it’s the diversity of voice, culture, and poetic “style” that makes this a powerful collection.

Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, who grew up in Dharamsala

and now lives in San Francisco, writes dreamlike prose poems that take up her experience as a Tibetan. Her work is among the most fresh and surprising, as is Nathaniel Tarn’s. And then there is Lawson Fusao Inada’s “A High-Five for I-5,” a cheeky lyrical piece that will appeal to anyone who, say, drives. This and other poems, such as Mullen’s “Mantra for a Classless Society,” help to bring poetry back to the revolutionary ground.

Zoketsu Norman Fischer opens one of his poems with the lines “poetry’s a way not a subject / in which anything appears.” And this might be just another helpful reminder that these poets are *asking* both to be awakened and to awaken, and that this alone is revolutionary. Editor Schelling has filled this collection with poems both challenging and accessible, clearing a path for both the sometimes poetry reader and the novice Buddhist, as well as the seasoned of each. And if by chance you reside comfortably in both worlds, you will find this an instructive and enjoyable read. ❖

*Colette DeDonato is a poet and nonfiction writer who lives in Oakland, California. She is the managing editor of Turning Wheel and the editor of City of One: Young Writers Speak to the World, an anthology of poetry about peace (Aunt Lute Books, 2004).*

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#### Aqalani\*

The pigweed is beginning  
to bloom.

The pigweed has been  
in the mouth  
of the hog.

In the stomach  
of the hog.

But that’s historical.

The pigweed is beginning  
to bloom  
and all of the world  
is celebrating  
a harmony.

—George Gott

(\*Native American greeting)

*George Gott recently retired from teaching writing and literature at the University of Wisconsin Superior. More than 600 of his poems have been published in numerous magazines in the U.S.*

## An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World

by Pankaj Mishra

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, 432 pages, \$25

### Reviewed by Rhoda R. Gilman

In 1992 a young man left university life in Delhi to rent a cottage in Mashobra, a village in the Himalayan foothills near Simla. He had been one of many middle-class sons sent for an education intended to shape him for a place in the new techno-industrial world that was opening up in India with globalization. But this son hadn't fit the slot; he wanted above all else to be a writer.

Pankaj Mishra had already had some success in selling reviews and articles, and now he dreamed of working on a book—perhaps a novel based on the life of the Buddha. The idea was suggested by his undergraduate enthusiasm for Nietzsche and the German philosopher's respect for Buddhist teachings. So Mishra began research, both by reading texts and by making solitary visits to monasteries and holy sites in the high corner of India near the Tibetan border.

A decade later the book had still not taken shape, but Mishra himself had become a successful freelance writer and journalist, commenting on the contemporary Asian scene. He had traveled the world and had established residence in London. Yet something pulled him back to Mashobra and the Buddha. The book he eventually wrote, *An End to Suffering*, interweaves his own story as a wanderer suspended intellectually between East and West with the life and times of Gautama. He draws parallels between the violent spasms of today and the turbulent first appearance of cities and empires in India 2,500 years ago. Both eras saw the destruction of a settled and ancient pattern of life.

The book contains an exceptionally clear and cogent statement of the Buddha's teachings, but it barely touches on the various elaborations of Buddhism as a religion and philosophy in later centuries and other cultures. Mishra's purpose is to examine the Buddha in the context of time and history. That history itself is a Western concept is brought home to the reader by the fact that the Buddha's identity as a living individual was rescued from layers of myth only in the 19th century. European scholars, literally unearthing buried evidence in stone and comparing ancient manuscripts, revealed the wandering renunciate and teacher who traveled back and forth across the Ganges valley in the already longstanding tradition of Indian *sramanas*. Gautama was, Mishra finds, a pragmatist, much like the roughly contemporary Socrates: "His aims were therapeutic and ethical rather than metaphysical or theological." He proposed no theories of causation but sought only a way of living and being in the world that would end the suffering which accompanies inevitable change, decay, and

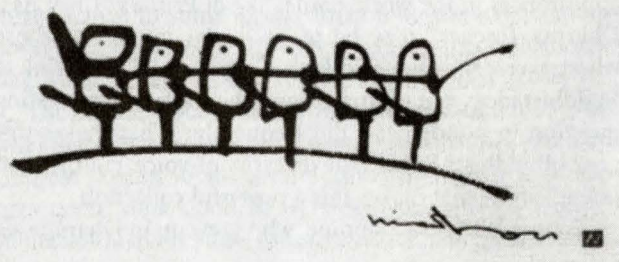
death, both for individuals and societies.

From Bodhi Gaya, where the Buddha was enlightened, to Bamiyan, where the Taliban demolished his towering statues, Mishra reflects on the teachings and their impact in the contemporary world. But it is in America that he begins to see their new role most clearly. There, in a welter of differing forms and rituals, brought together for the first time by immigrant communities and Western converts, he sees the "quietly paradoxical and growing presence" of the Buddha's unadorned message in a society that appears on the surface to be antithetical to it.

Along the way, in sharp, momentary images, Mishra describes his own evolving understanding against a background of philosophical disillusion and interethnic war and terror. As a child, his first learned verses were a 3,000-year-old mantra, and yet "I remembered 'Baa Baa, Black Sheep' much better." This commitment to both East and West is what gives the book much of its sweep and power. Mishra knows the seductiveness of historical perspective with "its promise of adding an extra emotional and spiritual dimension and validation to our limited life; with its ability to brighten the future and the past." At times his yearning toward the West seems reminiscent of Nehru, but India and the world have changed since Nehru studied at Cambridge University. Neither the nationhood nor the individual freedoms for which the first leader of independent India fought so hard can stop the bitter struggles over vanishing resources on a plundered planet.

To Mishra, Gandhi seems to have been closer to Buddhist principles than other political leaders, but it was the Buddha himself who drew the connection between "the very premise of the autonomous self-directed individual" and the amoral forces of modern civilization. He showed the inevitable interdependence between individual and social perceptions, and for the solitary, suffering human, Buddha's challenge to the very existence of a single, persistent self-identity opens "a whole new way of looking at and experiencing the world." It was in this liberating awareness, says Mishra, that "I finally began to write about the Buddha." ♦

*Rhoda R. Gilman, a historian and writer with a specialty in mid-western and Native American history, is also a Quaker who has practiced vipassana meditation for more than 20 years.*



Ninsho Kakinuma

by Tempel Smith

**O**n August 28, BASE alumni gathered at the Berkeley Zen Center to celebrate 10 years of BASE, a program dedicated to creating communities of Buddhist activists and service providers, deepening wise and compassionate action, and galvanizing the resolve to live a life dedicated to awakening the heart of bodhicitta. This 10-year anniversary is a remarkable milestone in socially engaged Buddhism.

Through the BASE program, 200 people in cities across the U.S. and Canada have fully committed themselves for six months at a time to prison reform, environmental activism, hospice care, and homeless service. Members have worked with abused and runaway children, assisted pregnant teenagers through their birthing, and addressed many other areas of social *dukkha*.

Several alumni started a BASE House in San Francisco, creating a model of a sustainable community focused on supporting residents in lives of mindful service and activism. The house has also become a meeting place and refuge for locals and travelers. Those who have spent time in the BASE House feel the special blessing of a healthy community, an experience that profoundly shapes their future living arrangements. Two previous residents of the San Francisco house recently started a new BASE apartment in Oakland.

May the BASE program continue to thrive! What follows are reflections on the BASE program from a few of the people whose lives have been transformed by it.

## BASE Reflections

I first learned about BASE on the Internet. It was 2002 and I was sitting in my friend's home in Victoria, B.C., searching the web for groups combining spiritual practice and social change work. By that time, I had been working in social change for a good five years and was dismayed by how separate my spiritual and activist lives seemed. I was hungry for integration, for a way to make my work in the world more spiritually reflective and my spiritual practice more aligned with my feelings for social change. I longed to experience the deeply radical feeling of being a spiritual warrior—peaceful, active, and persistent. When I came to the BPF website and discovered BASE, a light came on. It seemed to be exactly what I was looking for.

I traveled to the Bay Area, excited to meet what I imagined would be my comrades in BASE: anarchist Buddhists, simple-living yogis, and communally minded monks. I was ready to be held and supported in a community of like-minded radicals who might nurture my skills and social views. What a surprise it was instead to be greeted by a much less predictable collection of fellow seekers—homemakers, journalists, students, and businessmen, to name a few. My vision of social change began its slow evolution.

In the course of the BASE program I was challenged to review my definition of social change, a dualistic one that valued certain styles and actions above others. I had always believed that one needed to be on the front line to be an agent of “the revolution”—protesting, picketing, educating, and radicalizing. I soon became aware that the world of engaged Buddhism was far more nuanced and complex. When my mentor said, “Someone had to parent Thich Nhat Hanh,” I suddenly understood what it was all about. I began to see that there are many different ways to contribute to change in the world and to nurture liberation for other beings. In a community of diverse, active individuals, my understanding of how broad and encompassing this practice actually is reached a new level.

For me, social change occurs not just at protests and workshops with a select group of “front liners.” It takes place in the time I spend with a child, the way in which I speak up at a meeting, even the smile I share with the grocery clerk. I feel whole and integrated in a way I could not have imagined three years ago. —*Justine Dawson*

Diana Winston, Donald Rothberg, Maylie Scott, and I spent long hours together in the mid '90s developing a BASE model and fine-tuning the first groups. I've wanted to take part in a BASE group ever since, but found I didn't have the time between my daily BPF work, my family, and my responsibilities at the Berkeley Zen Center. But last year I finally got to do it.

It's difficult to encapsulate my BASE experience. I imagine this is common. There were 11 of us—nine participants, facilitator Justine Dawson, and me. As someone with broad experience in meditation and social action, I was asked to be the “mentor” for the group. As a mentor I had several guiding principles: to attend all the retreats and as many of the weekly meetings as possible; to build practice relations with all the members; to teach whatever people thought might be of use in our shared practice; to encourage; and to learn. Beyond these intentions, everything was wide open—that is to say, I didn't know quite what I was doing.

Like many new undertakings, the beginning was hard. I tried to read the group to see when to step forward and when to step back. Over time we opened to each other, liked each other, and became harmonious. Despite differences in age and dharma experience, we were able to accept the hard times and good times without getting thrown off course. In those six months we formed a community and a shared practice.

Our designated time is over, but our connection continues, and the road ahead is still unknown. —*Alan Senauke*

About five years ago, I heard Joanna Macy on KPFA talking about combining political and spiritual practice. This got me interested in Buddhism.

I came to BASE from union and solidarity work, in which there is an emphasis on efficient decision-making

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followed by action. I like that—I like getting things done. So let's just say a lot of the processing of feelings that took place in the group drove me nuts. Slowly though, I relaxed and tuned in to what people were saying. Sometimes it was frustrating, sometimes confusing, yet ultimately I was full of wonder as I listened to everyone struggling to find their place in this fractured world, to find a path that merged their spiritual needs with right livelihood or political action. It gave me a great feeling of hope to be in this company.

As the senior member of the BASE crew, I brought to the group many years of political work. I also had a very elementary Buddhist practice—I'm still working on getting my legs to cross. Alan Senauke's Zen teachings on the dharma of Martin Luther King moved me most. I found here the essence of engaged spirituality: "It was not," Alan said, "his 'dreams' that were so important, but his 'embodiment,' what he did with his body, where he placed it." I am hoping that my spiritual path will lead me to similar embodiments. Participating in BASE was a step or two on that path.

All in all, this was a very good experience for me. I developed greater patience with the group process, met some very interesting people, read some valuable articles, learned a bit about Zen, and ultimately gained a greater sense of engaged Buddhism. —*John Hess*

BASE helped me to integrate spiritual practice into my daily life and social change work. From others in the group, I learned concrete ideas and creative perspectives about how to practice in the world. This has helped me to see that my spiritual practice is based in my whole life, not just in my cushion time.

BASE allowed me to bring together many facets of my being—the part that loves inquiry, the part that loves more secular types of social analysis, the part that loves the bodhisattva vow to be of benefit to all beings, the part that loves to be quiet, and the part that loves to be loud. The intellectual, spiritual, and emotional streams of my life were able to intersect and inform one another in ways that seemed impossible in my life as a university student.

I now have a much clearer sense of what it takes to build a learning community than I did four months ago. Being able to co-create a course of study was a tremendous experience for me. I valued the multitude of perspectives, life experiences, and creative endeavors that each member of the group brought to the table and shared.

The community that formed was exceptionally beautiful. People were honest and kind with each other. I find it much easier to speak in groups now because of the supportive atmosphere I encountered. Inspired by my BASE experience, I am currently working on the development of a Buddhist Worker House—or some similar permutation—guided by the example of the Catholic Worker movement. —*Sara Schedler* ♦

# The International Advisory Council

by Alan Senauke

For 15 years BPF's International Advisory Board—Robert Aitken Roshi, A. T. Ariyaratne, Pema Chödrön, Christina Feldman, Maha Ghosananda, Lodi Gyari, Mamoru Kato, Joanna Macy, Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak Sivaraksa, Gary Snyder, and Christopher Titmuss—has been in place. We bow to these elders and teachers. Some of them actively advise us; others represent our direct connection to teachers and cultures who have consistently called for an engaged Buddhist understanding of liberation.

BPF is maturing at a time when the U.S. and the world are in turmoil. In our peace work, in prison dharma, in BASE, in chapters, and among our many members, people are calling for responsiveness, leadership, and strategy. So, the BPF board, Executive Director Maia Duerr, and I have turned to an even wider circle of teachers, writers, and activists to help us in the work of engaged Buddhism. This new body, BPF's International Advisory Council (IAC), grows out of our former Advisory Board and includes many more people, nationally and internationally, who have already been serving informally as our advisors for years. This long list of friends is a work in progress. There are many more who share our work and values, and have important understandings to teach us.

What are we asking of the IAC and what are we offering to its members? We see the IAC as being helpful in many potential areas. For example, its members can:

- provide spiritual direction for BPF and help to hold our vision
- respond to current events in words and action
- teach in BPF programs, workshops, and events
- advise us on issues, positions, and strategies
- develop Buddhist social thought and theory
- connect with people of other faiths and institutions
- strengthen BPF's international relationships
- support BPF's fundraising work

We offer these friends our grateful recognition and support for the work of their own centers, projects, and organizations. It seems to be a win-win proposition.

In the coming year I will coordinate the IAC for the BPF board and staff. My plan is to keep an active correspondence with IAC members, filling them in on BPF programs and activities, soliciting their thoughts and energies, and forming small working groups for particular tasks. If you have concerns you would like to see the IAC take up, or would like to communicate with any of its members directly, feel free to write to me at <alans@bpf.org>.

## BPF's International Advisory Council

*[Members are listed with their organizations and are based in the U.S. unless stated otherwise.]*

- \* Robert Aitken Roshi—Diamond Sangha
- \* Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne—Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka
- \* James Baraz—Spirit Rock Meditation Center
- \* Michele Benzamin-Miki—Manzanita Village
- \* Ven. Bimal Bhikkhu—Shishu Koruna Sangha, India/Bangladesh
- \* Sylvia Boorstein—Spirit Rock Meditation Center
- \* Melody Ermachild Chavis—Writer, activist
- \* Pema Chödrön—Gampo Abbey, Canada
- \* Christina Feldman—Gaia House, Great Britain
- \* Zoketsu Norman Fischer Roshi—Everyday Zen Foundation
- \* Rev. Noriaki Fujimori—Waimea Higashi Honganji
- \* Samdech Prea Maha Ghosananda—The Dhammayietra Center for Peace & Nonviolence, Cambodia
- \* Roshi Bernie Glassman—Peacemaker Circle International
- \* Rev. Tova Green—Green Gulch Farm
- \* Lodi Gyari—International Campaign for Tibet
- \* Ruben Habito—Maria Kannon Zen Center
- \* Roshi Joan Halifax—Upaya Zen Center
- \* Rev. Paul Haller—San Francisco Zen Center
- \* Ven. Heng Sure—Dharma Realm Buddhist Association
- \* Mushim Ikeda-Nash—Writer, activist
- \* Jill Jameson—Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Australia
- \* Ken Jones—Network of Engaged Buddhists, Wales
- \* Rev. Mamoru Kato Shonin—New England Peace Pagoda
- \* Stephanie Kaza—University of Vermont
- \* Ouyporn Khuankaew—The International Women's Partnership, Siam
- \* Jack Kornfield—Spirit Rock Meditation Center
- \* Ken Kraft—Lehigh University
- \* Santikaro Larson—Liberation Park
- \* Rev. Taigen Leighton—Mountain Source Sangha
- \* Roshi John Daido Looi—Zen Mountain Monastery
- \* David Loy—Think Sangha, Japan

*(continued on page 40)*

### The Poignancy of Impermanence

by Diana Lion

This is the last Prison column I'll be writing for a while. I've been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome and MCS (multiple chemical sensitivities) and will have started an extended medical leave by the time you are reading this. It has been a wonderful seven-plus years, and I hope to return to BPF after I'm well. A big highlight of my work has been all of you—prisoners, ex-prisoners, and free-worlders. I want each of you to know how much you have enriched my life and influenced the course of this program.

Gratitude is interesting. It enriches the person giving it perhaps more than those to whom one is extending it. I'm filled with gratitude for the staff in the BPF office who help protect me from my own habitual patterns of overwork, for my dharma teachers who remind me that joy and rest are part of the dharma too, for my friends who are helping me with the everyday stuff that has become difficult, and for the flowers in my neighborhood that remind me that no matter what, I can always see beauty nearby.

I'm grateful too for our two terrific new Prison Program Coordinators. Hong Chingkuang is in charge of ministry, and Michael Callahan is in charge of advocacy.

Hong is a longtime dharma practitioner grounded in the Chinese Pure Land tradition. He is Shanghainese but grew up in New York City and has traveled extensively throughout the United States. He's an accomplished artist (this includes working as a tattoo artist in San Francisco's oldest tattoo parlor), and knows the prison world well, having spent eight years inside. During his incarceration, he started his own hand-printed newsletter called *neverdespise*, disseminating the Buddha Dharma to youth and old folk alike. He has a deep grasp of the issues prisoners face while inside and after release. Inspired by the teachings and vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, Hong founded a Buddhist youth society called Jiu Hua Tong, which is dedicated to helping incarcerated youth identify with their own inherent Buddhature. His sweet disposition, dharma practice, and experience will add immeasurably to the Prison Program.

Michael is a Zen practitioner who has worked with Critical Resistance, a nationally respected organization whose goal is to abolish the prison-industrial complex. His experience working with California prisoners and their family members inspired him to help launch a prisoner and community newspaper, *The Abolitionist*. Through his work at Critical Resistance and as a participant in Generation Five's Community Response Project, Michael has been addressing the relationship between interpersonal and state violence with the hopes of creating viable local alternatives to our current economic and criminal justice system. This echoes our program's long-term plan to com-

bine dharma values with systems already in use by indigenous cultures and communities around the world in order to create a restorative justice system for this country. Michael's humor, skills, and inclusive community organizing experience will be tremendous assets for the Prison Program's advocacy efforts.

I'm thrilled to welcome them, and confident about leaving the program in their hands. ❖

#### Death Penalty Awareness

Amnesty USA's National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty (NWFA) is an annual event co-sponsored by BPF every October. In 2004, many BPF chapters and Buddhist sanghas participated. We hope that even more of you will join BPF this year in observing this weekend of solidarity, reflection, discussion, and action on the death penalty. For more information, check out [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org).

#### Advisory Council, continued from page 39

- \* Rev. Francisco Genko Lugovina—Zen Peacemaker Family
- \* Joanna Macy—Writer, teacher
- \* Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh—Unified Buddhist Church: France, Vietnam, United States
- \* Mayumi Oda—Plutonium Free Future
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- \* Ven. Phra Paisal Visalo—Wat Pasukato, Siam
- \* Diana Winston—Spirit Rock Meditation Center ❖



## From the Executive Director

### News From the BPF Office

by Maia Duerr

Over the past months, BPF board and staff have been exploring ways to respond to the growing disease of militarism. One of the most obvious ways is to support young people who are faced with decisions about involvement with the military. In June, we published "The Dharma and the Military: A Resource Guide" on our website (see [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org) and page 13 of this issue). These are some of the projects we're considering:

- **Counter-recruitment Work:** Outreach to high school and college campuses to provide accurate information about the military to young people. We may design a "First Precept" card for those who are interested.
- **Teen Hotline for Conscientious Objectors:** Address teens' spiritual concerns from a dharma perspective and support them to file for CO status, if requested.
- **Support for Returning Veterans:** Develop a network of BPF members who can provide counseling, meditation instruction, and other support to those returning from Iraq.

In the coming months, the newly formed Chapter Council (see below) will help us to field-test these ideas among chapters and members in their local regions. I invite your feedback as well.

After we published the Dharma/Military Resource Guide, several people wrote to remind us that the burden of undoing militarism shouldn't rest only with young people, and that families of soldiers also pay a huge price. They are absolutely right. Johan Galtung, one of the pioneers in the study of peace and conflict resolution, describes three levels of violence: 1) direct violence—the act of actual harming; 2) structural violence—the systems, institutions, and structures that may lead to direct violence and that also embody a whole process of violence; and 3) cultural violence—the symbols, images, and customs that legitimize structural and direct violence.

Those serving in the military may be directly in the path of the first kind of violence, but we all bear responsibility for deconstructing militarism at the other two levels. We can think about whether our everyday choices cultivate seeds of peace or war. How do our purchases and taxes support the proliferation of military arms? Does our transportation depend on oil and an intricate web of dysfunctional political relationships? How do our interactions embody nonviolence or violence?

### BPF's New Chapter Council

One of BPF's greatest strengths is its chapters, which hold the potential to further BPF's mission and purpose in the world. The Chapter Council, comprising seven people representing different geographic regions, was launched in

Spring 2005 as a means to fully realize this potential. These Regional Representatives act as liaisons between chapters and the BPF central office, bringing ideas and concerns to bimonthly conference calls with the chapter coordinator and other representatives.

We've had three meetings so far, and I can attest to the dedication and insight of the regional reps as we sort through such questions as:

How have chapters kept members active and engaged? How do chapters sustain themselves?

What social/political issues are most compelling for chapters? What events and actions have been the most rewarding? What resources would help support the work of chapters?

As of July 2005, the following people have volunteered to serve on the inaugural Chapter Council:

- **Northeast U.S. States:** Mike Fallarino (Albany, NY)
- **Southeast U.S. States:** Currently open. Thanks to Will Boggs for filling this position until July 2005.
- **Midwest U.S. States:** Chingu Donna Muck (Ann Arbor, MI)
- **Western U.S. States (except CA):** Heidi Enji Hoogstra (Portland, OR)
- **California:** Margie and Charlie Calvert (Santa Cruz, CA)
- **Canada:** Jess Huffman (Calgary, Alberta)
- **International:** Jill Jameson (Australia)

Stay tuned for more news about the council in the coming months.

*(continued on page 42)*

### Creating a Legacy of Peace

For more than a quarter of a century, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship has been a compassionate and nonviolent instrument for social change, taking a progressive stance on militarism, disarmament, the death penalty, the prison-industrial complex, and environmental and human rights.

Your support makes our ongoing work possible during these challenging times. Please consider:

- Corporate or matching gifts
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- Inclusion of BPF in your will or trust
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If you would like more information about these and other giving plans, please contact Jenisha de Rivera at 510/655-6169 ext. 310. All inquiries are confidential.

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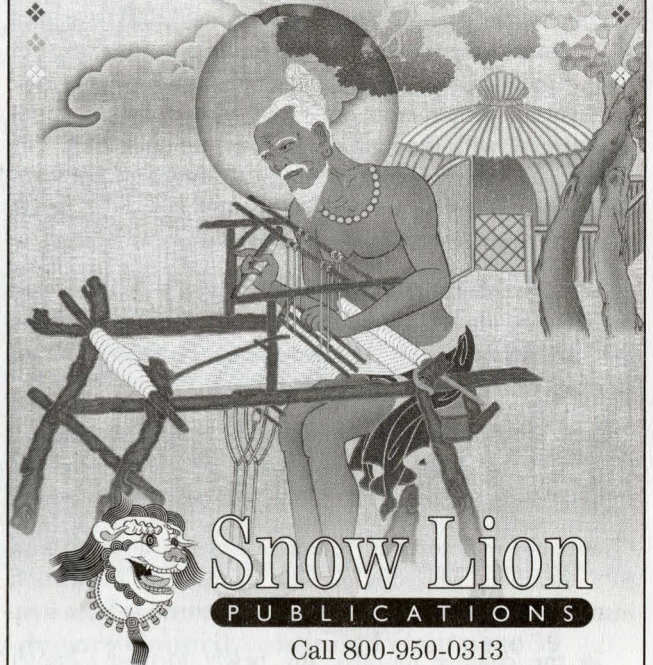
The summer months have been a time of transition for the BPF staff. Diana Lion, BPF's Prison Program Director and Associate Director of Programs, has been struggling with health issues all year. As Diana's work partner and friend, it has been painful to see her offer her heart and soul to her work (Diana can do no less!) and then to see her suffer severe health consequences. With both her doctor's and our support, Diana has decided to take a medical leave of six months to a year beginning in August. We will miss her greatly, and at the same time we know how important it is for her to have time to fully recover.

Thanks to a very generous donation from Grant Couch, a Prison Program supporter, we were able to hire two part-time coordinators for the program: Hong Chingkuang and Michael Callahan (see Diana's column on page 40). I'll just add that I'm delighted to have them both working with us. Alan Senauke will mentor Hong and Michael in prison dharma. (Next to Diana, Alan is the staff person with the most experience in prison work.) To help us cover programmatic work, longtime BPF friend and TW columnist Mushim Ikeda-Nash will fill the role of Acting Associate Director of Programs during Diana's absence.

I am grateful to the entire BPF community—board, staff, chapters, and members—for continuing to support our work in a way that is nourishing and sustainable. ❖

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**Aeshah & Turtle  
Kokomon**



**Dennis**



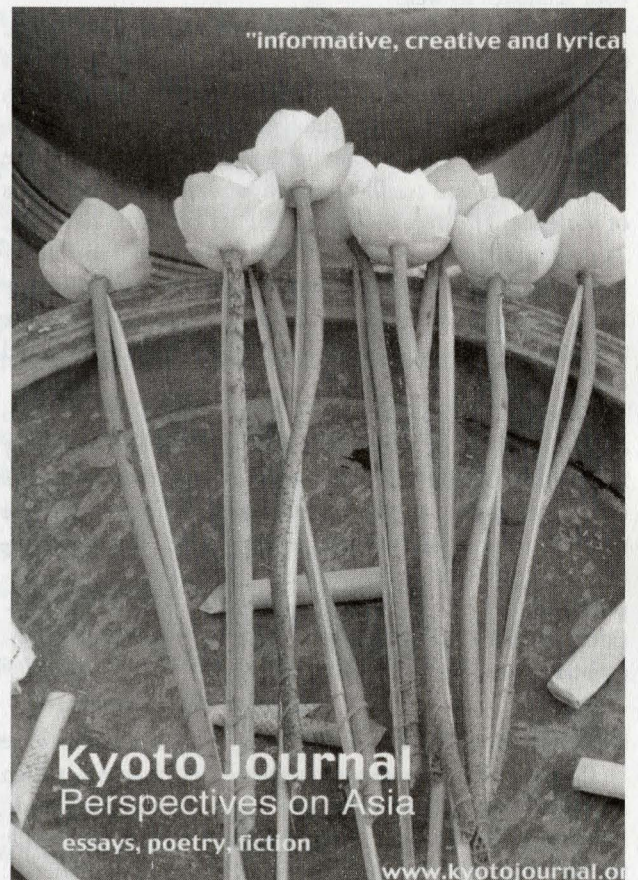
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## Gratitudes

*BPF could not survive without help from all of you! We hereby gratefully acknowledge contributions above membership received between April 1 and July 31, 2005:*

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Ninsho Kakinuma

# Announcements & Classifieds

## ANNOUNCEMENTS/ CLASSIFIEDS

**Sharing Hope in Sri Lanka:** Saturday, October 8, 6:30-8:30 PM, Berkeley Friends Church, 1600 Sacramento St. (at Cedar). Celebration, fundraiser, and outreach. Jeyanthi Siva and others will talk about their peace work in war-torn Sri Lanka and their plans for the coming year. Jeyanthi is a former Bay Area resident, born in Sri Lanka, who returned to the island three years ago to teach Nonviolent Communication to people of all ethnic and religious groups. More info at [www.sandhi.org](http://www.sandhi.org) or contact John Porter, 510/845-5125.

### Zen Community of Oak Park:

Traditional Zen training for a contemporary world with emphasis on developing skillful means for healing suffering. Teacher Sensei Robert Joshin Althouse, fully accredited in the White Plum lineage tradition, offers Inner Disarmament workshops at churches, dharma centers, and organizations around the country. 163 N. Humphrey Ave., Oak Park, IL 60602. 708/445-1651, [www.zencommunity.org](http://www.zencommunity.org), <[info@zencommunity.org](mailto:info@zencommunity.org)>.

**New Website:** The Meditation Spot helps Internet searchers find a suitable meditation practice by profiling prominent teachers in every tradition. [www.meditationspot.com](http://www.meditationspot.com).

**BPF e-Newsletter!** Want to stay up-to-date about BPF and the world of socially engaged Buddhism between issues of *Turning Wheel*? Subscribe to BPF's monthly e-newsletter. Sign up at [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org).

**Not Turning Away**, an anthology of 25 years of *Turning Wheel*! Available at your local bookstore, from Shambhala Publications, or from Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Send a check or money order for \$20 (includes postage) to: BPF, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703.

**Making the Invisible Visible**, writings by people of color and their white allies about healing racism in our Buddhist communities. Available on the Spirit Rock website, [www.spiritrock.org](http://www.spiritrock.org).

**Safe Harbor**, ethical guidelines, process, and resources for Buddhist communities. \$7 (includes postage), available from BPF, 510/655-6169; [bpf@bpf.org](mailto:bpf@bpf.org).

**Texas Freedom Sangha** publishes a quarterly newsletter for/about Buddhist prisoners in Texas. Texas prisoners can request free subscriptions and/or submit articles, sutra quotes, etc., for publication. Contact us at: Texas Freedom Sangha, 519 South Sylvania Ave., Ft. Worth, TX 76111-2241.

## GROUPS

**Green Sangha: Spiritually Based Environmental Activism.** Groups meet in Oakland and Marin County. Form a group in your hometown. Call 415/459-8610; [www.greensangha.org](http://www.greensangha.org).

**Mindfulness, Diversity, and Social Change Sangha**, blending mindfulness practice in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh with social change work, meets weekly in Oakland. Contact Olga 510/540-0141 or e-mail: <[mindful@rightbox.com](mailto:mindful@rightbox.com)>

## VOLUNTEER/DONATIONS/ SPONSORSHIP

**Prison Dharma Network (PDN)** needs your donations of dollars and used dharma books (no magazines please!) to continue making the dharma available to prisoners. If you are interested in joining PDN, please visit our website: [www.PrisonDharmaNetwork.org](http://www.PrisonDharmaNetwork.org). Send donations to PDN, P.O. Box 4623, Boulder, CO 80306-4623. 303/544/5923; <[pdn@indra.com](mailto:pdn@indra.com)>.

**Please lend us a hand!** October 2005 is the 20th Anniversary of the Peace Pagoda in Leverett, MA. To celebrate, we will inaugurate the New Temple! Please help us with cooking, lawn mowing, garden work, construction, painting, computer input, temple cleaning, etc. Contact Leverett Peace Pagoda, 100 Cave Hill Road, Leverett, MA, 01054; 413/367-2202.

### From the State Pen to Penn State.

Help Dirk Van Velzen earn a degree in business administration at Penn State. There are no more federal student loans for prisoners. Help Dirk by purchasing calendars which include drawings from incarcerated artists. Calendars are \$19.99. Proceeds will help fund his undergraduate tuition. Visit us online: [www.prisonscholar.com](http://www.prisonscholar.com), or call 800/111-2222.

### BPF volunteers and interns

(editorial, prison program, administrative) are wanted, needed, loved! Call us at 510/655-6169.

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For more info: 415-459-8610 \* [info@greensangha.org](mailto:info@greensangha.org)  
[www.greensangha.org](http://www.greensangha.org)

**NEW!**

# Bodhisattvas We Have Known



*Herewith we inaugurate our new back page, dedicated to the inspiring bodhisattvas we meet in our lives. We welcome submissions. Send us your stories (900 words maximum) of the people who give you the courage to work for peace and justice.*

## **Marshall Rosenberg Founder of Nonviolent Communication**

by Diana Lion

This street-smart 70-year-old, with a mischievous glint in his eyes, has an unflinching commitment to peace and social justice, a heart “as wide as the world,” and a motivation that combines the spiritual with the political. He is Marshall Rosenberg, born in 1934 in Detroit, to Jewish working-class parents.

Growing up during the Great Depression and World War II profoundly shaped Rosenberg’s commitment to working for peace. As a young man he was attacked frequently for being a Jew. His first response was to train as a prizefighter. Later he changed strategies and earned a doctorate in clinical psychology. He quickly grew dissatisfied with the labels used to categorize people, labels that froze them into fixed identities from which they had little hope of exiting.

In the late 1960s, Marshall traveled throughout the United States teaching a new paradigm he was developing based on work by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. This work evolved into Nonviolent Communication (NVC), which is currently taught in more than 40 countries. NVC provides a framework for mindful, dynamic communication. Over the years, Rosenberg has given workshops to police and inner-city gangs; warring groups in Sri Lanka, Colombia, Bosnia, Israel, Palestine, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone; teachers and students in schools; executives; and couples and families. He and his colleagues work on six continents: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America.

Rosenberg is an incorrigible storyteller. If you ask him a question, he’ll usually answer you with a story. He likes to tell of his early experience trying to spread the word about NVC. Driving home, exhausted, across the vast expanse of Texas in 1966, he pulled off the road and asked himself, “Why the hell am I doing this?” His momentary crisis of faith led to a vision that energized him. “If I just keep doing this work, maybe 20 years after I’m dead there will be someone from each part of the world who is benefiting from this work and passing it on.” Decades later, the realization that there *are* NVC teams all over the world helps him overcome any doubts he might entertain about the importance of his work.

A few months back, he led an international intensive training on NVC in India. On the second day of the training, one man got up to express the depth of pain he had experienced in his life as one of India’s “untouchables.” To do that in a group of 90 people, where some of the participants were from higher castes, took remarkable courage. The group chose to spend the next three days dealing with the pain created by the caste system. Rosenberg’s empathizing (in NVC format) with both the untouchables and the Brahmins allowed each side to fully witness the other’s pain. This resulted in a team of committed people from both groups who have put together a program to transform the caste system. They videotaped Rosenberg’s dialogue with the man from the workshop, and are using that in their work throughout India.

Rosenberg has worked within many cultures, including prisons, where his focus has been on restorative justice, a holistic approach in which the communities affected by the crimes participate in designing reparations and resolutions. He describes one encounter with a sex offender:

“I empathized with this guy who had sexually molested kids. I asked him, ‘What needs of yours were getting met when you did this?’ The guy said, ‘What the hell are you talking about?’ I said, ‘What needs of yours? I’m sure you’re doing it to meet needs.’ He said, ‘I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.’ And I said, ‘Why did you do it?’ He said, ‘I’m dirt! That’s why I did it.’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘I don’t think you did it because you’re dirt. I think you did it because it met some needs of yours. Whatever those needs were, I probably have the same needs—we all have the same human needs. If you and I can identify the needs you were trying to meet, maybe we can find another strategy that would meet them in a more productive way.’”

The prisoner admitted that he was lonely—he was creating community for himself by bringing the kids to his apartment. Rosenberg told him he could see how that would meet the need for companionship. “But what about the sex?” he asked.

The prisoner looked at the floor, then looked up and screamed, “They know what it’s like to be me!” His father had molested him. He didn’t know how to say, “I had a need for empathy. I didn’t know I could get it by talking to somebody.” So he got it by seeing the terror in the kids’ eyes, which reflected the terror he’d felt. That met his need for empathy. When he understood that, he started to cry. He said, “But that’s no reason for me to do it to them!”

Rosenberg’s commitment and contribution to peacemaking for us as individuals and as members of a larger world has touched many of us, in dharma communities and beyond. When I talked with Rosenberg recently he laughed, saying: “If the Buddha comes back to life and gets a lawyer, he’s got me good. He can get me for taking all his stuff and presenting it as mine. Mostly every part of NVC has been affected by my understanding of the Buddha. I feel very close to the social change work of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.” ♦

For more information, visit [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org).

# DZOGCHEN

## THE NATURAL GREAT PERFECTION

### DZOGCHEN RETREATS WITH LAMA SURYA DAS

Dzogchen is the consummate practice of Tibetan Buddhism. Considered by many to be "the teaching of our time," Dzogchen is direct, immediate, essentialized, adaptable, and profound: a pure awareness practice applicable to any circumstance and readily integrated into modern life. Dzogchen, often translated as the Natural Great Perfection, directly introduces us to our inner Buddha, the inherent freedom, purity and perfection of being that is our true nature.

DZOGCHEN CENTER MEDITATION RETREATS are held across the country:

Santa Rosa, CA	Fall	October 8–16, 2005
Garrison, NY	Winter	December 30, 2005–January 8, 2006
Joshua Tree, CA	Spring	March 25–April 2, 2006
Garrison, NY	Summer	July 15–30, 2006

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LAMA SURYA DAS is the author of *Letting Go of the Person You Used to Be: Lessons on Change, Loss and Spiritual Transformation*. He is also the noted author of the *Awakening Trilogy: Awakening the Buddha Within, Awakening to the Sacred, and Awakening the Buddhist Heart*.

Lama Surya Das is a Lineage Holder of the Dzogchen Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism in the Rimé (non-sectarian) tradition. For over thirty years, including more than eight years in secluded retreat, he has studied with the great masters of Tibetan Buddhism. With his open and lively style, he is particularly effective in the transmission of Buddhism by presenting Buddhist ethics and insight, as well as methods of practice, in a manner accessible to all.

For complete information and secure on-line registration for all of these scheduled events, go to [www.dzogchen.org/retreats](http://www.dzogchen.org/retreats), e-mail [retreat@dzogchen.org](mailto:retreat@dzogchen.org), or call 617-628-1702.

## Save The Date! • Save The Date! • Save The Date!

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