



TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism

Special Issue

A CALL TO ACTION



Buddha Needs You!

A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT AITKEN

**Plus: Thich Nhat Hanh, Joanna Macy,
Robert Thurman, and others**



Guest Editorial by Robert Aitken

Make no mistake. The Neo-Cons are in power in the U.S. and are betraying us and our political heritage. Our very Constitution is called into question. Our nation has been launched on a ruthless course of murderous imperialism.

Some say that students of the dharma do not involve themselves in political action, but Mahayana Buddhism has clearly enabled us to touch the Iraq and the Darfur in ourselves. The fact that Iraqis are my sisters and brothers doesn't need to be swathed in saffron robes.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship is our vehicle, just as the various traditions of Buddhism are vehicles. Let's use BPF as a vehicle, for the most common sense we can conjure up. Everything is on the table. It was put there for us. As a nation we are on a downward path, "invading the world," as writer and scholar Antonia Juhasz says, "one economy at a time."

Are we at BPF in a place where we can speak out? As a tax-exempt organization, we are on guard to protect our status. What would Emma Goldman do? What would Dorothy Day do? What would Kathy Kelly do? What would Baizhang Huaihai [Chinese Zen master during the T'ang dynasty] do?

When Baizhang was in his eighties his monks felt that he should rest and not turn out with the others at *samu* [temple work] time. They hid his garden tools, and this gave him a chance to deliver his most famous dictum. At the next meal he locked himself in and refused his food, saying, "A day without work is a day without eating." This led to the expression in connection with *samu*: "All invited." Everybody turns out. Everybody takes responsibility.

Why not have a bunch of us within the fellowship call ourselves the Buddhist Anarchist Caucus and meet for coffee around somebody's kitchen table somewhere? Why "anarchist"? Because we're Buddhist.

Buddhism is anarchism, after all, for anarchism is love, trust, selflessness, and all those good Buddhist virtues, including a total lack of imposition on others. During the 19th and even early 20th century, European and American anarchists occupied respected podiums on lecture circuits across the continent. (The roster of distinguished speakers included the anarchist Har Dayal, author of *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Sanskrit Literature*.) But there was in the United States almost half a century of concerted, bloody-minded, and ultimately successful endeavor to erase anarchism and its devotees from civilized discourse. To this day, even in an organization like our own, the very word *anarchist* evokes an unkempt foreigner with a bomb about to go off in his back pocket.

But go to Google, type in the words "Buddhist Anarchism," and stand back. The number of links will surprise you. Everything really is empty, personally interconnected, and precious in itself. We don't need some guy in saffron robes to tell us so. Anarchism makes sense.

It's time to put ourselves in a position where we have nothing to protect. No group ego. No name, no slogan. Like King Christian X of Denmark we can all wear the yellow star. There is only one thing that works in the face of the iron faces, and that is decency. By being decent, I don't mean being nice. I mean Mahayana responsibility. It isn't nice to block the doorway. Decent Mahayana conduct means behaving appropriately. It means an essential agenda that is not necessarily legal, like smuggling medicine to Iraqi people, or setting up a half-way house for recently released prisoners, or feeding the poor, five days a week, week in and week out, for years and years, like Catholic Worker houses across the country. The essential agenda is not a hobby, after all. ❖

—Robert Aitken

Send nonfiction, poetry, and art submissions to *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703-9906, with SASE; or to <turningwheel@bpf.org>. We also welcome letters to the editor at the address above or via e-mail. See www.bpf.org for submission guidelines.

TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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Robert Aitken Calls Us to Account

In this issue of *Turning Wheel* we celebrate one of our most beloved teachers, Robert Aitken Roshi, BPF co-founder and elder.

Early in 2006, Roshi contacted us at *Turning Wheel*, urging us to do a special issue that would be “an exacting address of the current horrors from a Buddhist position.”

He mentioned the *Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, a one-time substitution for *Co-Evolution Quarterly*, back in 1961—“a book, really, in magazine form that many of us old-timers still treasure; a landmark for the ‘60s.”

So we decided to do this special issue of *TW*, twice as long as usual, with a spine and a heavier cover. Aitken Roshi agreed to be a consulting editor, and we sent out the call:

“Life on planet Earth is threatened by war and corporate greed. The situation is urgent. What is a socially engaged Buddhist response to our current planetary crisis?”

The issue begins with a guest editorial by Roshi, and our features begin with his challenging essay on page 15.

I hadn’t seen Roshi for a long time, and it was a joy to take this opportunity to go to Hawai’i to interview him. We include a piece about the political library that Roshi gave to BPF, and we review his most recent book. Many of the other articles were solicited by Roshi.

This issue exists because of him. It comes from his vision, his pen, his conversation, his sangha.

We hope you will relish the opportunity to spend time with Aitken Roshi in these pages. And we are proud that the rest of the issue, too, with its many voices, speaks with the vigorous, rigorous spirit that he has always encouraged. During this dangerous time in the world, these voices can help us find our own response. Thank you, dear Roshi, dear teacher, dear elder.

—Susan Moon

Encouraging Words

There is the twinkle in his eyes, the remarkable light humor he brings to even difficult topics. There is the fierce moral questioning, every issue a potential practice field. For many of us, there is the ongoing gift of Aitken Roshi’s “encouraging words.”

An avid follower of Aitken’s mind, I have eagerly bought each of his new books as soon as they hit the bookstores. Each one seems to shed light on the challenges at hand and to offer fresh perspectives on core teachings. Over the years I have returned many times to the fresh and thoughtful words of Aitken Roshi. Books do not just fall from the sky and publish themselves. Aitken’s love of writing and willingness to endure the editing and production process has given the Buddhist community a beautiful literary legacy. His commentaries on the *paramitas* informed the first BPF Meditation in Action Institute; his version of the precepts inspired the vows my husband and I took at our wedding. In all his books, Aitken shows us that clear expression reflects clear mind. His careful and eloquent writing is for me (as a writer and Zen student) a grand feast of words—filled with intention, grace, and the true heart of a most generous teacher.

—Stephanie Kaza



Robert Aitken with his granddaughter
Photo by Doug Codiga

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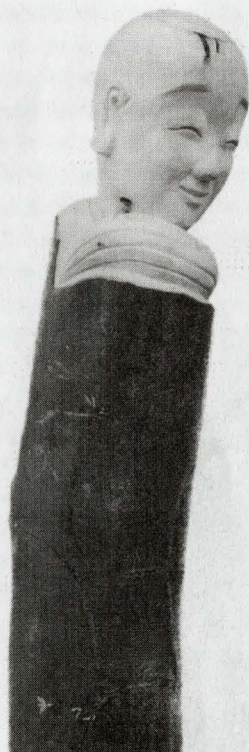
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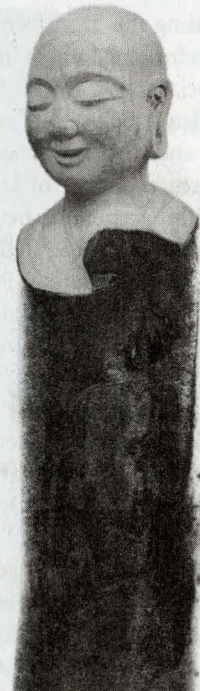
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Letters

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Ken Knabb's "Engaged Buddhism at an Impasse"

Thanks for publishing "Evading the Transformation of Reality: Engaged Buddhism at an Impasse," by Ken Knabb (Spring '06). While reading Buddhist books, I frequently get a sense that the author isn't visionary in a radical feminist way and doesn't believe that the status quo needs to be replaced with egalitarianism, which would lead to world peace. Knabb's essay seems to me a pep talk for getting the revolutionary ball rolling. After I read it I got books on Emma Goldman and the Tiananmen Square protest and have been reading up on revolutionaries in the women's and Civil Rights movements, and about people such as Nelson Mandela and Voltairine de Cleyre.

I think that the most effective nonviolent revolution requires educational reform. I propose the idea of having Universities of Peace spread across the world. Peace education should start as early as possible, before children are brainwashed into assuming that violence rather than negotiation is the way to do things. I think courses in nonviolent communication should be required from grades K-12, and should be taken as seriously as reading and math.

Mainstream elementary, junior, and high school education has an androcentric and militaristic slant, and textbooks don't spend time on peace movements or nonviolent activism. The educational system needs to spend more time covering the history of nonviolent and antiwar activism and teaching nonviolent communication skills, so that we can move forward and finally become civilized.

—Susan E. Wiget

"Evading the Transformation of Reality" by Ken Knabb was a refreshing, much needed critique/corrective of the usual social action articles found in *Turning Wheel*.

Political, social, and economic structures consistently pollute and corrupt us as individuals. We could have a much greater chance of attaining enlightenment (or salvation) within societal structures that enhance, promote, and nourish the Eightfold Path. Instead they encourage anger, hatred, and ignorance. Prayer, meditation, and sending forth of metta may help individuals, but they will not bring about the immediate changes needed in society.

As Knabb points out, there are nonreligious groups that worked out methods that can be used to change societal structures. Many are practical and realistic. However, they require *action* on our part. Buddhists must study these methods and take a much more active part in the political process. Self-work, spreading the teachings and insights of Buddha (or Jesus) among our fellow men and women, is an incredibly slow process. Personal transformation and societal change—one is not effective without the other.

—Bob Hochwalt

(See page 40 for a longer response to Ken Knabb's article.)

Interfaith Dialogue Continues

On May 18, 2006, I, along with a Baptist minister, a Muslim cleric and scholar, and a Sikh priest, spoke at an interfaith peace conference on the topic "Reconciling God and Human Suffering." I presented a Buddhist view on the subject. Each of the other religions represented has a history of violence aimed at protecting or extending their influence. Buddhism has never done this. I wondered why.

I opened your "Interfaith Dialogue" (Summer '06) issue hoping to find insight into my question, but I was disappointed. Many of the articles in the issue look for and affirm the common ground among the world's religions. But I think we do not need to ask, "How are world religions the same?" but instead, "How are they different?" What does Buddhism have that the other, violence-justifying religions do not? Is it the teaching of emptiness? Is it meditation? Is it that Buddha is not a male god who likes to be praised and who either advocates violence or is himself violent? What is our secret? Conservative Christian Right governments are reincarnating the crusades by disguising them as the spread of democracy. Islamic governments and Islamic splinter groups are chanting jihad. Each points to religious teachings as their justification.

In her essay "Twenty Years of Christian Buddhist Dialogue" Rosemary Radford Ruether touches on doctrinal differences among the religions and how they impact ecology, war and peace, poverty, and the global economy. I thank her for that. Let's now take this inquiry further!

—Kuya Minogue, Golden, British Columbia, Canada

Thank you very much for your work, always, but in particular for the latest issue on interfaith dialogue. Wow! Having been personally involved with interfaith and ecumenical work for most of my adult life—I just celebrated my 40th year of ordination in the Lutheran Church and 15 years of practice in the Zen Community—I think this issue is a gem. I am grateful for your work on behalf of all created beings.

—Bob "Koshin" Hanson, Neshkoro, Wisconsin

Erratum: In the Summer 2006 *Turning Wheel*, the end of the Family Practice column should have read as follows:

Our homework assignment is still the same:

Give up the old ways—

Passion, enmity, folly.

Know the truth and find peace.

Share the way.

—The Dhammapada, trans. Thomas Byrom

(The first line of the Dhammapada quotation was erroneously included in the author's text.)

Indra's Net

Refuseniks

Refuseniks, directed by Sonja De Vries, is a new film about Israeli conscientious objectors. I attended the Bay Area premiere in Oakland, California, in May 2006.

Film Highlights:

A young Israeli woman recounts going to Auschwitz on a high school field trip. While her classmates insist that to keep Auschwitz from recurring, Israel must expel all Arabs, she worries that to do so could set off a chain reaction precipitating another Holocaust, not of Israelis, but of Palestinians at Israeli hands. Israel is not there yet and NOT like Nazi Germany, she insists, but sometimes people don't realize when things have gone too far. She is only 18 years old. When her time comes she refuses draft induction.

A formerly gung-ho Israeli soldier recalls being on vacation in Tel Aviv when an army buddy braggingly shows off a photo of himself and two other soldiers with a dead and mutilated young Palestinian, their trophy kill. When next called up again for reserve duty in the Occupied Territories he refuses to go.

Another young man speaks of hearing a different narrative about Israel and Palestine, not the narrative of Holocaust and the ancient biblical right to the Land of the Jews that he had heard since childhood, but the narrative of colonialism—the story of white Europeans taking land by force and using the Bible as their justification while expelling and oppressing the indigenous non-European population. He refuses to serve in the Occupied Territories when summoned. While he does not identify it as such, the ancient Buddhist precept “One does not take what is not

freely given” informs all his actions.

None of those interviewed are Buddhist and all consider Israel their home, but their contemplative intelligence in the midst of dire circumstance is a still point in a roiling world of fear and violence, reiterating the Buddhist notion that all beings are connected. They have traded in their American-made M-16s not only for plowshares, but for Manjushri's sword of wisdom that cuts through all delusion.

Historian Howard Zinn has called the *Refuseniks* “genuine heroes.” Wellesley Professor Joel Krieger calls the film “required viewing for anyone who refuses to accept easy answers about the Israeli Palestinian conflict.” After viewing this film, it is easy to see why. For more information: www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org, www.reelrevolutionfilms.com.

—Francesca Rosa

See pages 46–50 for Annette Herskovits's article about Palestine/Israel.

Erratum:

In the Winter 2005 *Turning Wheel*, we published an article called “No Nukes! Peace, Justice, and Nuclear Disarmament,” by Jacqueline Cabasso. The article contained errors of fact that came about in the editing process and were not the author's responsibility. You will find a corrected version of “No Nukes!” on the BPF website. This updated version was published in the Spring 2006 *Peace Messenger*, the quarterly publication of the World Peace Council. The article, which describes the ongoing and intensifying threat of nuclear weapons and asks “Where is the public outcry?” is particularly relevant to the current issue of *Turning Wheel*. Please go to www.bpf.org.



Silence

by Zahi Khamis

Born in 1959 in a village in the Galilee, Palestinian artist Zahi Khamis expresses a deep sense of loss, anxiety, and yearning for homeland in his work. Zahi's paintings have been featured in many solo, juried, and group exhibits, including shows at the United Nations, the Palestine Center (Washington, DC), and the Carnegie Institute for Peace. For more information or to view more of his work visit www.PalestinianArt.com.

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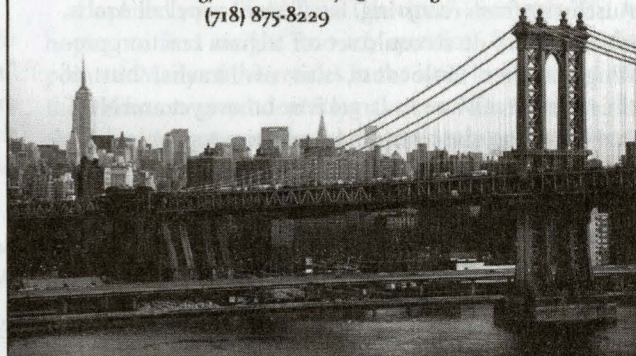
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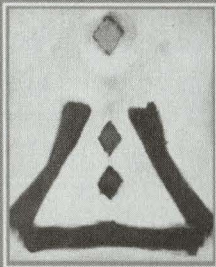
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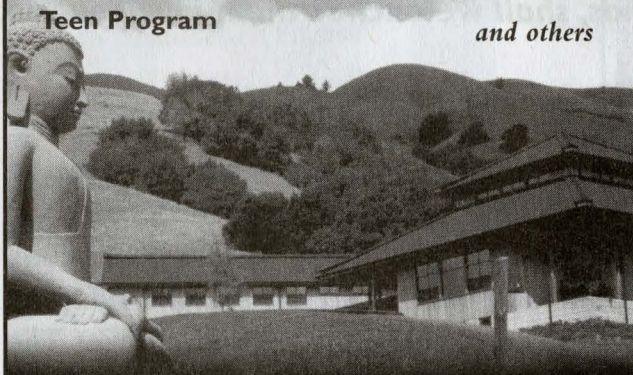
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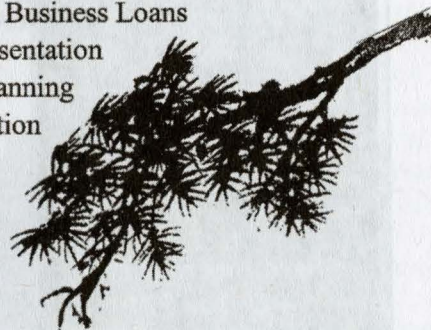
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JIKO LINDA CUTTS is a Zen priest and co-Abbess of Zen Center, where she has studied since 1971. She has lived at Green Gulch Farm with her family since 1993. Linda is a member of the Zen Center Environmental Committee.



WENDY JOHNSON is a lay-ordained dharma teacher in the lineage of Thich Nhat Hanh and author of the forthcoming Zen Center book, *Gardening at the Dragon's Gate*. She helped establish the organic farm and garden program at Green Gulch Farm.

For more information, visit www.sfzc.org/lectures. Purchase tickets online, or by calling 415.865.3790

Jump In and Do It! Building Public School Learning Communities

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

*The old pond
A frog jumped in,
Kerplunk!*

—Basho, trans. Allen Ginsberg

Our son's small four-year-old public high school in Oakland, California, doesn't have grades, final exams, teachers, or a curriculum. The students are at the school only two and a half days per week, gathering in peer groups called "advisories," and meeting with an adult educator called an "advisor." Most take some courses, for free, at the community college nearby. "Learning Through Internship" (LTI) takes place two days a week at locations throughout the Bay Area. On any given Tuesday or Thursday during the school year, MetWest High School students might be observing surgery at Children's Hospital in Oakland, building a stock car and researching gear ratios, teaching a class in basic computer skills to incarcerated youth and their families, learning to docent a museum exhibition, assisting a kindergarten teacher, or learning fashion design.

A radical departure from traditional American high schools, but does it work academically? MetWest graduated its first senior class in June 2006, making the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* with a photo of jubilant youth in caps and gowns and reporting that 100 percent of the 25-member senior class had been accepted to at least one four-year college or university. To appreciate this statistic, you need to know that the dropout rate in Oakland public high schools is so high that it has been called an "emergency" situation, and so-called "white flight" has occurred in the school district, leaving behind youth of color, many of whom could be called "at-risk youth." The Oakland Unified School District collapsed financially several years ago, and a state-appointed "administrator" was sent to replace the superintendent, while the Oakland school board was demoted to advisory status. I could go on, but you get the picture: where we live, the public school system is badly broken.

I'm writing this because I'm passionate about universal education, and because this issue of *Turning Wheel* has been informally referred to as the "Get-Off-Your-Butt-and-Save-the-World Issue." Because Buddhism is a relatively young religion in the United States, in thinking about socially engaged Buddhism we may naturally be inclined to look for visible elements that we think are definably "Buddhist" in social justice work: doing Buddhist sitting meditation

before going out to campaign for a political candidate; carrying Buddhist banners in antiwar marches; and teaching peace songs and serving vegetarian snacks to children. But if we're going to get off our behinds and save the world, I think we have to offer our help wherever help is needed, even when it doesn't look Buddhist, dropping our own agendas and bringing our skills, curiosity, respectful attention, and deep listening to the situation at hand, and helping to build community with whoever else shows up.

One "place of practice" that needs you badly could be your local public school. Do you read, write, do math, use a computer, like kids? You can tutor, mentor, assist teachers, give money for textbooks. Like the frog in Basho's famous haiku, jump into the pond! Get smeared with peanut butter and jelly from the hands of excited first graders; walk into a group of teenagers whose characteristic greeting is a laconic "Sup" and who seem to have cell phones surgically affixed to the sides of their heads. As in meditation, you're likely to find that it's not what you thought it would be. It might be better in some ways, worse in others, but the kids, the teachers, the staff, will all be real, not an idea in your head.

Over the past 12 years, our family has contributed to the schools that Joshua, 17, has attended since kindergarten. Now Josh has one more year at MetWest High School in Oakland, and his dad and I are getting ready to support him in taking the college entrance exam, applying to colleges, getting financial aid, and in the process helping other students at the school as well. I work as a volunteer at the school, teaching literature, tutoring individual students, mentoring, and sometimes supervising study halls. I get to grow a little younger as I learn more about the worlds these teenagers inhabit: what music they're listening to, what they think about President Bush and the war in Iraq, and how first love intersects with e-mail and text messaging.

And, because I am Buddhist, I do get the occasional request to teach meditation to young people in the schools, and I always say yes. Entering young adulthood successfully means that you have to know how to concentrate, how to be mindful, how to promote harmony in your communities, and how to exercise whatever wisdom you've gained. I don't really care through what door our children enter to gain more awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, and to learn critical thinking, kindness, and respect for life. If I can help to open a door, I want to be there to do it. If the pond presents itself, I want to jump right in. ❖

MetWest is part of a group of high schools called the "Big Picture Schools," based on a prototype school in Rhode Island that was originally funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. See www.bigpicture.org for more information. There are many other alternative public schools, and all children in all schools can use your help to make schools safer, more effective, and more compassionate learning communities.

History

Xuanzang Helps the Blind

by Diane Patenaude Ames

For Chinese Buddhism, Xuanzang (602–664 C.E.) is a towering figure. Born into a learned family, he followed his elder brother into a Buddhist monastery. Frustrated by the limited number of Buddhist texts available in China at the time, he had a vision encouraging him to travel to India and bring back more. When the emperor of China forbade this, he set out secretly in 629, traveling along the so-called Silk Road. After nearly dying of thirst in the Gobi Desert, he became the honored guest of several central Asian kingdoms between China and India, all of which he described in a travelogue still studied by historians.

When he finally reached India, Xuanzang immediately headed for the famous Buddhist university called Nalanda. After learning to speak, read, and write Sanskrit well enough to win debates, he studied Buddhist philosophy and the exegesis of many Mahayana Buddhist texts. Above all, he collected and copied such texts. At last he packed them all up and set out to return to China by roughly the same way he had come. In 645, amid great celebration, he entered the capital, Chang'an, with an estimated 657 Buddhist texts. He was to devote the rest of his life to translating what he considered the most important of these, with the aid of the Indian scholars he brought to China on

his return journey and later. Since he concentrated on translating texts of the Yogacara (Mind Only) school, he is credited with introducing that school into China.

All this is well known throughout the Far East. Less well known is the fact that Xuanzang's journey had a secondary purpose: to help the blind of China.

By Xuanzang's day, Indian surgeons were routinely healing cataracts and other serious afflictions of the eye. Chinese surgery, impeded by Confucian taboos against cutting the body, lagged behind. So after some Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese, Chinese doctors, intrigued to find in them references to such medical advances as cataract surgery, cried out for Indian medical texts. Given the long association between Buddhism and medicine, it was hardly surprising that Xuanzang and Yijing, another Chinese pilgrim who visited India later in the seventh century on a similar mission, responded by collecting medical texts along with purely religious ones. Nor is it coincidental that in the seventh century, Indian surgeons suddenly appeared in China and began performing successful cataract operations. From then on, Chinese medical texts began to have chapters on ophthalmic surgery, apparently more or less copied from Indian texts. And Chinese surgeons began restoring sight to patients blinded by cataracts and other eye disorders. Thus, in addition to bringing hundreds of Buddhist texts to China, Xuanzang helped the blind of China to see. ❖

inward | outward

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Mountains Flow

by Stephanie Kaza

If you mention Rachel Carson, most people think of her book *Silent Spring*. But to really understand Rachel Carson's full contribution, you need to read her three books on the sea. For her, the sea was a source of inspiration and insight, an invitation to contemplate the eons of time that shaped the world we know. She spent 12 summers on the rocky coast of central Maine deepening her own sense of time and relationship to the sea. Last spring I read the definitive biography on Carson and traced her story to Southport Island and Ocean Point, and back 500 million years ago.

I arranged a visit to Carson's summer place to align with the low tides of the month. I wanted to see the areas where she went tidepooling and wrote about fairy shrimp and green crabs. Ocean Point was one of her favorite spots; it was obvious why as soon as I saw it. Massive granite ledges and fields of tumbled boulders stretch on for hundreds of yards, creating pools, caves, and channels filled with intertidal life. The point is a geologic bonanza, with rocks from all eras thrown together in seeming disarray. I was especially intrigued by those that were weathered gray and finely grained—older, I thought.

In *The Edge of the Sea*, Carson explains how the coast of Maine formed. Glaciers advanced from the north, the sea level dropped; the glaciers retreated and the sea level rose, drowning the valleys. But as the glaciers moved forward they scraped the mountains and carried millions of tons of rocky debris with them to the edge of the sea.

Ah, the mystical "mountains walking"! Zen master Dogen (a geologist in disguise?) wrote about this in his own way much earlier: "Eastern mountains travel on water." Well, maybe frozen water in this case. Dogen admonished students to look closely, not to take things at surface value. "When your learning is immature, you are shocked by the words 'flowing mountains.' Without fully understanding even the words 'flowing water,' you drown in small views and narrow understanding."

The rocky coast of Maine is a physical koan unfolding. The many peninsulas and narrow bays are remnants of the last glacial age, the current shoreline but a moment in a long history of mountains walking and water flowing. Carson saw all this and sought to convey a sense of deep time. In the preface to *The Edge of the Sea* she invites readers to go down to the low-tide line and "enter a world that is as old as the earth itself, the primeval meeting place of the elements of earth and water, a place of compromise and conflict and eternal change." In each rocky tidepool she saw the mountains flowing—from past glaciation, from the formation of the Atlantic Ocean, from the earliest uplifts of the Avalonian plate. That gray weathered rock I'd seen was Ellsworth schist, formed over 500 million years ago from sea floor mud.

How does a person develop a sense of deep time, of being able to look at something in the present moment and see its vast history? Dogen insisted it requires more than simply "turning an object and turning the mind." He points out the delusion of "explaining" and thinking you are "seeing into true nature." Geologists and biologists can be helpful since they work with these questions of time in their studies. Dogen was more cryptic; he didn't provide any simple method. He just warned: "Set words and phrases are not the words of liberation." I believe Dogen was suggesting an approach to time that is beyond the rational, beyond our usual understanding—that one must go to the edge of what is known and then gaze into the unfathomable.

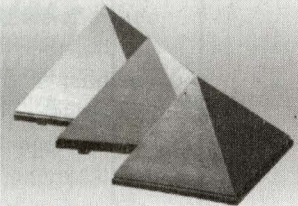
Maybe Rachel Carson glimpsed what Dogen was talking about. She wrote, "Understanding comes only when, standing on a beach, we can sense the long rhythms of earth and sea that sculptured its land forms and produced the rock and sand of which it is composed." Studying the physical form of the coastline is one way to study time, to cultivate a shift in perception. Dogen urged students to "investigate mountains thoroughly." Perhaps he meant it literally as well as metaphorically, knowing himself that the physical world carries great teachings for the limited human mind. The beauty we see in a simple rock is far more than a shape or color; it is a container of time, a story of mountains walking through mud, volcanoes, glaciers, and tidepools. ❖

For more on Rachel Carson, see the comprehensive biography by Linda Lear, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*. The Dogen quotes are all from the Mountains and Waters Sutra, in *Moon in a Dewdrop*, translated by Kaz Tanahashi.

bombs exploding nearby
kids bat balloons in the sky
—Gary Gach

Gary Gach is the author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Buddhism* and has translated the work of the Korean poet Ko Un, featured in this issue of TW. See more on page 96.

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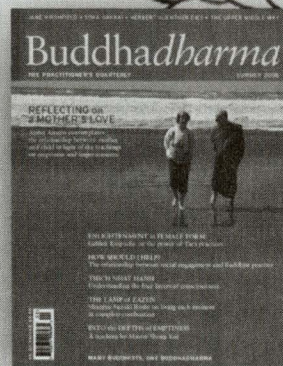
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Many Buddhists, one *Buddhadharma*

The Groundless Ground of Social Action

by Robert Aitken

Recently Amy Goodman broadcast her commentary, *Democracy Now*, from Santa Fe, and interviewed Robert Fisk, veteran war correspondent, who was in Toronto. The camera was close to her face as she looked up at the figure of her guest, blown up on a huge screen before her. In the course of their conversation he remarked:

If you go to war, you realize it is not primarily about victory or defeat, it is about death and the infliction of death and suffering on as large a scale as you can make it. It is about the total failure of the human spirit.

This total failure is not far away, in terms of space, time, or karma. It is your failure and mine. Goodman and Fisk bring their conversation to a close like this:

GOODMAN: You've covered the Israeli invasions of Lebanon, the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Gulf War, wars in Algeria, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the invasion and occupation of Iraq—

FISK: Enough, enough, enough.

GOODMAN: What gives you hope? What gives you hope?

FISK: Nothing. I'm sorry. Nothing. I'm sorry. Nothing at the moment. Ordinary people, I guess. Ordinary people who speak out. People in the Arab world as well. But in terms of governments, nothing much. I may be wrong. I may be too much of a pessimist because I've seen too much.

Amy's face, so close to the camera, was stricken. It was as though she had suddenly taken to her very heart the truths of "Dover Beach":

*Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

For Matthew Arnold, it seems, the only refuge is one another in love, and indeed, what other refuge is there? There isn't any, if refuge for the self is the purpose. I think poets, artists, musicians, and Zen students have a different purpose—to forget the self, as Dogen would have it. Shakespeare could forget himself and take part in the existence of Othello or Ariel, Rembrandt could

do the same with *The Jewish Bride* and her bridegroom, and Bach in the music of the spheres.

There is hope when the individual Zen student forgets herself or himself completely and is open to the peak experience of taking part in the existence of another. There is hope when anyone can do this—when the family, the neighborhood, the ethnic group, and the nation can forget themselves and take part in the existence of another.

This is a huge "when," yet racial, class, religious, and ethnic reconciliation hinges upon it. The act of wiping away greed, hatred, and ignorance hinges upon it. The Japanese have the *senryu*:

Katachichi o nigiru ga yoku no deki hajiime
Clutching the other breast
Is the beginning
Of greed.

In his book on *senryu*, R. H. Blyth comments:

When a baby six or seven months old feeds at the breast, he holds the other as if he is afraid someone else will get some of the milk, a kind of dog-in-the-manger attitude. It is the first sign of egotism and greed...

Or at least that's how a Japanese person might interpret the baby's action. In any case, the Three Poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance are deeply entrenched in the self. It is the task of parents to show that there are other beings out there. Forgetting the self, at least at peak moments, is a mark of maturity, a mark that is not consistently shown by everyone, or their families, neighborhoods, ethnic groups, or nations. Maturity is the fundamental problem that faces people of this world if they are to survive and continue to flourish.

People who are grown-up physically but cultivate childish poisons are a danger to themselves and the world, and this danger intensifies in proportion to their position of influence. Decent people tend to protect themselves and their families by pretending the barrage of newspeak is all true. It is dangerous not to pretend. Try questioning "national interest," for example. It is not really anybody's interest, unless it is individual and international as well, but you can't afford to stand on your hind legs and say so if you want to earn enough to support your family.

Maybe you can hold up signs calling the system into question at peace rallies and marches. But without follow-through the rallies and marches can simply perpetuate the system by furnishing a place simply to blow off steam. Thich Nhat Hanh calls them "bonfires of paper."

"National interest" is not really anybody's interest, unless it is individual and international as well, but you can't afford to stand on your hind legs and say so if you want to earn enough to support your family.

The way of Zen is to take the world and the stars personally, but that person is not confined by the skin.

And while bad political policies and poisonous leaders can be dumped with effective demos, they may only be replaced by far nastier policies and even more vitriolic leaders. Dramatic expressions of opposition, even salt marches, need follow-through with the same quality of stick-to-it-iveness that criminal leaders can show and apply. Not easy. To quote Frieda Berrigan when she was given the Pax Christi award in June 2004:

We [Pax Christis] have assumed the name "peace-maker," but we have been, by and large, unwilling to pay any significant price. And because we want peace with half a life and half a heart and will, the war will, of course, continue, because the waging of war, by its very nature, is total, but the waging of peace, by our own cowardice, so partial.... We cry peace and we cry peace but there is not peace. There is no peace because the cost of making peace is at least as costly as making war, at least as exigent, at least as disruptive, at least as liable to bring disgrace, prison, and death in its wake.

Or, as Frieda goes on to quote her dad, that doughty Christian Phil Berrigan, "you had better look good on wood."

Even those who give all they have when they are young can poop out very soon. Here in Honolulu, leaders of a noble sit-in at the University of Hawai'i back in 1968 were in trouble with the law for a transparently criminal scam just a few years later. Poets and Zen students forget their early experiences of insight as well. Wordsworth, for example, metamorphosed from a butterfly into a grub, neglecting his early inspiration. Finally he was made poet laureate, and Robert Browning wrote:

*Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a ribbon to stick in his coat—*

Sexual scandals and jingoism on the part of Zen masters are evidence of how a realization experience may not be enough to carry one through a lifetime of exposure to the poisons of the world. Christians like Dorothy Day and Phil Berrigan show us how to pay the significant price again and yet again. I think that as Buddhists we too can stick to our original intentions, like Yunmen Wenyan:

Yunmen entered the Dharma Hall to give formal instruction and said, "The Buddha attained the Way when the morning star appeared."

A monk asked, "What is it like when one attains the Way on the appearance of the morning star?"

Yunmen said, "Come here! Come here!" The monk stepped closer. Yunmen took up his staff and drove the monk from the hall.

Urs App, Yunmen's translator, enlarges upon Yunmen's words—"Come here! Come here!"—by adding, "And I'll explain it to you." Pathetic. Yunmen would take care of him too.

The problem shared by the monk of long ago and the scholar of today is that they didn't know their own original intention and took Yunmen personally. There is a subtle but hugely important point here. The way of Zen is to take the world and the stars personally, but that person is not confined by the skin. "I am large; I contain multitudes," wrote Walt Whitman. He was not speaking egocentrically. Neither was Yunmen, or any of our betters at their Zen podiums long ago, or even today.

It is a crucial matter. The groundless ground of social action is the ground of making one's bed and brushing one's teeth, of course, but that is another story. Let's concern ourselves with social action. It is a pressing concern today.

The system of greed, hatred, and ignorance stinks to high heaven. Bach and Rembrandt are endangered. Great geniuses like Thoreau and Dorothy Day knew this quite well. Something triggered their realization. For Day it was the words and presence of Father Zossima in *Brothers Karamazov*. There is such a trigger out there for everyone.

What then sustained Day and Thoreau in their lifetime of selfless endeavor thereafter? A magical kind of mix of character and talent, perhaps. And what creates that mix? I don't know, but I bow to it. Shakespeare had it. Beethoven had it. Wallace Stevens had it. Moreover, Yunmen had it; Dogen had it; lots and lots of Zen students have had it and continue to have it, sustained not only by character and talent, but also by the sayings and doings of their betters in the past, which they internalize by the demanding teachings of a man or woman who has walked the path.

It may not be immediately evident how Yunmen and the other old worthies were true peaceniks. They were masters of metaphor, and it takes some doing to get at their meaning. They were Chinese, after all. As a Hindu the Buddha spelled everything out. His meaning jumps out at you, but maybe it doesn't stick. He and Yunmen occupy the same pantheon, however. Here is the Buddha patiently setting forth his insight into war as the ultimate violence in advice to Yodhajiva, a professional warrior:

When a professional warrior strives and exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, and misdirected by the thought: "May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist." If others then strike him down and slay him while he is thus striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: "When a professional warrior strives and exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down and slay him while he is striving and exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas

slain in battle," that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb.

I hold out Yunmen as one who touches the deepest possible point of the other, and the Buddha as the one who explains *it* most clearly. The "Three Bodies of the Buddha" (*Trikaya* in Sanskrit) is a Mahayana teaching that explicates both:

*Vairochana, pure and clear, Dharmakaya Buddha,
Lochana, full and complete, Sambhogakaya Buddha,
Shakyamuni, infinitely varied, Nirmanakaya Buddha.*

This little gatha is recited as part of the grace before meals in both Soto and Rinzaï temples in Japan, and in American and European Zen centers as well. It is a marvelously succinct expression of Buddhist experience, yet almost no one ever explores the meaning of the terms and their configuration, in Japan or anywhere else. Look up the "Three Bodies of the Buddha" in a Buddhist dictionary and you will find utter piffle—garbage that dishonors our ancestors and the blood they shed for our sake.

Get these terms straight. The Dharmakaya is the total absence of any enduring self. You and I as poets realize we have no identity. We have no future. *This* is it! You are not reborn in any kind of next world. Where did the Buddha talk about eternal paradise? If he did, he contradicted himself, or the sutra is spurious. Knowing that our fellow beings will die soon, and that their death is forever, can only evoke compassion, suffering with them, pecking about in the gravel with them. The *Caigentan* says:

"Always leave boiled rice out for mice and keep lamps dark out of pity for moths." The ancients had this sort of concern, and it's really the whole point of life, generation after generation. Without it, one can only be called a blockheaded carcass. [Aitken, *Vegetable Roots Discourse*, reviewed on page 85.]

Responsibility and compassion are the same thing, a fact of life for the Dalai Lama or Buddhadasa. It is your fact of life and mine. If you ignore the needs of mice and moths, you can take one more step to deny the medical needs of children quite easily.

The Sambhogakaya is the containment of all beings and things by all beings and things. "I am large; I contain multitudes." Indeed. Keats took part in the existence of the sparrow, while the perversion of this realization would be schizophrenics, who find all arrows of their sociograms pointed to themselves. It would be the CEO who uses all beings for himself or herself. Contrast with the noble person whose arrows point in all directions and who is used by all beings, keeping healthy and educated for that purpose. Contrast with any decent person. "Decent" means "appropriate to cir-

cumstances." The circumstances are the codependent arising of all beings and things.

The Nirmanakaya is the infinitely precious nature of all beings and things, including sparrows. I live in a retirement community in Honolulu that is open to the elements. Sparrows perch on the louvers until after folks have finished their noon meal. Then they swoop down and nibble at leftovers in the brief interval before the tables are cleaned up for supper. Dear little birdies.

The perversion of the Nirmanakaya is the collector who lays up treasures of things and human resources and has never read or taken to heart Huxley's *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, or it is the one with an axe who has never seen snakes make love, or who has but doesn't care. Even animals that are most dangerous to human beings are tender with their young. This was the theme of the anarchist Peter Kropotkin in his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, which rejected the notion that competition was central to the development of species. (This notion was enhanced by a misunderstanding of Darwin's "survival of the fittest," which did not mean "strongest" but rather "most fitting.")

The Three Bodies of the Buddha make good, helpful sense, but ultimately they are like the thousands of other terms the philosophy offers up. The Buddha had only one body—the three are a complementarity. If we were to diagram them, the three lines would merge in the frame of an old guy who lived thousands of years ago, and in everybody else's frame before and since.

That is, my frame and yours. Can you take the Three Bodies seriously? Can you take the teaching to heart? We face horrible crises. The persiflage of planners in that *blackest of Black Houses*, who justify torture for intelligence and white phosphors as a weapon, hides the horror of unquenchable human trauma as effectively as Pampers conceal their forked tails and clever prostheses disguise their cloven hoofs. They are not merely destined for hell, as the Buddha cautioned Yodhajiva, the warrior, they already inhabit a chamber of terror infinitely nastier than anything in Dante's imagination. These are the planners we support with our hard-earned dollars. You and I justify torture and white phosphorus and the whole rotten system. Enough! Enough! The Buddha did not avoid politics any more than Jesus was meek and mild. It is surely past time we turn the criminals out, but we can't do that with rhetoric. With worthies of the past looking over our shoulders, let us conspire. Let us breathe together and make it happen, and conspire to keep it happening. ❖

(Greg Mello helped in the preparation of this essay.)

The Buddha did not avoid politics any more than Jesus was meek and mild. It is surely past time we turn the criminals out, but we can't do that with rhetoric.

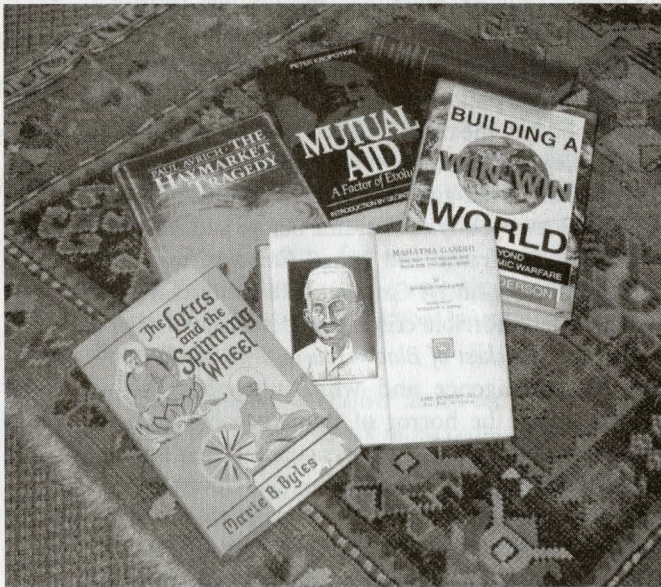
Another Aitken Legacy

His Political Library

by Chris Wilson

When BPF founder Robert Aitken Roshi moved to smaller quarters recently, he had to find suitable homes for his vast library. Besides his numerous Buddhist works, his library included many books reflecting his wide-ranging interests in the arts, sciences, politics, and philosophy.

He gave his political books to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Few of them discuss “engaged Buddhism” (a term that Aitken regards as redundant). Instead, most represent a range of progressive responses to longstanding problems such as militarism, the penal system, civil rights, the environmental crisis, and political oppression.



The collection now has pride of place in BPF's Berkeley headquarters. [If you visit the San Francisco Bay Area, we welcome you to come by the BPF office and enjoy the books.] True to the theory that books say something about the person who collected them, these tomes constitute a very personal legacy by revealing the distinctive interests and attitudes of a beloved founder and teacher.

I will try to give a sense of what you would notice on examining the collection. Books on Gandhi, pacifism, and nonviolence are by far the largest group in the collection. They include all the major biographies of Gandhi, including the early biography by Romain Rolland. There are also many of Gandhi's early essays, and an early edition of Bayard Rustin's *Unto This Last*,

the wonderful collection of essays that inspired Gandhi.

There are also many books about our penal system by critics, reformers, and inmates. Aitken has long worked with prisoners in Hawai'i as part of the prison dharma movement carried on by BPF and others. Looking further, one finds several books about the Civil Rights struggle in the U.S. It seems likely that, for Aitken, prisons are a troubling reminder of the unfinished civil rights struggle. The disproportionate share of prison populations made up by inmates of color on the Mainland is mirrored in the number of native Hawai'ians in Hawai'i's prisons.

Other books treat the environmental crisis (e.g., Renner's *Resource Wars*) with a sense of urgency, and indeed Aitken has long spoken on this topic in the most urgent terms. One might include in the environmental category Aitken's copies of the works of Peter Singer, the leading ethical philosopher on the question of animal rights.

Aitken's books of cultural criticism by Lewis Mumford and others show a healthy concern about technology's dangers. Mumford's critiques anticipated those of the late Jane Jacobs, whose writings on the nature of cities helped save Greenwich Village from being “modernized.”

In the sphere of economics, there are books exploring noncompetitive economic models (e.g., Hazel Henderson's *Building a Win-Win World*, and *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care* by Goudzwaard and de Lange).

Turning to political theory, there is a smattering of books on American democratic socialism (Eugene V. Debs, Michael Harrington). Notable by their absence are books on Marxism, with the exception of *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. In addition to having foreseen the defects of Leninism, Rosa Luxemburg is enjoying renewed interest today for her prediction that capitalism would become increasingly imperialist and militarist in its globalization. In recent public talks, Aitken has spoken forcefully of the need for an analysis that can explain the link between corporate/state globalization and the ecological and military disasters that now plague us.

Finally, there is an intriguing group of books about anarchism. Caricatured as bomb-throwing extremists by the yellow journalists of the 19th century, most anarchists opposed militarism and were among the earliest advocates of nonviolence. It is this strain in

continued on page 21

Time to Go All Out

An Interview with Robert Aitken

by Susan Moon

I went to Honolulu at the end of June 2006 in order to interview Robert Aitken Roshi just a few days after his 89th birthday. For about 30 years I have known and admired him as a writer, Zen teacher, BPF founder and elder, frequent contributor to and supporter of Turning Wheel, and friend. We had agreed ahead of time that I would meet with him for three successive mornings in the retirement complex where he lives.

We had a pleasant, informal visit the first morning I was there, and he showed me pictures of his new granddaughter. I stayed for lunch in the spacious dining room surrounded by Hawai'ian plants and birds. But that afternoon, Roshi had to go into the hospital for antibiotic treatment of pulmonary infections. Because I had come all the way from California to see him, he generously agreed to talk with me the next two mornings from his hospital bed.

When I came into his room, he was watching women's golf on TV. "Oh, do you follow golf?" I asked in surprise. "No, but I follow Michelle!" he answered, and for a few companionable moments we watched Michelle Wie, the talented 16-year-old Hawai'ian golfer. The next morning, Roshi was watching—with delight—a pair of Java sparrows billing and cooing on the balcony outside his window.

During our conversation, a nurse came in to check on him. He introduced me to her and told me about her five children and her plans for her own education. I thought they must be old friends, but he had just met her that morning. I was inspired to see how, in spite of his discomfort and tiredness, Roshi continued to take joy in the life around him. I felt lucky to have that time with him.

Roshi was released from the hospital a week later, having recovered from the lung infection. —SM

* * * * *

Moon: How did you first become an activist?

Aitken: When I was interned in a camp, in Kobe, Japan, in World War II, American B-29s burned the city of Kobe in two bombing raids. The camp was on the hill above the city, where the planes came past us as they made their turnaround—the bomb bays were open and we could see the racks of bombs. The next morning, we saw refugees—women and old men and children—filing up the trail past our camp toward villages behind the city. The juxtaposition of those two events—the night before and the next day—hit me pretty hard, and I resolved at that point that in addition to making my life one of Zen study I was also going to make it a life of social action.

Moon: Did you think at that time that they would be two separate things?

Aitken: No, they couldn't be, because there was just one me. And so, long before I was able to get organized as a Zen student, I was going on marches and taking part in meetings, in resistance to further development of nuclear bombs. It was really an anti-nuclear movement. But it was all kind of namby-pamby when I look back on it.

Moon: What do you mean by "namby-pamby"?

Aitken: We didn't do much. And I think that's the weakness of the peace movement generally. The people at Los Alamos and in Washington, DC have a clear agenda, and we don't.

Moon: Were there any actions you took part in that you felt were really effective?

Aitken: I took part in a sit-in at the University of Hawai'i, in the early fifties, in support of a professor of political science who was about to lose his tenure. I was already on the staff of the East/West Center. We had an open mike, and my message was that we weren't trying to *achieve* anything. We didn't know what the outcome of our action would be, but we wanted to say what was right, without assuming that we were going to achieve a certain goal. And that had some effect, I think. We won, the professor kept his tenure, and the university president resigned.

But you know, I realize that I, too, haven't had a clear agenda, or at least I haven't devoted myself to the way of peace and the way of social justice the way the right-wing people have devoted themselves to the way of greed. And I want to make up for that now as much as possible. We need to go all out, the way Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness has gone out, all the way out, and the way Phil Berrigan's daughter, Frieda Berrigan, goes all out.

Moon: Didn't you take part in an "all-out" action against Trident submarines in Puget Sound?

Aitken: Well, I was one of 4,000 people involved in that demonstration. I was a friend of Jim Douglass, one of the organizers of Ground Zero.

I learned a great deal there about how it is possible to get 4,000 people organized. We did a lot of orientation to begin with, and then we divided into affinity groups. We had a spokesperson from each affinity

group, and they formed the spokescouncil. If someone has something to say, they say it, and then they shut up. It's important that individual participants consciously make themselves a part of the process, so that when they drop their own stone in the soup, they just let it sit there and see what happens, instead of dominating. There wasn't any domination at all.

Moon: You've done a lot of work with prisons and prisoners. That's another part of your social action.

Aitken: Yes, I have. I learned a lot from those guys. I used to visit a fellow who said to me, "I want to ask you about the precepts." I said, "What do you want to hear about the precepts?" He said, "I want to know how to respond and not react." Which blew me away.

Rumsfeld and those guys aren't bothered by people waving signs and demonstrating. It's a way of allowing people to let off steam.

Moon: What did you say?

Aitken: Well, I went over the precepts with him. But I think too much has been made of my social justice concerns.

Moon: Why do you think that?

Aitken: Because I haven't done anything.

Moon: You've done a lot! You've been a kind of model.

Aitken: I just talk a good line of social action.

Moon: You don't feel that you've walked the talk? You have! You get out there on the street with your "Impeach Bush!" signs.

Aitken: But you see, Rumsfeld and those guys can live with people who say "Impeach Bush." They aren't bothered by people waving signs and demonstrating. It's a way of allowing people to let off steam. But they can't live with programs like Voices in the Wilderness. We Buddhists have to get a program like that going.

Moon: You spoke about the importance of acting without trying to *achieve* anything, without knowing what effect it's going to have. Is there tension between acting without measuring results on the one hand and wanting to be effective, not namby-pamby, on the other? How do you balance those two attitudes: wanting to make a difference and not wanting to be attached to results?

Aitken: You keep your eye on speaking truth to power.

You do not have your eye on vanquishing the bad guys. Signs that say "impeach" are not effective. You need to do something positive, like smuggling medicine to Iraq.

Moon: You say you haven't done enough, but don't you think everybody feels that? Kathy Kelly probably feels that *she* hasn't done enough.

Aitken: But I haven't ever been in jail, either!

Moon: People have changed the world without ever going to jail. That's not the only way to do it.

Aitken: Well, I'm interested in where we go from here. I think we must be as organized as the other guys. We must be as devoted and focused as the other guys. We're not.

Moon: How do we develop our focus?

Aitken: I'd like to see a BASE program where people sit around the kitchen table and decide they're going to take a particular action. And they're going to network with others, and encourage others to form their own groups of 15 people or so.

I'm dismayed by the perspective that says we must go along so slowly that we don't get ahead of the people among us who are still developing their understanding of social action.

Moon: Yes, I understand your concern. We need to go forward with strength and courage. Don't you think it takes a tremendous amount of courage to do what needs to be done?

Aitken: Absolutely.

Moon: One of the reasons I was asking you to talk about your own experience with social action is that in order to gain courage, we need stories from our elders, we need models. The stories give us examples of what people have done, what people *can* do. We can go on from there and do more.

It's particularly helpful for people to know about your work for peace, because you're a respected Zen teacher. The fact that you've lived a life of social action is encouraging to the many people for whom you are a Buddhist teacher and elder.

Aitken: I'll accept that. Ask me something else!

Moon: What do you think of now as meaningful peace work?

Aitken: Well, what is meaningful for me is to work with people who are willing to just drop their own ideas into the pot and listen to others. Also, we need people like Phil Berrigan. He spent 11 years of his life in prison, while his kids were growing up. That's beyond the call, but nonetheless, we need some people like that to lead us.

Moon: When was the last time you felt that you were participating in the kind of exchange where people were really listening to each other?

Aitken: It was an ongoing thing when I was living in Kaimu, on the Big Island, because every Friday we turned out to stand together for peace, and there might be two or three of us, or there might be ten of us. But there was a core, and there still is a core. They turn out every single Friday afternoon in front of the Federal Building, with a sign that says simply, "Buddhist Peace Fellowship." People who go by honk and wave.

The work we need to do takes that kind of steadiness and perseverance. ❖

Aitken's library, continued from page 18

anarchism that has interested Aitken over the years.


Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, a book that Aitken has cited in his essays, perhaps best reveals the nature of his interest in anarchism. A nonviolent and antimilitarist anarchist, Kropotkin was a brilliant Russian prince who was disowned by his family for his progressive views. (One could even say that he "left home" like an earlier prince.) He became world famous for his geographical and zoological studies in Siberia in the late 19th century. He was an early supporter of Darwin's theory of evolution but a bitter opponent of certain populizers of Darwin (e.g., T. H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer), who used "survival of the fittest" as a rationale for predatory capitalism and imperialism.

Kropotkin wrote *Mutual Aid* to answer Huxley and Spencer, arguing that all societies showed more cooperation than conflict. By documenting the tendency toward mutual aid in both animal societies and human cultures, he argued that the natural course of evolution was toward greater cooperation, not greater competition. Because of his emphasis on the interdependence of all life, Kropotkin is now widely regarded as a founder of ecology.

Aitken clearly favors Kropotkin's conclusion that human society will evolve to a point where voluntary coalitions will become the prevailing political form for peacefully resolving problems. Aitken has long argued that communities of Buddhist activists may become models for a general social transformation (see Aitken's essay "Envisioning the Future" in his collection *Original Dwelling Place*).

Aitken's political books imply that change will come not through a universal conversion to Buddhism but through all peoples grasping the interdependence of all life, a change of consciousness that Buddhists will help to bring about. ❖

Chris Wilson has been practicing Buddhism since 1967, and Robert Aitken has been one of his teachers. He serves on the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Board of Directors.



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Think Globally, Act Joyfully

by Robert Thurman

The following is based on a talk given March 5, 2006, at a BPF fund-raising event in San Francisco.

Which Nhat Hanh coined the phrase “Being Peace,” meaning if we wish to see peace in the world we have to become it ourselves. So this is the challenge. How do we actually do this? What is the method by which we can realize this?

When Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree, the first word he said—according to the Tibetan tradition—was “profound” (*gambhira*), and the second word he used was “peace” (*shanti*). “Profound peace.” The Buddha is considered a being who discovered the nature of reality and directly experienced it, so what he really said was that the reality of the world is peace. The ultimate reality is the third noble truth: the truth of Nirvana.

You would think that, being a buddha, he should have known about George Bush. He should have known about the George Bushes in each of our own minds and hearts when we are angry and when we’re feeling egotistical and when we’re feeling that by destroying somebody else, we’re going to be all right. The Buddha should have known about all that, and yet he said that the reality is peace. That is why he was happy.

The fact that the world is Nirvana is the Buddha’s teaching. It is the encouragement of Buddhism. That’s why we can tolerate injury, if we practice Buddhism. In order to be nonviolent, we have to develop the ability to bear injury and tolerate it—to receive injury without anger, without hatred, without doing it back to the other. And that ability takes a little work—as we all know from our latest squabble with our mate, or child, or parent, or friend at the office.

So the first way of Being Peace that is really critical is to remind ourselves of that fact—that reality is peace. Because we normally don’t recognize it. We live

in a world of delusion. We think that you are out there, and that I am over here. We think we are separate from everything else.

Aitken Roshi has nicely said that maturity is realizing that someone else is out there. He noticed that he had spent some time in his life thinking that he was the only one, and that he had grown up and noticed that someone else was out there, was real. Everybody thinks they’re the main one who is here, and they think that everyone else is foolish not to recognize that—except for their mom, or, sometimes, their beloved, during the honeymoon. Each one of them thinks that their beloved is the real thing—temporarily.

And then they love that beloved because they think that for once someone agrees with them. But that only lasts until the diapers come around. There has to be something deeper—there has to be enlightenment where you stay in love, with all beings, forever.

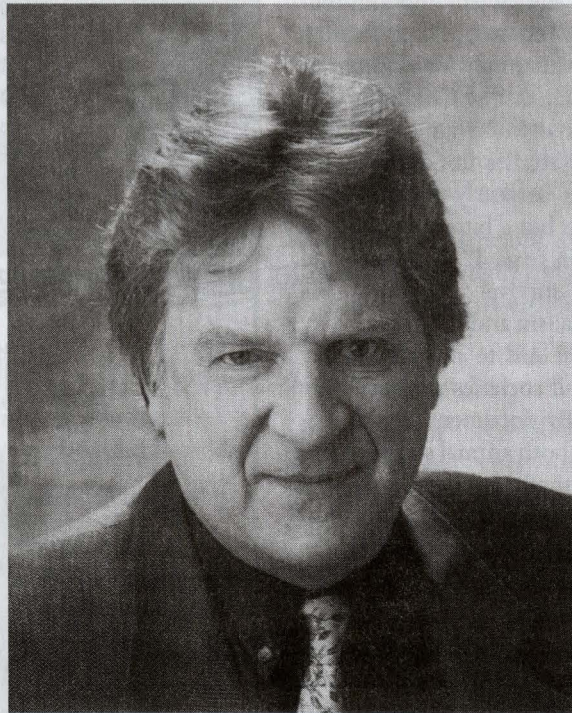
So, apparently, as unbelievable as it seems, if we really knew that we were one with other beings, we would know that we are one with George Bush; that George Bush is us; that Saddam Hussein is us. We have to remember that Nirvana is the true reality, and the other reality is a false reality.

That doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. It’s there because of our delusion—created and constantly recreated by our delusion. So the key thing is that we have to get rid of that delusion.

And how do we get rid of the delusion that thinks that samsara is the real thing—that the world of suffering, and differences between people, and violence, and anger is the real world? How do we stop thinking that to be sane we have to fight like everybody else?

The Buddha said, rightly, that violence does not put an end to violence. Violence is not realistic. Violence is lemming behavior.

The Buddha’s insight is that the root of our suffering is absolutism. “Ignorance” sounds too passive. It’s



not ignorance that's causing the suffering, it's delusion. It is believing that you are the absolute. It is thinking that you are an undeniable, really real person. Whereas, actually, your sense that "I am the real me" is wrong. You are not you. Don't worry—you're not me, either. Neither of us is us. The Buddha sees us as nondifferent from the Buddha, although the Buddha doesn't go around thinking he is Buddha.

The key thing is this absolutism. Because the other side of the delusion—that we'll attain Nirvana when we realize that we don't exist—is also not the case. The teaching of selflessness itself can be confusing if people understand selflessness to mean that you don't exist. It doesn't mean that. It means that you *do* have a self. The Buddha said that the self that understands that it lacks a self is the Enlightened Self. That's the Buddha Self. And what that means is that the self that realizes that it is not absolute, it's only relational, only relatively different, and ultimately not different from all other selves. So in the absolute sense it doesn't exist as a separate thing, although relatively it can be separated.

the root of all suffering.

The real point is that the more we can undo our absolutism—see through it, find our relationality—the happier we are.

There's a famous argument in Shantideva of someone who says, "How terrible to feel the suffering of other beings—to take that upon myself, when daily I'm already concerned about my own suffering. And now I'm going to suddenly take everyone else's suffering on? Who wants that?!"

When you wrap your whole inner monologue around "I, me, mine," and "how enlightened am I?" and "how peaceful am I?" and "when are they going to listen to me?" and "will I get something from that?"—whenever you are thinking that way, are you ever getting enough out of anything? No! Because whenever you feel a little moment of happiness and you turn around and say, "How good was it?"—is it ever enough? No! It was better some other time, wasn't it?

The Dalai Lama says that whenever he feels unhappy, he just thinks about other people, and he realizes

There is no eternal damnation—that's an exaggeration. But there will be a lot of hot work for a couple billion kalpas.

rate. So enlightenment is complicated; it embraces dissonance. It's subtle, not just some simple thing.

So what matters most is absolutism. Hatred is only secondary, and violence. Absolutism is what makes people capable of bombing women and children—"I'm absolute," "My cause is absolute," "My rightness is absolute," "Their wrongness is absolute." And this means that we have the complicated task, when we're meditating on the cushion or when we're marching in protest, of being relational with all other beings. Being Peace is being relational; what Thây called so brilliantly "interbeing." And that is challenging. But that is what we should be aspiring to, because only that will help.

Gandhi would call off his protests and strikes when his people got overexcited and started burning police stations or killing people. He would immediately stop. We have to understand what that means if we want to be a Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and if we want to bring something new to this movement of 30 million people worldwide who marched against the Iraq war, who actually represent hundreds of millions. We cannot accept the dichotomy of sitting on our pillow versus marching in the street, because we can be completely peaceful marching in the street and we can be completely righteous and upset sitting on the pillow. It doesn't matter what you're doing. It matters how self-critical you are capable of being, and how determined you are to deconstruct at every level the ego absolutism that the Buddha so beautifully analyzed as

that his unhappiness is like one tiny drop, because there is so much suffering of other people. So he immediately feels relief.

The point is that the more you forget about yourself, the better you feel. As the Dalai Lama says, the first person to benefit from your compassion is yourself.

The larger point is that absolutism about the self is the root of all the suffering and violence. And those who are committing the most heinous level of violence are those who are making the decisions to go to war and to torture people and bomb innocent civilians—it's not the soldiers who make those decisions. We march to ask them to stop the war not because we hate them or because they are evil, but because we are sorry for them.

Why should we be sorry? Because they will have a rude shock upon their death. They are expecting that Jesus is going to take them up to the Houston Country Club, up in heaven, because they call out his name. Whereas Jesus—who is just Buddha, most deeply, there is no difference—is going to say, "Oh yes, you'll get here. Everyone does. My colleague, Buddha, assures us that we're all going to come here someday. But on your way here," Jesus will say, "you have to go down through there. You've got to go down there and help those people out who are roasting in depleted uranium flames that you helped to kindle. There is no eternal damnation—that's an exaggeration of the fundamentalists. But there will be a lot of hot work for a couple billion kalpas."

I told that to a fundamentalist once, and he told me I was bound for hell because I didn't believe. I told him he was quite right I was bound for hell, but not because I didn't believe, but because I am lazy. And I told him he was going to have a rude shock, because when he got his ticket to ride, the ride would bring him down to where I was, and he would be working to save me. Down there. And I'll be one tough case.

I've always dreamed that the Buddhist Peace Fellowship should have a Gandhian political ethic and a Shantidevan yoga. Shantideva wrote the *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, and his teaching of patience in the sixth chapter is an incredible yoga. We should have summer camps for young people out in

are doing wrong and injuring you or injuring others. You feel bad that you have not been able to help them. And even though you could tolerate their injuries without anger or revenge, you still might oppose them, since their deeds are most harmful to themselves. But with that motive, you will do so effectively, out of real concern, because you see the longer perspective of evolution and how they are harming themselves more than the people they are hurting.

There's a bodhisattva in the Lotus Sutra named Always Creeping. He's one of my heroes. He had a vision in which he saw that all beings that he met would become a buddha in the future. So he bowed to them, to whomever he saw. But sometimes people

Your sense that "I am the real me" is wrong. You are not you. Don't worry—you're not me, either. Neither of us is us.

Wyoming where they don't only sit in zazen but also have group dynamic therapy under the philosophy of Shantideva.

Shantideva gives us three types of patience, and patience is the antidote to hatred. The first type of patience is called "the tolerance of voluntary suffering," which is the "no pain, no gain" type of thing—the ability to bear pain without anger and to accept injury from any source. It's like saying, Whatever they do to me, I'm going to be happy. I'm going to give a hot speech about how they shouldn't go to war, but I'm going to stay happy. I'm going to be jolly. None of these long faces. Even if I pour blood over myself and lie in a coffin, I'm going to do it happily. Think globally, act joyfully. That's a slogan I like. That is "the patience of voluntary suffering."

The second kind of patience is called "the patience of knowing reality." That's a really deep one. Gandhi also taught that kind of patience, without having read Shantideva. This means that when someone abuses you, or even when the government is assaulting millions of people, you don't unrealistically demonize the particular agent who you think is the main person, who really wanted to do all that harm. You look more realistically, and realize how he or she is helplessly deluded, like a mindless robot conditioned by distorted ideas and unrealistic worldviews. They are deluded. They think they are saving themselves or us by doing what they're doing, but they are actually building themselves hells and hells and hells of further existences in their multiple lives. Therefore you don't blame them personally. You actually pity them. That's called "the patience of knowing reality."

The third type is called "the patience of non-retaliating," which means "the patience of forgiveness." That's where you feel full compassion for people who

didn't want to be a buddha. They thought it might lessen their profits, so they would say, "Stop bowing to me, I'm not a buddha. Now get lost."

"Oh, but you will be a buddha," he'd say. He would see the best in all beings, and it would make them mad. They would throw things at him. So he developed the ability of continuing to bow while creeping away, and they called him Bodhisattva Always Creeping.

That's the Buddhist Peace Fellowship right there—Bodhisattva Always Creeping—creeping away from the injurers, seeing their future buddhahood, seeing their beauty, seeing their potential greatness, not hating them. Being truly sorry that they are putting themselves on a very long path away from their own fruition and happiness and joy. And even feeling guilty, because by taking the blow and being patient and not being angry, one is accelerating one's own progress to buddhahood—really fast. "They're getting the real karmic harm by harming me and others. And by putting myself in their way to let them harm me I am actually making evolutionary trouble for them. So, I'm sorry, I'm sorry for you that I'm allowing you to harm me, and by letting you harm me to destroy your own evolutionary progress. I'm sorry."

When we can be like that, we are peace, no matter what happens, and so we can effectively share peace, just from our presence and our natural actions. That is being the Being Peace Fellowship, universal form of the Buddhist one. ❖

Robert Thurman is a scholar, former Tibetan Buddhist monk, director of Tibet House in New York City, and close friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He is the author of many books on Buddhism, including Infinite Life: Seven Virtues for Living Well. He is a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship's International Advisory Board.

A Buddhist Soldier at Abu Ghraib

by Aidan Delgado

Aidan Delgado served with the U.S. Army Reserve in Iraq from April 2003 to April 2004, assigned to duties at Nasiriyah and at the infamous military prison at Abu Ghraib, before being granted his long-delayed status as a conscientious objector.

Following his honorable discharge in 2004, Delgado, while completing his studies at New College of Florida, began speaking out about the abuses he had witnessed at Abu Graib and elsewhere, initially through New York Times columnist Bob Herbert and, later, in an ongoing series of lectures/slideshows arranged by Democracy Now! throughout the country. He continues to be active with Iraq Veterans Against the War—speaking out, showing his slides, and going on peace walks.

The following remarks combine an edited version of a talk given by Delgado in Oakland, California in March 2006 with excerpts from an interview with Susan Moon.

I completed my first year of college in Florida, but after that, like many students, I was bored. I was dissatisfied with the ivory tower and the kind of privilege I'd lived with my whole life. So I thought I'd see how the other half lives, and I decided to join the Army Reserve. I signed up on the morning of September 11, 2001. Just after I finished signing my contract, my recruiter said, "Oh, you should see what's on TV! They bombed the World Trade Center."

My father was a diplomat, and I spent the first seven years of my life in Thailand, so I was exposed to Buddhism at an early age. My father always portrayed Buddhism to me in a very favorable light, and it was something that resonated with me. Then, when I was in college, I was studying Buddhism academically for a class, and in the space between when I signed up and when I had to go to basic training, I had a lot of free time to study. I picked up the Buddhist books I had for class and I started to really read them for the first time.

I often say that my Buddhism developed as a reaction to the stress of having enlisted in the military. I felt like basic training was going to be a very intense experience, and that I needed to do something to prepare myself. So I think I went toward Buddhism as a means of stabilizing myself and getting some self-control to help me deal with the stress of the army. At first I had almost a Zen samurai mentality about it—you know, you can be a warrior and a Buddhist at the same time. As I got more into it, I began to realize that the tenets of Buddhism and the army were opposed.

So after my advanced military training, I said to my

sergeant, "You know, Sergeant, I think I made a mistake. I think the military is not a good fit for me. I'm a Buddhist now. And I also might be a conscientious objector." And he, being a good sergeant, counseled me to wait, take my time, I hadn't been in the military very long, give it a chance, my feelings might change, I might adjust.... But just two months later we were deployed for service overseas.

One of the big political footballs of the initial invasion and later was the issue of what the Iraqis thought: Did they support us? Did they oppose us? Because I spoke Arabic (I had gone to high school in Cairo, Egypt) I was able to communicate with Iraqis, and I can tell you that when we first arrived, there was a sense of jubilation in the streets. There was a sense of celebration—that much is true.

When I spoke to Iraqis at the beginning, they would say, "We love you. God bless you. God bless George Bush. Thank you for liberating us." Six months later, when I spoke to Iraqis, they would say, "We love you. God bless you. When are you going home?" Twelve months later, at the end of my tour of duty at Abu Ghraib, they would say, "When are you going home? We want you to go home!"

From the very beginning of the war I saw a lot of brutality and ugliness from our side, from our own forces. There was an enormous amount of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim sentiment in the army, and it was a reflection of what was going on in America after September 11. It became okay to look askance at Arab Americans and Muslim Americans. Most of the guys in my unit had never left the U.S., and certainly they'd never been to the Middle East, so they were in culture shock. They were terrified of the Iraqis, they saw ambushes around every corner, and they were in high anxiety because they weren't attuned to the rhythms and customs of life in the Middle East. And unfortunately their fear and anger found expression in Iraq, in the way that they treated the bodies of the people they killed, in the way they treated the civilians they came in contact with, and in the way they treated the prisoners who were under their thumb at Abu Ghraib.

But I was blown away by the Iraqis' hospitality, their generosity, their seeming lack of a grudge for soldiers who were occupying their land, and I was really impressed with their friendliness towards us. In one instance, there was a baker in Nasriyah. We were

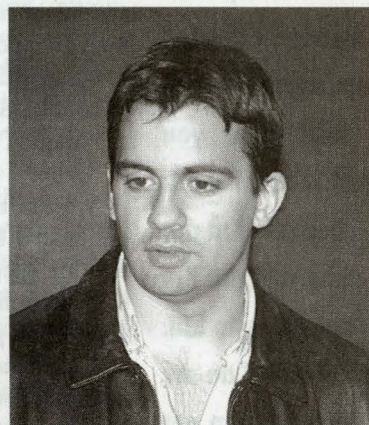


Photo by Alan Senauke

there buying bread for a company picnic and he quoted us a ridiculously low price, and I said to him in Arabic, "Look, we're from the U.S., we have tons of money, we don't have to pay such a low price, we can pay you a much higher price." And he turned to me and he said, "No, no, no, you don't have any family in Iraq, and while you're here I will be your family." That was his perspective toward U.S. soldiers.

Another time, I was walking through a crowded bazaar in Nasriyah after exchanging U.S. dollars, and the exchange rate was about 1200 for a dollar, so I was coming out of the money-changer's shop with an armful of money, and I realized I was safer in Iraq than I would have been at home. I would never dream of walking down a crowded U.S. street with an armful of money. So I never understood the intense fear of the Iraqis. These people were friendly.

We ran a prisoner-of-war camp in Nasriyah. We only had a few hundred prisoners, all young men of fighting age, and for the most part they'd been captured in military operations. It was this initial contact with Iraqi prisoners that really brought home the reality of the war for me and changed my mind and my heart about what was going on.

When I stood just across the razor wire from them, what I felt was empathy. I felt no animosity. In fact, when I looked at them, I thought: these are young, bored, uneducated guys who were conscripted. No choices in their life. And I looked at the guys in my unit and I thought: man, they're exactly the same. Most guys in my unit were poor rural southerners who didn't have a lot of education, didn't have many choices. And there was a sense of mirroring. I began to feel I couldn't participate in this war in good conscience when I saw the human face of what I was doing.

I agonized about this for months. I had to make a choice in that environment about what kind of man I was going to be, what kind of Buddhist I was going to be.

So I talked to my sergeant at length, I talked to my friends, I talked to the army chaplain, I even spoke to the chaplain from the Republic of Korea, who was a Buddhist, to try and straighten this out. And I decided what I had to do. I went to my commander, I handed him my rifle, and I said, "Look, you just take this back because I'm not going to fight; I'm not going to kill. I'll stay, I'll do my job, but I'm not going to fight. This war is wrong, and I want to be processed as a conscientious objector." About the third month I was there, I began the formal process.

Following my conscientious objector announcement, my commanders turned immediately and openly hostile. They told everybody in the unit what I was doing, so all of a sudden a lot of the other guys

wouldn't speak to me, and I'd be sitting at the lunch table by myself. Then they took away the ballistic plates that went in my vest in the front and back, saying, "You're not going to fight; you won't need this." Then they took away my home leave: "You can't go home, you're a flight risk, you won't come back." Once they had taken that away, I felt like I had nothing left to lose. I became adamant that I was not going to cave in or allow them to dictate my future. And ultimately I did win my honorable discharge, 18 months later. It was far too late, since I'd already returned from Iraq.

I will be the first to admit that I was a very disrespectful, insubordinate soldier after I asked for CO status. But I was so disillusioned with the way they were treating me, and I was so upset, and I felt so betrayed that I did whatever I could to deliberately annoy them. I let my beard grow out, and I wore a do-rag, and an empty pistol holster on my vest, and I put a banana in it, and I'd walk around on patrol and pull out the banana like it was a pistol. It was childish, I know, but it was the only way I could keep my sanity.

There's a Buddhist teaching that's meant a lot to me. It's the inspiration and the animus of my activism. The Buddha said, "He who conquers himself is greater than he who conquers a thousand times a thousand on the battlefield." That's a reevaluation of masculinity and honor and what's really important. I'm feeling so much braver and stronger and better now that I put away my weapon than I ever did when I had it.

Before being sent north, I was sent on a strange errand. They called us to get our gear on and we went way off into the desert, off the main roads, navigating by GPS, and we came to a broad, flat expanse, and we saw army earthmovers nearby, excavating something. As we got closer, we saw that they were excavating a mass grave for victims from Saddam's era who had been abducted and executed and buried in the desert. The Kuwaiti government had sent forensics teams to identify the remains and repatriate them to Kuwait. The army was there to assist them, but the army earthmover operators, when they dug into the pit, were pulling up body after body, and they were breaking apart, like leaves, and as a result, the Kuwaitis were categorizing the remains in bags. A soldier I was there with said to one of the Kuwaitis, "Give me a skull. I want to hold one of the skulls in my hand." He picked up a skull, and he started tossing it to himself, and he turned to me and said, "Private! Take my picture. I want a picture of me holding this skull." So I snapped a photograph. It was a surreal moment. There was the mass gravesite, and there were colorful parasols all around to protect the Kuwaiti workers from the bright sun, and the soldier was holding a skull that had been drilled in the back of the head

I went to my commander, I handed him my rifle, and I said, "Look, you just take this back because I'm not going to fight; I'm not going to kill. I'll stay, I'll do my job, but I'm not going to fight."

with a 9-millimeter handgun. I remember thinking, “I should be feeling something,” but I felt nothing at all.

I remember walking along the edge of the pit, looking down at all the bodies, and feeling completely numb. And I thought I was a bad person because I was looking at dead people, and I knew I was supposed to feel something but I felt nothing at all.

My feelings often came back after the fact. In the moment, I wouldn’t feel anything, but later, looking back, things came rushing back to me, floating back to me, feelings of regret, remorse, or guilt that were absent at the time. Like that mass gravesite—it wasn’t real to me that day at all. It wasn’t real to me until long after I returned and I began looking through the photos and remembering. Then it came back to me. Even now, in a strange way, it feels disconnected, because it’s so far outside my normal experience. It’s so unreal that you can’t process it.

After six months in the south, our unit was re-deployed north to Baghdad Correctional Facility, aka Abu Ghraib Prison. Before leaving, we had one last task to accomplish. We had no armored vehicles in our company, and we knew that the fighting in the north was much fiercer than in the south. So we actually took up a collection and we bought nuts and bolts, and we hired an Iraqi welder to slice pieces of sheet metal from abandoned cars nearby and the mechanics got the job of bolting them to the underside of our vehicles to try to protect ourselves from IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and rocket-propelled grenades.

We arrived at Abu Ghraib in mid-November. The prison housed between 4,000 and 6,000 prisoners. Most of the U.S. soldiers lived inside, in prison cells. There was a small group of Iraqi detainees who were segregated in a separate area, which is where all the infamous abuses took place.

You wouldn’t think of Iraq as being cold or wet, but when we arrived, in winter, it was freezing—25 degrees. I shared a cell with six of my buddies. We were sitting pretty—we had electricity, lights, heat. But the prisoners were housed in canvas tents, about 70 to 80 people per tent, on a wooden floor, set on the ground, and they had a trench for a latrine, and the

space was enclosed in razor wire.

The military police used the cold as a means of controlling the prisoners. When the prisoners committed some infraction, the MP would first remove their tents. On the second infraction they’d remove their jackets, and on the third infraction they’d remove all their clothing. So you’d have 70 prisoners huddled together on the platform in their underwear in 20-degree weather. The army has said that there was not a single case of tuberculosis at Abu Ghraib. But 18 members of my unit came home from Abu Ghraib TB-positive, from being in close contact with the prisoners.

If the prisoners didn’t have any communicable disease when they came in, they soon did from being housed in a crowded tent with terrible sanitation. They also had a big problem with dysentery inside Abu Ghraib, because the food being served to the detainees wasn’t from the U.S. Army stores. It had been subcontracted to a Baghdad food service, and when it arrived it often had maggots or cockroaches. This contributed to the tension inside the prison camp.

One of the things about being a CO is that you always get stuck in the worst jobs. And one of these worst jobs is working in headquarters under all the commanding officers, as their valet, their go-to guy. I did a lot of the paperwork at Abu Ghraib, shuffling the prisoners around on the detainee board. One day I was looking through my paperwork, and I was looking at a rap sheet for prisoners, showing what they were in Abu Ghraib for.

As I flipped through page after page, all I saw was “petty theft,” “public drunkenness,” “forged coalition documents”—petty, nonviolent offenses.

It turns out Abu Ghraib was the repository for the Iraqi justice system, which had no functioning prisons for even minor offenses. In addition to that, I found out that we had a policy of random sweeps. Every time the base would come under fire from outside, we would send soldiers into the surrounding area to sweep up all the men on the street and bring them to Abu Ghraib for questioning. If they found out they were innocent, they’d be slated for release. But the release process was so bureaucratic that it would sometimes take six months to get prisoners released. So the prison became overcrowded with people who’d



Photo by Aidan Delgado

been collected in a random sweep and had committed no offense at all. The International Red Cross report, for 2003, section 7, said, "Coalition military intelligence officers told the International Red Cross that in their estimate, between 70 and 90 percent of the persons deprived of their liberty in Iraq had been arrested by mistake."

* * * *

Abu Ghraib was situated between two main highways on the way to Baghdad, so it was very easy for Iraqis in a pickup truck to drive by, fire a few mortar rounds into the camp, and move off before we could respond. When the mortars came, we'd put on our flak vests and take cover inside, so relatively few U.S. soldiers were killed while I was at Abu Ghraib—I think just two. This wasn't the case for the detainees, however, who were outside in canvas tents. At least 50 were killed during my stay there. Fourteen prisoners were killed from a single mortar shell that came down into the yard, because they were packed so densely. I don't know how many were wounded.

The worst incident that my unit was involved in was the November 24 demonstration. That afternoon, the patience inside the prison camp had reached the boiling point. The prisoners had been demonstrating for several nights in a row. They had torn up the tents and spray-painted slogans on them, and were marching around chanting in protest of the living conditions.

The demonstration became very unruly. They picked up stones and pieces of wood from the tent floor and began hurling them over the fence at the guards. So all the police were called to go down to the camp. The army tried to quell the disturbance with rubber bullets, but that failed, so they requested permission to use lethal force, and they opened fire on the prisoners, and they shot 12 of them and killed four.

One of the sergeants in my unit was one of the guys who did the shooting, and he passed around photographs of the people he had killed. He was bragging, "I shot this one in the face, I shot this one in the groin," and everyone in the unit was chiming in and praising his manhood. I was getting more and more angry. I turned to him and I said, "Sergeant, are you *proud* of this? You shot unarmed men who were behind barbed wire for throwing stones!" He didn't get angry at me. He said, "Well, I saw them bloody my soldier's face. So I knelt down, loaded my weapon, said a prayer, stood up, and fired." He was very calm, no affect. He wasn't a vicious guy; he wasn't a monster. He was a family man, a devout Christian, extremely polite and courteous, one of the nicest guys in the unit. But in that situation, in so much misery, in so much hell, and after almost a year in Iraq, he had changed. He had become somebody different from who he had been back home.

After the demonstration, my unit was tasked with

transporting the bodies of the prisoners who had been killed. They were to be taken to the army mortuary, to be cleaned up and returned to their families. However, the guards on the detail diverted the truck to a field, they opened the body bags, and they further mutilated the bodies of the people who had been killed. One of my friends was there, and he showed me the pictures he had taken.

When people ask me, "Why are the Iraqis so ungrateful for what we're doing for them?" I say, "Some Iraqi family had a loved one, a husband, father, brother, son, at Abu Ghraib, who in all probability had committed no offense, and he never came out again. Either he died from disease, or was shot by the guards, or was killed by mortar bombardment from the outside. That's why they hate us." For every person who dies, and for every survivor who comes out of Abu Ghraib and tells his story, there's a ripple effect. Maybe we don't get these images back home, but I guarantee you they see it on Al Jazeera. And if you saw what they're seeing, you'd understand their attitude.

The Army says that those iconic abuse photos from Abu Ghraib were just because of a few bad apples. But that's not the case. The violence was very prevalent, and these kinds of horrible things, abuse and mutilation, were going on all over. It's all part and parcel of the same occupation. It's inseparable. If you support the Iraq war, you are in some sense supporting the torture of prisoners, and the mutilation of prisoners, and the killing of protesters. It can't be separated. I want people to have a sense of ownership for everything that's going on in Iraq. So if you support the war, you know what it is that you are supporting. And if you oppose the war, you know what it is that you are opposing.

* * * *

When I returned, all I wanted to do was put my Iraq experience behind me forever, and never speak about it ever again. At my school I got so sick of people asking me, "What was Iraq like? Did you kill anybody? What was Abu Ghraib like?" I got so tired of answering people individually that I said, "Okay—How about *one* talk? I'll get the auditorium, and I'll show slides, and I'll tell my story once, and that will be the end of it. I'll never have to talk about it again."

I did it, and 500 people showed up, and they were very shocked by what they saw. Now I'm in the position of talking about it every day, or every week, and each time it reopens the wound. I really don't like to do it. But I go through this stuff, not because I enjoy it but because I feel I have an obligation, like speaking for the dead, because people don't know anything about Abu Ghraib. They don't know about Iraq. So I get up one more time. The war's never over. I'm back at Abu Ghraib every time I tell the story. I do it as a practice because I want people to share that experience. ❖

When I returned, all I wanted to do was put my Iraq experience behind me forever, and never speak about it ever again. But I feel I have an obligation, like speaking for the dead,

Our Long Journey Together

An Interview with Joanna Macy

by Martha Boesing and Susan Moon

Joanna Macy is a Buddhist teacher, writer, activist, and scholar. For three decades, she has been developing teaching tools to help us respond to the perils and suffering of our world. Her work combines imagination, courage and good strategy to bring us teachings about "the work that reconnects." This work is described in one of her many books, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (with Molly Young Brown, *New Society*). Joanna has been a mentor, advisor, and supporter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship from the beginning.

In the following interview Joanna speaks of the *Great Turning*, a name for "the essential adventure of our time: the shift from the Industrial Growth Society to a life-sustaining civilization." You will find more about the *Great Turning* on her excellent website (www.joannamacy.net) along with many other teaching tools, resources, encouragement, and inspiration.

In May 2006, Martha Boesing and I interviewed Joanna in her home in Berkeley, California, as cherry trees bloomed outside the window. Martha is an activist, playwright, director, and former BPF board member. —SM

Martha: This issue of *Turning Wheel* is a "call to action" in a time of urgency. What actions would you call people to?

Joanna: The very term "call to action" suggests sounding the bugle and getting everybody to run to the barricades. That's the response we've become habituated to: urgency, urgency, urgency! At this point, I'm convinced that it's too late to turn around the collapse of the industrial growth society, and that the task we all have, and one that I find worthy and exciting, is to help each other through it, saving what we can, and making sure that the collapse destroys as little as possible.

There's so much to save. There are many mental, spiritual, and psychological tools that we can give each other, as well as linking arms to slow down the destruction and to create new forms, new structures, new Gaian ways of doing things.

So, for me, in the last year or two, the conceptualization of the *Great Turning* has been a source of increasing gratitude on my part. The *Great Turning* helps us understand that the industrial growth society is doing itself in. There's no way to save it, and why would we want to? There's also no point in buckling on the armor and heading out to destroy it, because it's doing that job very well itself.

So what we want to do is focus on serving life as best we can in this time of unraveling and destruction.

Martha: Do you believe the Earth will survive?

Joanna: Yes, I think that the Earth will survive, and that some humans will survive, but that they will be condemned to live in a severely degraded world.

My husband, Fran, recently attended the Chernobyl conference, on the 20th anniversary of the accident. He learned that 40 percent of the surface area in Europe was contaminated. So let's look at how we can serve the generations that are coming after us, to save what we can, and to do it with joyous gratitude that we have the opportunity.

Sue: Do you think that some fronts are more urgent to work on than others, or do you think it's all equally urgent?

Joanna: Some clearly have more repercussions, deeper levels of causality, in our planet's system. Rising sea levels and shifting ocean currents caused by melting arctic ice, for example, could bring on famine quite rapidly.

It's just common sense that some issues are more urgent than others. But the problem with prioritizing is that we can start to compete in urgency, to say, "My issue is more important than your issue." If we are fully, undividedly responding to this time of crisis, we won't try to harangue each other. We won't say, "What are you doing just working for women at the rape center when there are... *blah, blah, blah.*" I find that tiresome in the extreme. All these concerns are inter-related. An attitude that says: "I'm doing this, but I totally respect what you're doing" will serve us better in the long run.

Also, we need to realize that we may not succeed, and to actually take that in. Because we suspect it, so we might as well bring it around from behind our left ear where we don't want to look at it: *We may fail.* There's no guarantee. But this is our chance, you know? The very dire nature of our situation helps us drop our dependence on seeing the results of our own actions. Once we drop that, then we're almost unstoppable. It's very liberating.



Martha: And it's very Buddhist: the door to liberation lies through suffering.

Joanna: Exactly. There *is* a door, sometimes a quite narrow one. It's a door that's painful, but if you just walk through it, then you're in a big place. Everything is shot through with radiance, and you think, "Ah, we can do this."

Sue: I always take comfort in the law of karma—that beneficial actions produce beneficial results. So even if I don't see the results of my actions, I trust they will have an effect somewhere down the line.

Joanna: That's right. And that motivates you to keep dedicating the merit.

You know, I thought of you, Sue, last week, when I went to the weekly demonstration at Boalt Law School about U.S. torture policies. I took my turn, as you had done, to stand on the street, wearing the pointed hood that we know from the famous photograph from Abu Ghraib. My arms got so achy as I held them out. Through the black hood I saw people hurrying by, trying not to look. It felt good to have that experience, that solidarity.

In the Great Turning, there are three domains of essential activity, which are often pitted against each other. But they go together.

Martha: What are the three domains?

Joanna: First, there are holding actions to slow down the destruction being brought by the industrial growth society. That includes most of our legal, political, legislative, and regulatory work, as well as civil disobedience and direct action. It's very wearing, with more failures than successes, but it's terribly important because it saves lives, species, and ecosystems for the sustainable society that is taking birth now.

The second dimension is creating alternative structures and alternative ways of doing things. We can call them Gaian structures, Gaian ways of doing, and they are arising with abundance in this time. These changes are mostly unreported in the media, which is another reason why the Great Turning is important to talk about, because the mainstream, corporate-controlled media do their best *not* to reflect it.

I'm talking about new ways of holding land, new ways of growing food, new ways of distributing food, new forms of energy, new forms of schooling, new forms of healing, alternative currencies, barter systems, and new ways to measure wealth, sustainability, and disease. There's a lot going on!

But these forms aren't going to last unless they're deeply rooted in new ways of understanding reality, new ways of seeing our relationship with ourselves, each other, and the living earth.

Martha: And that's the third domain?

Joanna: Yes. That's the shift in consciousness—spiritual, cognitive, and scientific. That's where systems theory and deep ecology come in.

These three domains support each other. You can go into one and find yourself popping into another. Julia Butterfly goes up the tree Luna for two weeks, to save it, and she ends up staying for two years, and, because of cell phones and radios, she is able to participate hugely in the shift in consciousness. It's important to see these connections, because the divineness that sometimes takes place in communities for change can be quite disheartening.

Sue: That brings up another question I have. You've been doing this kind of work for so long, all your life, really. There must be times when you just think, "Oh no! It's impossible!"

Joanna: Every day!

Sue: What keeps you going in those times?

Joanna: I love this whole Gaian approach to reality. It stretches my mind and heart. I love stretching my perceptions, as well. Another thing is the great people. I wouldn't know either of you without this work. Forgive me, but when I think of the company my mother kept, her bridge partners and so forth, I feel lucky to be around people I so admire and take delight in.

I like being alive at a time when the basic assumptions underlying patriarchy are being dismantled: Papa knows best, shut up and obey, the rules of private property. As a child growing up under top-down power, I thought, "Oh well, that's just the way life is, I guess." Now there's a great comeuppance as we see how destructive these assumptions are.

Sue: We also see people believing in these assumptions and strengthening them. There's a polarization, too.

Joanna: Yes. I'm disheartened about what's in store for this country. I'm wondering what can wake us up when we have already seen wars of aggression, two elections stolen, our constitution shredded, the Democrats being so cowardly.

Sue: It seems to me that we are called on to have a lot of courage right now. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough courage. I don't stand in front of bulldozers. I'd like to develop more courage for standing in front of bulldozers, metaphorical if not literal ones.

Joanna: You know, frankly, I'd throw in the sponge any day if I could, but I can't. It would be so boring. What would you do that would be half as much fun?

Sue: I can think of some fun things to do. You could work in the garden and make nice flowers grow, paint

a picture, sing a song, make dinner for your family, have a wonderful vacation on the beach. You could say, "I can't deal with it anymore. I'm just going to go to a class on making mille-feuille pastry."

Joanna: It's not wrong to enjoy your life. It's good to do those things, too. Just don't buy your garden fertilizer from WalMart.

Martha: What do your grandchildren think about all this, Joanna?

Joanna: They understand that Oma and Opa are working for the Earth, and they kind of like that.

In the workshops we give we go into "deep time," where we allow the future beings and the ancestors to become real to us. We take it as scientific fact that the future is inside us. Sister Rosalie Bertell, the researcher in radioactivity, says that every being who will ever live is on earth now, in our DNA and in our gonads and ovaries.

I can't imagine staying as involved as I have, and as glad as I have, without the deep time work. I think our grandchildren are going to go through a lot of awfulness that we can't stop, and that what we're doing now may make more of a difference for generations a little farther off.

I would like to see American Buddhists include the world situation more in their practice, because the Buddhadharma gives us wonderful tools for being within a challenging situation. People work so hard on a retreat. They really do. Such focus! What could be harder than training the mind to watch the mind, day after day. To me, it's just a shame to make this huge effort, which uses every ounce of your being, and not set it within the context of the healing of our world. There's danger that people will just do this for their personal comfort or as some kind of escape. The psychic strength and the acuity of vision that develop—why not apply them to the collective situation that we're given by being born now?

Sue: As Aitken Roshi says, Buddhism must be engaged. There's no such thing as just sitting on your cushion.

Martha: How can an organization like BPF help bring a concern for the world into Buddhist centers in the West?

Joanna: BPF stands for that concern, for one thing. It has a kind of symbolic weight. Some of us have talked in the past about writing a letter to the Buddhist teachers in the U.S. I don't want to name names, but there are teachers with a huge following, who raise buckets of money, but who rarely if ever mention political and social concerns. And these are the people to whom we give the care of our souls.



Siddhartha
by Jan Eldridge

Sue: That's a good idea, to have a letter from BPF to the teachers, encouraging them to bring in those concerns.

Joanna: People need to be reminded of what is happening, that this whole, technically based, industrial growth system is about to go under, at tremendous cost. It's hard to take it seriously. Look! There are cherry trees outside, blooming. There are children coming home from school. There are people heading to the grocery store. This looks like a peaceful day in a beautiful place.

Sue: And it is.

Joanna: I have to battle with my own natural tendency for moment-to-moment forgetting. Then my friends come back from Palestine, back from Iraq, back from Nigeria, and they tell me what they've seen.

Sue: I think we can enjoy the cherry blossoms with gratitude at the same time that we remember the people being bombed in Iraq. Somehow, we have to fit both of those things, at the same time, into our awareness.

Joanna: Yes, I have never in my life been more in love with the blooming flowers. People walk by me as I stand there gazing at them. Everything seems so very, very precious.

Sue: How do you see your own role, personally,

changing? You're an elder for us, and you're getting older. You couldn't have the energy you used to have in a day, though it certainly looks like you have a *huge* amount of energy! All of us are getting older. What is it appropriate for us to do as we become mentors and elders and pass on the actions to younger people?

Our teachers will be those who have been through a holocaust and still love the world. If we can love our world, then we have a chance.

Joanna: I'm actually a little embarrassed to be running around so much! I think it's not age-appropriate. But it's true that now I give more hours in the week and in the month to being with people one-on-one in a mentoring way. It's happened naturally.

In my teaching, in the work I do with groups, there's more spontaneity, even glee. There's more emphasis, just coming up naturally, on gratitude. I've become more aware of what I've received. Gratitude is necessary because it gives us a ground to stand on when there's so much crashing around us. Gratitude is not dependant on external circumstances.

In the Western psyche, there's a tendency toward self-loathing and self-hatred. I've heard Buddhist teachers comment on this—the challenge in presenting the Buddhadharma in a situation where there has been so much self-blaming, culturally and religiously inspired. An untrammled love for life is like a raft, like a lifeboat—just to love it, just to love it.

In *The Book of Hours*, Rilke says, "I just want a little more time, / Just give me a little more time, because I am going to love the things as no one has thought to love them."

If nothing else happens in the workshops I teach, I feel it's time well spent if we can get back to loving life; if we can see that the pain we feel for the world and our love for it are not separate, but that they are two sides of one coin.

Sue: A significant offering you make is that you show us it's possible to do this very difficult work and not turn away from suffering, not be afraid of the dark.

Joanna: There's a wonderful practice we do, written by Caitriona Reed, of bowing to our adversaries. As we bow we say something like: "You who destroy the environment for your own profit, you show me how much I value honesty and generosity, and how much love I have for our planet home. So I bow to you in gratitude."

Sue: Can you tell us a story about an encouraging experience you've had recently?

Joanna: I visited the Onondaga Nation recently.

They're one of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee, in central New York, whom we used to call the Iroquois Federation. The Onondaga are among the poorest because they won't build casinos. They know that once the casinos come in, the mafia comes too. Onondaga land goes in a huge swath from Pennsylvania all the way up to Canada, though only a tiny part of it outside Syracuse, New York, has been left in their control.

Last year the Onondaga finally brought a land rights claim against the state and federal government. Their *tadedaho*, which means their spiritual leader, announced it at a press conference. He's a construction worker in long braids and a steel helmet, chewing gum, and there were tears in his eyes. He said, "This lawsuit is hard for us to do because if we fail at this, then there's no hope left for our people. But we have prayed a lot and this is our demand."

They're not asking any recompense. They're not asking anybody to move. They're asking one thing only: that the land be cleaned up, that it be environmentally restored, for the sake of the white people living there as well as for themselves. This is the first such claim that has been made in this country.

When I visited the school in their nation, a teacher, one of the clan mothers, said: "Here in this hall, we meet every morning with the students for thanksgiving. Of course, we do a very abbreviated form because the real thanksgiving takes several days." To my total delight, she proceeded to guide me in their 20-minute version. "Now we gather our minds as one mind. We give thanks to Grandfather Sun, who warms the seeds and gives us light so we can see each other's faces. We give thanks to the moon, who changes her shape and pulls the waters. We give thanks to the maple, chief among the trees."

I felt: this is the way we're going to survive, if we do survive. Our teachers will be those who have been through a holocaust and still love the world. If we can love our world, then we have a chance. We'll save something of it. You don't have to get a grant from the MacArthur Foundation—just love something. That's my call to action.

As I sat there with that wise woman, I thought about the long journey we have *all* been on together. The life that is in us, breathing through our lungs and beating our hearts, goes back to the first unfolding of space-time. Over billions of years this planet has nurtured the life that is in us. Just as the Buddha, on the night of his enlightenment under the bodhi tree, remembered all his past lives, we can remember all the eons and beings that brought us to this point. You don't have to believe in rebirth, as the Buddha pointed out himself, but you *can* know that you've been brought to be alive on Earth at this time for a reason. It's a privilege to be alive now. ♦

Notes from the Wayside

by Daniel Mintie

The story is told of the king of Magadha declaring war on Kapilavutthu, Shakyamuni Buddha's home. Buddha tried dissuading the king, without success. As the king came at the head of his army Buddha went to the wayside and seated himself beneath a dead tree.

Usually people sit in the shade of living trees—all the more so in the midday heat of the Indian subcontinent. So the king took note of Buddha and asked, "What are you doing beneath that dead tree?"

"Sitting in the cool shade of my native land," Buddha replied.

Touched by this answer the king turned his army round and returned home.

* * *

I grew up during the Vietnam War. That war killed Mike, the boy next door. I was 10 at the time. I remember going out to the cemetery in Los Angeles, standing in the midday sun, watching soldiers take a flag off of Mike's coffin. They folded the flag up and handed it to Mike's mother, Betty. She stood there in dark glasses, looking down at it.

Betty stayed in the house after that, except when she went to the corner to buy beer. When she drank too much to walk to the corner she'd come to our house. My mom would walk Betty home, then go herself to the corner and return with a big grocery sack filled with six-packs. I'd hear the screen door bang on the porch next door and Betty crying and thanking my mom.

* * *

My whole life the king has been marching. On Vietnam, on El Salvador, on Iraq. On Betty's home. On your home and on mine. My whole life the king *will* be marching. How to live with such a king? What to do?

Buddha did something. Something unusual. You could say he called attention to something. You could say he called the king to attention. When the king came to attention, he too did something unusual. He turned round and returned home.

That day the king returned home.

Ten years after Mike's death I met Dan Berrigan. He'd been visiting mutual friends in Los Angeles and I gave him a lift back to the airport. I don't remember what we talked about. What I remember is realizing I'd now met somebody who knew how to live with kings, who knew how to do the unusual. A few years earlier Dan and some friends had poured napalm on selective

service records in Catonsville, Maryland. The usual thing was to pour napalm on people and villages in Vietnam. The king took note of this fracture of order. Dan was sentenced to three years in federal prison.

Later that year I met Robert Aitken Roshi. I asked him about Zen practice. "If you go this way," he replied, "you can touch perfect peace." An extraordinary statement—and one I immediately realized I'd waited my entire life to hear.

These two meetings took place 30 years ago. One way of describing what I've done since is this: attempt to live up to them.

Something unusual. I keep coming back to this. Buddha had a penchant for it. So do Aitken Roshi and

The preparations to incinerate all livings were entirely legal. The fence-climbing had been declared a federal crime.

Dan Berrigan. Not the usual thing. Not business as usual. And because the usual gets codified into law, doing the unusual may involve breaking the law. Here is a story of breaking the law:

I was living in Seattle when the navy began parking nuclear submarines in Puget Sound. Local people began climbing the fence and going onto the submarine base. This was a way of calling attention to what was happening on the other side of that fence—a way of calling attention to the earnest preparations there to incinerate all living things. The preparations were entirely legal. The fence-climbing had been declared a federal crime.

I went over the fence with my friends Ty and Ben. That same day, in an act of mass civil disobedience, several hundred people went over the front gate where they were immediately arrested and taken to jail. Ty, Ben, and I had a friend drop us off 10 miles away at the back gate. We waited for the patrol truck to go by on the perimeter road, then climbed the barbed wire and followed Ben's compass for a mile through the pine forest, arriving at the officers' club at lunchtime.

The club was filled mostly with officers' wives and civilian subcontractors. The three of us took places at different tables and joined the talk about "those protestors" at the front gate. Gradually it came out that

those protestors were rather closer than the front gate. This information dramatically increased the lunchroom's interest in us. The regulars at first got very tense—I don't know what they'd been told about us—then slowly relaxed. Table talk took a whole new turn. When the military police arrived, the waiters had to come over and point right at the three of us. Who was "us" and who was "them" had become less obvious than it was at the front gate.

As the MPs were removing Ty to the paddy wagon I heard the women at his table protest: "Wait a minute! Can't we just say he's with us?"

* * *

Social action. We fail to notice this term is a redundancy. What other kind of action is there? What act could I perform that would not affect all beings?

Failing to recognize there is *only* social action, we relinquish our power to change the world. Our thinking hems us in. "I can't change the world," we say. When the fact is that, moment to moment, each one of us *is* changing the world. The question is never whether we are doing so. The question is always how.

* * *

Ty and Ben and the others who were arrested that day pled not guilty to federal trespassing charges. They defended themselves at trial by proposing that

I am, as are you, as is each of us, personally responsible for the war's onset, its prosecution, and its end.

the base—not the walking onto it—was illegal. The king saw it otherwise.

I pled guilty—of course I broke the law—and my case went directly to sentencing. Mine was the first trial, and the courtroom was filled with friends and press people and the simply curious. The judge asked if I wanted to make a statement before being sentenced. I asked for three minutes. The judge looked surprised and a little relieved. It seems protestors often wanted much more time than that. I asked the judge if he would keep time and let me know when three minutes was up. Again he looked surprised, and a little bemused. He said he would. I thanked him and asked that he start immediately.

Then I sat down.

Thirty seconds passed. "If you have something to say, say it now," the judge ordered. The bemusement was gone from his voice.

I considered this order. And remained silent.

Ten seconds more. "If you aren't going to say anything, I'm going to sentence you."

"Your honor," I said, "we agreed to three minutes. I

don't believe that time has passed."

"I'm the judge in this courtroom," the man roared, enraged now, red-faced, coming up out of his chair. "I'm the one who will say when your time has passed."

* * *

The judge and I perhaps learned something that day—something about how a steady stream of words covers over the fact of the matter. Covers over the march against Kapilavutthu, or against a whole planet. When the words stop, when all the arguments for and against come to an end, then we are left with the thing itself: the killing of living beings. Then we are left with the meticulous preparation for killing—the paperwork, the submarine base, the tax code, the court.

Ty too learned something about this at his trial. Before sentencing, he turned around to read a prepared statement. He looked down at his notes. He looked out on the faces of his family and friends. He opened his mouth. Then, much to his astonishment, he broke down and wept.

* * *

Not my president, not my war. Friends sometimes chant this as we walk together, tens of thousands of us, through the streets of my native land. I don't chant it. Whose president is he, if not mine? Whose war?

Another way of saying this is that I take these things personally. Of course he's my president. Of course it's my war. I am guilty as charged, connected with the killing in every way. I am, as are you, as is each of us, personally responsible for the war's onset, its prosecution, and its end. When we have, each of us, had our fill of it, the war will be done. Telling myself any other state of affairs pertains only permits the killing to continue.

Another way of saying this is that I myself and you and all of us together are exactly the king marching. And exactly the prince, the royal one, seated in the cool shade of our native land.

* * *

The story of the king of Magadha goes on. Another day the king returned with his army and wiped Kapilavutthu from the map. Buddha arrived to see the last of his family and friends, the last of his world gone up in smoke.

The story of the king of Magadha goes on. It goes on in the historical record and in each day of our lives. The story of the king and of the prince is our story. It's the story of a choice we make daily. The story of murder and the story of cool shade. Each thing we say or do not say, each thing we do or left undone, writes this story—for ourselves and for all living beings.

Daniel Mintie is a poet living in Placitas, New Mexico. He is grateful to his wife, Jana Zeedyk, for relating the story of the king of Magadha, as told to her by Katagiri Roshi.

The Radical Way

by Nelson Foster

Let me begin by making it clear that I think the world is in a hell of a mess. The air, the weather, the soil, the forests, streams, rivers and seas, fields and farms, deserts and wetlands and ice caps, cities, states, nations east and west, north or south, virtually the entire international regime of collaborative and regulatory agencies and mechanisms, our economy, our legal system, religious institutions, the mass media, entertainment, education, science, medicine, you name it; on all sides, I see natural and cultural systems that are troubled or failing. I won't linger over this bad news, which most of us know too well and which has reduced many a good person to depression or despair. I start here merely to prevent anyone from mistaking what follows for the words of a man out of touch with our times and circumstances.

For the same reason, I feel obliged to say also that I'm aware of heartening accomplishments on many of the same fronts I've just listed; this essay isn't the work of a pessimist or a fatalist either. However dire the situation seems, it's worth bearing in mind that the future is open and that today's problems, intractable as they appear, may presage a transformation for the good rather than an impending disaster. As the late Korean master Seung Sahn liked to say, "A good situation is a bad situation. A bad situation is a good situation." Perhaps that was his gloss on the Tao Te Ching:

*It is upon misfortune that good fortune depends;
it is within good fortune itself that misfortune crouches
in wait,
and who knows where it will come out?*

None of us knows or can know what the future holds, but our situation being what it is, we'd be foolish not to turn our thoughts to radical responses. By radical, I don't mean, "Workers of the world, unite! Rise up and throw off your shackles!" Nor am I suggesting overturning our senile patriarchy in favor of matriarchy or tossing out industrial society and reverting to sod houses and skins. I mean *radical* in the old Greek and Chinese sense—root—as in the Cheng-Tao Ke (Shodoka): "Going straight to the root is the hallmark of the Buddha; / gathering leaves and collecting branches is no use at all."

What is that root, and how do we go straight to it? For present purposes, I'll forgo a more direct answer and borrow the old trick of pretending the world can be split in two. From one vantage point, which for

convenience we may label "positive," the root is the mind that we all share with stones and fish and trees, the mind that's open, luminous, spacious, free of bias or fear, unborn and undying. From the second, "negative" point of view, the root is *avidya*, delusion, the mind that's closed off, dark, constricted, full of prejudice and fear, snarled up in birth and death, gain and loss. To get to the root in the first sense is to get to the root in the second sense. It's a process that really can't be divided in two.

For Buddhists, going straight to the root is certainly a matter of practice and realization...and what? How do we continue this radical process in all our relations? Many of us, myself included, have taken the path of good causes, resisting outbreaks of greed, hatred, and folly, defending innocent people, wild places, civil liberties, and so forth. Although such projects still capture my sympathies, with each passing year it seems more apparent that even a myriad of brilliantly conducted, thoroughly right-minded campaigns couldn't keep pace with the burgeoning of delusion. Efforts of this sort amount to cutting back the leaves and branches of *avidya* while leaving the root untouched; as appealing as they might be, they aren't radical. For each outrage arrested or reversed, another's perpetrated—or two, or ten—and it takes a while before we even notice. Again, like the author of the Cheng-Tao Ke, I feel moved to urge, "Just get to the root—never mind the branches!"

I find political activism not only superficial but often mistaken in orientation. A steady diet of painful news creates a powerful temptation to locate the source of our woes elsewhere; it leaves us, understandably, wanting to shake our fists at Congress or the White House and to shout, "Throw the bums out!" But whatever release railing about Them may briefly afford, it doesn't comport with the Way. Fundamentally the bums are us, and each one, however flawed, is a jewel of Buddhature. In practical terms, moreover, and more gallingly, I have to admit how deeply I'm enmeshed in the exploitive, harmful systems I find so easy to abhor. As even a reluctant, bit player in the theaters of investment, banking, and credit, as even a frugal consumer of gas, oil, propane, and plastics, as a beneficiary of our highway network, mining industry, trading power, and military might, as an all-too-frequent user of jet aircraft, satellite communications, information technology, and the like, I can't legitimately subtract myself even for an

I find political activism not only superficial but often mistaken in orientation.

instant from the problems at hand.

I don't mean to deny differences in kind or degree of responsibility between me and, say, Dick Cheney, but if there's going to be an indictment of the status quo, surely my name belongs on it—and yours, too, I dare say. Likewise the name of every activist organization I know of. From the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and Greenpeace to the Republican Party and al Qaeda, they, too, collaborate in the status quo through funding, publicity, travel, communications, litigation, and so on. Irrespective of our agenda, in utilizing banks, the Internet, the media, the courts, all the standard machinery of society, we're investing in that machinery. Ultimately, as Marshall McLuhan saw, the medium is

If there's going to be an indictment of the status quo, surely my name belongs on it—and yours, too, I dare say.

the message. To put the point more generally, the way things go is also what they become; the process is the product. Radical change won't ensue from business as usual. To nudge civilization out of its present, ruinous trajectory, we need to embrace a process—a way of living—truly consistent with our hopes.

Reorienting Ourselves

The necessary starting point for the sort of process I have in mind is humility, humility of style and means, if not of aims. It's the necessary foundation, that is, both for me in making the recommendations that follow and for the way of living that I'm recommending. Were we not to begin with humility, it would be hard to go further. None of us—not Lao Tzu, not the Washington pundits, certainly not I—has sufficient information or insight to know what the future holds or to prescribe a course for it, and that fact alone dictates an essentially conservative approach, cleaving to what's been given by nature or tested by culture rather than placing faith in revolutionary or “futuristic” solutions held out by smart people who cling, despite all the wreckage in view, to illusions of progress. Although the law of unintended consequences has dependably revealed the limits of human ingenuity, hubris remains one of our root problems as a species, writ large in our society and nation, from patterns of personal consumption to foreign policy. We need humility now in the worst way. Cultivating it at every level of affairs would go a long way in reversing our troubles.

Buddhism has no patent on humility, of course, but with surrender to practice and experience of emptiness, it reliably develops as one fruit of the Way. It's difficult to be deeply self-impressed if you see

every day that there's nothing to the self, more difficult to be greedy or combative if you realize there's nothing to gain and lose. Yet this needn't reduce us to the indecisiveness Yeats famously warned against: “The best lack all conviction, while the worst / are full of passionate intensity.” Though it can help us slip free of “best” and “worst” and lay aside stridency and bigotry, humility isn't necessarily at odds with either conviction or passionate intensity.

At the same time, Buddhism's radical commitment to the welfare of all beings makes it clear that strong convictions mustn't take the form of partisanship. Or to put the matter affirmatively, the transformative way of living I'm looking for requires me, especially in the event of conflict, to take everyone's side. Playing favorites in a marital problem or any other species of dispute neglects the fact that these conflicts invariably arise mutually and withholds compassion from someone who undoubtedly needs it. By oversimplifying the forces at work, choosing sides obscures conditions, compounds differences, and hardens conflict. Our responsibility is to care for each party on its own terms, the abuser no less than the abused.

Tung-shan was about to depart. Nan-yüan said, “Closely study the Buddhadharmā. Widely confer its benefits.”

Tung-shan said, “Closely study the Buddhadharmā—no question about that. What is ‘Widely confer its benefits?’”

The master said, “Not a single thing dismissed.”

Not dismissing a single thing keeps the whole intact. Even the impulse to take sides is included, along with anyone who actually does take sides. When nothing's excluded, there's no grounds for partiality, and the benefits of the dharma may extend in all directions.

The principle of taking everyone's side, or of not dismissing a single thing, isn't confined to situations of conflict. The haiku poet Issa can be our teacher here:

*No, no—don't jump, flea!
In that direction is the
Sumida River!*

Fleas are astounding creatures. People who calculate such things report that a flea can spring 150 times its body length, which is the equivalent of you or me leaping a quarter of a mile. Achieving 20 times the thrust of an Apollo moon rocket, it reaches the zenith of its flight, 5 inches, in a 2000th of a second. What a gross error it would be to dismiss a flea.

Nan-yüan's admonition would be out of reach if not dismissing a single thing meant being aware of everything everywhere or even if it meant just sustaining an encyclopedic awareness of one's immediate environment. His charge is simpler than that, though still very difficult: not to diminish anything

we encounter—that flea, a leaf of cabbage, the far-away look in a child's eyes, the pleasure a neighbor takes in gambling, a political statement that's uninformed or prejudiced. We write things off in a flash of thought, with or without malice. "It's only a leaf of cabbage" does it as effectively as "What an idiot!" Dismissal often occurs unconsciously, out of pique or deep-seated habit, so catching oneself in the act is both tricky and imperative.

Conferring the benefits of the Buddhadharmā on all beings requires that we discover and maintain the mind that teachers of old likened to a mirror, impartially open to whatever appears. To the extent one's vision is warped by biases or grudges, the odds of responding appropriately to circumstances decline (along with chances of experiencing beauty and satisfaction). The practice of taking everyone's side doesn't obviate the need for decisions or actions, of course. The time comes to say *Yes* or *No* and to hold one another accountable for misconduct, but even at such moments, it's possible to refrain entirely from partisanship or dismissiveness, showing with word and gesture that there's no dividing Us from Them.

In taking this path, it's important also to sustain a deep, patient respect for the workings of cause and effect, which are precise and inexorable, if sometimes slow to play out. For example, I think it can be stated, without partisanship or dismissiveness, that the collapse and historical notoriety of the present Bush Administration are now certain and perhaps were inevitable, given the degree of hubris and blind ideology exhibited in its upper echelons. Inevitable or not, at this juncture the house of cards has begun to fall, and it's extremely unlikely to stop falling. By the same token, wise and generous efforts we wake now can be counted on to bear fruit in the fullness of time, maybe in roundabout ways no one notices. To act in such confidence is radical—and liberating. Seeing the results, much less claiming credit for them, is beside the point.

Along the same lines, we need to take a long view of the world's ups and downs. I don't mean to suppress the joy and sorrow tomorrow's news may bring. Let the joy be pure joy, the sorrow pure sorrow. Just remember it's been ever thus. In an essay titled "The Politics of Prajna" that I published in the early 1980s, I find this declaration (among others I wouldn't make today): "The ancient [Zen] teachers did not live in a world as ruined and miserable and precarious as ours." True, theirs wasn't a world of nuclear weapons, global warming, or gene-splicing, but improved acquaintance with Chinese and Japanese history leads me to suppose the old worthies faced no shortage of mayhem, misery, or precariousness. Woes of their era—banditry, famine, pestilence, an oppressive imperial bureaucracy,

marauding warlords, Mongol invasions, high infant mortality, low life expectancy (especially for women), and so forth—don't seem highly preferable to our current problems. Nor should we suppose that lack of chainsaws or tractors protected China from deforestation, desertification, draining of wetlands, and other large-scale ecological calamities. The "dusty world" of T'ang poems wasn't merely a metaphor for the seductions of society; it was a reflection of pervasive soil loss in the country's central plains.

While our situation is dire in many respects, some of them unprecedented, let's not overlook how continuous it is, too, with that of our ancestors or how resilient, as a rule, natural and human communities have proven through the ages. If we bear this big picture in mind, we may be able to view fresh depredations and disasters with the gimlet eye of a Chinese sage, as belonging to the same vast ebb and flow that governs the seas and stars, and thus enjoy some poise amid the flux instead of careening from crisis to crisis. Maintaining the long view and steadiness of mind is itself radical in a time marked by shortsightedness and hyperactivity.

Practical Steps

Besides living humbly, serving impartially, trusting in cause-and-effect, and rooting ourselves in the long view, to contribute to a change of trajectory we need, of course, to take practical steps. The most crucial, I think, is wedding ourselves and our families to places and communities, with a stout determination to stay put. Uprootings and re-placements are so much the norm in our society that the very idea of settling down for good may sound far-fetched, but that only goes to show how odd things have gotten. Historically, even nomadic peoples had clearly defined home territories, and "the gypsy life" was stigmatized and so discouraged. Since the Middle Ages, entering a Roman Catholic order has entailed a vow of *stabilitas* because, in a monastery as in a neighborhood, renouncing mobility calms the mind as well as the body. It also ups the ante in one's relationships, almost compelling care. This is it. We have to make it work, not only now but for the long haul. A sober vow to stay put sharpens attention to every aspect of a place—its weather, landscape, language, history, economy, jokes, institutions, not to mention fellow occupants.

Such a vow establishes the basis for another down-to-earth practice: working small and close to home. Mainstream culture teaches us that great accomplishments are the province of capitol cities and corner offices, laboratories and headquarters, and are achieved by individuals of rare talent and intelligence, whose names are in the headlines and preserved in history. Holders of high office, military commanders, popes, moguls, inventors, social crusaders, mafia

Famine, pestilence, an oppressive imperial bureaucracy, marauding warlords, Mongol invasions, high infant mortality, and low life expectancy don't seem highly preferable to our current problems.

dons, and others famous, infamous, or both—all certainly exert an influence for good or ill, just perhaps not as potent an influence as is commonly thought. The big questions—What kind of people do we want to be? How shall we live? How can we get along together? Which goods, services, and technologies shall we accept and which refuse? What legacy shall we leave to future generations?—are ultimately resolved by the likes of you and me, in millions of small conversations, decisions, tasks, and purchases.

When I consider the social changes that have occurred during my lifetime, the outcomes of elections, legislation, and Supreme Court rulings seem largely secondary, reflecting shifts in public opinion more than instigating or driving them. Those who temporarily work the levers of power can certainly initiate dreadful things, impede constructive projects, and in that sense do great harm, but lacking support, neither they nor their deeds can last long. All things are contingent, including dictatorships. This is the other side of our enmeshment in the status quo: there's no private sphere of power, of virtue or cruelty. So instead of being transfixed by the spectacle of stars strutting the world stage, let's attend to what's close to our noses. As the old proverb reminds us, "For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the horse was lost." Everything depends on the care you and I devote to matters at hand.

Working small and close to home is quintessentially humble work and really the only work there is. Deals made by financiers and entrepreneurs and rules set by politicians and bureaucrats don't get water in the glass, fields plowed, wood cut, food cooked, clothes sewn, children taught, landscapes restored, or widgets built; all that is accomplished, in the meaningful sense, by people working close to home—although dislocation by "market forces" often makes home today a poor expedient in a city far from birthplace and family. To the extent that we take such work back into our own hands, through direct labor and trade with neighbors doing likewise, we can see to it that it's done well, with dignity and without inflicting hidden damage. Working small and close to home might sound at first like turning our backs on distant communities, but it's just the opposite.

As the above comments imply, I feel that we must be cautious and humble in using technology. Americans are beloved by marketing experts as "rapid adopters," quick to acquire the latest gadgets—which is to say, tardy at doubting their value and impact. Since evidence often takes time to accumulate, we need to sharpen our ability to anticipate their effects and learn to err on the side of prudence. This doesn't seem too terribly difficult. When plastics came on the market, for example, even if no one foresaw the dan-

gers of introducing a little-known suite of petrochemicals into our homes and workplaces, land and sky, the very qualities that made plastics attractive to industry—their manifold applications, durability, and cheapness—made it possible to predict the problem of waste we now have, especially at sea. Photodegraded plastic trash, 80 percent originating from land sources, has laden the oceans with minute plastic particles that outweigh plankton six to one in parts of the North Pacific and that transport PCBs and other toxins into the food web.

It seems apparent in retrospect that the car, guzzling gas and belching fumes, would impose heavy long-term costs, but its ruinous impact, like those of plastics and many other technologies, outran scientific detection, quantification, and consensus. This is a catch-up game we can't afford to play, especially as the power of our devices continues to increase. Only forethought and restraint seem capable of sparing Earth and society from accelerating damage due to technologies already established, much less new ones, and we can't rely on experts or governments to practice these virtues in our stead. Inextricable from humility, they are virtues that have been handed down since antiquity in the form of myths and practices, folktales and proverbs (simple tools in their own right), and it's up to us to employ them afresh. Reasserting the necessity of restraint and the imperative of thinking for future generations will be an enormous creative challenge in a culture oriented to excess, in an era of Now. This, too, is radical work, near at hand and urgent.

My concerns about technology have gained me a local reputation as a Luddite, I'm sorry to say, for it strikes me as a dismissal of both the historical Luddites and the discomfiting thought that, as our natural systems continue to fail, we'll almost surely have to wean ourselves off technologies we've come to take for granted. Let me note that I too (as I drive my '85 pickup, tote plastic bags, and write on a hand-me-down computer) find the prospect of such change uncomfortable, all the more so because my concerns extend to the whole range of technologies, not just the vaunted "high" variety. I think Plato was correct to warn that reliance on the technology I'm using right now—written language—would have the unintended consequence of enfeebling human memory. What a terrible trade-off! Facing technology choices as Buddhists, we can't pretend our decisions somehow don't matter. The need for care is an immediate corollary of the law of cause and effect.

A final practical guideline: to be rigorously mindful of how we get our living. By that, I mean less what we do to "make money" than actually how we work, how we fill our needs. Where our everyday behaviors meet the abstraction of The Economy lies a pool of power

**Deals made by
financiers and
entrepreneurs
don't get water
in the glass,
fields plowed,
food cooked,
children taught,
landscapes
restored, or
widgets built.**

we've barely begun to tap. Consumer actions—driving a hybrid vehicle, buying organically grown and fair-trade foods, investing in companies deemed socially responsible—cause worthy but superficial changes, leaving both our own habits and the destructive machinery of big business essentially intact. Steering a Prius to Costco or Whole Foods for a plastic sack of Earthbound greens is one thing; walking to the garden to pick some greens is quite another. After supper, will it be a Hollywood spectacular on DVD or old, free, peaceful arts of homemade entertainment like games and storytelling, making music together or “settin’ till dark,” talking?

Some feel that only government can put the brakes on corporate power and restructure the marketplace to support healthy forms of farming, manufacture, and trade. I doubt very much that it will, even if it could. Transformation of the economy more probably awaits our willingness to take the work, responsibility, and pleasure of getting a living back into our own regions, if not into our own homes. The major obstacles are our declining taste and capacity for domesticity, our willingness to buy cheap, world-ruining goods from giant, world-ruining corporations, and attachment to luxuries and conveniences our great-grandparents did perfectly well without. (My demon whispers, “Chocolate! Airplanes!”) These are imposing barriers, to be sure, but transcending them is entirely in our power if we can root ourselves in the mind that lacks nothing and cultivate contentment.

Outcomes

There's a troubling disproportion, I realize, between the problems we face and the sort of response I'm advocating, which many readers may consider tantamount to fiddling while Rome burns. I'd be deluding myself terribly if I imagined that radical steps of this nature would translate swiftly and surely into improvements in the lives of campesinos, sweatshop workers, child prostitutes, victims of genocide and torture—or protect the porcupine caribou herd, a not-yet-identified beetle in the Indonesian rain forest, and the world's melting glaciers. Yet I feel more confident in this type of response than I do in conventional alternatives like writing a check or letter, volunteering for a candidate, holding a sign on the street corner, or occupying a building.

There's a time and place for such things; I just haven't found them satisfying or credible instruments for getting at the root of our problems. Besides perpetuating existing social machinery, they “outsource” the work of change to politicians, NGOs, scientists, journalists, bureaucrats, religious leaders, Somebody Else, and I fear they often give a conscience-salving illusion of having done something, sapping energy for

harder, more consequential steps we can take. Others must and will do their part, of course, but that doesn't lighten our responsibility or reduce the urgency of our situation. If the burden of responsibility feels staggeringly great and our means to respond seem vanishingly small, it may be helpful to recall Seung Sahn's axiom “A bad situation is a good situation.” From that vantage point, our times are replete with opportunities to do constructive work, and everyone has the capacity to do it.

What in particular any of us ought to do depends largely on personal callings, talents, training, and opportunity, which is to say local needs and resources—matters that you know better than I. There's one item I'd like to put on everyone's to-do list, though, both for its inherent worth and as a project exemplifying the approach I've outlined: building trust. It seems to me, and sociological research appears to bear out this impression, that trust has eroded throughout American society during the past

*Steering a Prius to Costco or Whole Foods
for a plastic sack of Earthbound greens is one
thing; walking to the garden to pick some greens
is quite another.*

50 years. When I was a boy, people manifested a breadth of trust that today would seem naïve—trust in the police, in doctors, in priests, in the food supply, in education, in the law, in science, in business, in Uncle Sam, in the kindness of strangers even. For liberals, the Supreme Court has been a last bastion of faith in government, but in recent years, that's fallen off as well. This nationwide loss of trust is a catastrophe of epic proportions, inconspicuously shredding the social fabric. It calls for emergency measures.

Like what? A great beauty of the process I've recommended is that you or I, or the two of us together, can launch a crash program to restore common trust without a single meeting, by-laws, a database, or fund-raising. The office is wherever we are, open all day every day, as we say what we mean and do what we've said. The goal is advanced with each honest exchange, each arrival as promised, each courtesy, each confidence kept, each mistake acknowledged and made right, each word of gratitude given for trust placed in us or for another's trustworthy conduct. The program uses, at no cost, the most powerful and up-to-date PR method—word-of-mouth advertising—and devotes all its promotions to trust itself, since the program never has to impress supporters by touting its own accomplishments. Taking everyone's side and manifest only in reliable words and

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Engagement Without a Road Map

A Response to Ken Knabb's "Evading the Transformation of Reality"

by Michael Veiluva

If religion is the opiate of the masses, then political utopianism is its crack cocaine.

After decades of involvement in antiwar, anti-nuclear, and environmental causes beginning in the 1970s, I did not come to Zen Buddhism to supply myself with any new political road map. My reasons are much simpler: I did it out of the need to clean out the cobwebs in my spiritual attic. The convergence of Buddhism and progressive action turned out to be a happy combination of "right action," but I get nervous when I see Buddhists criticized for not devoting themselves to "real change" by adhering to well-trodden utopian political faiths such as anarchism or situationism.

My use of the term "faith" here as applied to utopian politics is very intentional, since these philosophies insist that "real social change" can only come about through the massive restructuring of society in some ill-defined future, led by an intellectual "vanguard," to accomplish political "liberation." To me this talk has never jibed with the ruthless empiricism of Zen Buddhism which emphasizes daily *experience in the present*, as opposed to scholastic accumulation of written knowledge, belief in an afterlife, or homage to some external Supreme Being who, so I'm told, hates gays but loves tiny frozen embryos.

When I opened the Spring 2006 *Turning Wheel*, Ken Knabb's "Evading the Transformation of Reality" exploded like a grenade in my breakfast cup of tea. Truly the last thing I expected to see in BPF's journal was a good old-fashioned situationist attack on engaged Buddhism. As I read Knabb's articulate and pungent attacks, I felt pummeled, trampled, and left as roadkill. Say *non* to complacency! Forget those first nine ox-herding pictures beloved in Zen literature, the finding and disappearance of the bull. We should be leaping right into frame number 10, the enlightened monk returning to the world, except instead of extending alms-giving hands, he's kick-

ing capitalist butt and liberating the multitude. Yeah, baby! Right now!

This indeed sounds like good fun. But Knabb's dismissal of most progressive causes is remarkably puritanical and joyless, since he argues that unless we possess the correct political perspective, *good works* alone will not get you admitted into the ranks of the vanguard. In the situationist universe, active work on healthcare, AIDS, farmworker rights, antimilitarism, antiwarfare, or racial equality is mere "social service" that buys into the illusion of political "spectacle." Situationists instead demand that our proper focus should be upon struggles for real "social change." To what *real* end?

Utopian political philosophies like situationism and much of anarchism pass themselves off as sciences of definitions—what is *real*, what is *spectacle*, what is *change*. But pinning down any "correct" definition of a political term is much like quantum physics, since the very act of definition leads to uncertainty and conflict. I honor anyone who can be so well versed and self-assured, but do we really want to substitute intellectual scholasticism for social service? If that is what being an "engaged Buddhist" means, I'm back to being a pagan.

So after the radioactive fallout cleared from my breakfast table, I puzzled over just what thread of *Turning Wheel's* editorial policy was furthered by Knabb's polemic. As the author himself notes, the article (and its longer version on Knabb's website) is apparently part of a continuing decade-long dialogue between him and BPF. But in the universe of possible critiques, was "Evading the Transformation of Reality" really fair? Does it further the vital empowerment of engaged practicing Buddhists? Or (as one of my friends observed) was it an exercise in flipping over other people's go boards, black and white stones flying everywhere, simply to shout, "See? The other side is blank!"



Wood carvings by Zoshi Takayuki. See pages 58 and 59 for more.

I respect Ken Knabb, a preeminent situationist scholar of awesome intellect and a well-known translator of Debord. He certainly brings many valid analytical points to the table. He is right to say that modern politics is mostly *spectacle*, and that the essence of political economy is to misleadingly persuade us that the appearances and images generated by the media, government, and big business are as *real* as the plants growing in my garden. Knabb correctly emphasizes the need to draw connections between “good works” and more intrinsic and organic social causes and effects. To take one example, nuclear weapons are not simply a wrong in and of themselves; they are also a product of a thoroughly militarized, messianic, and materialistic society that diverts scarce resources from education, health care, and other desperate social needs. We cannot be complacent that our single-issue work by itself is enough, but to be fair, I have met few progressives who are either complacent or deny that such linkages between social issues exist.

But in the final tally, situationists and many other left scholastics too often relentlessly substitute negative critique for constructive action, which devalues people’s social work in the *here and now*. I particularly take issue with the idea that an intellectual vanguard (*Pick me! Me!*) must ultimately lead the multitude to some ill-defined utopia, not unlike St. Augustine’s vision of a perfect, otherworldly “city on a hill.” Put into misguided practice, secular and ecclesiastical dogmas premised upon imagined perfect political or spiritual afterlives operate to deny present reality and wallow in endless dualities. Such temptations engender wars between Catholics and Protestants, Sunnis and Shiites, the smaller battles between communists and anarchists in the streets of Kronstadt and Madrid, and the *petit* verbal squabbles between situationists and other left intellectuals.

Why should Buddhists worry about clutching at these icons? If religion is the opiate of the masses, political utopianism is its crack cocaine. Anarchism and Marxism certainly provide useful tools for academic historical or economic analysis (especially in the critique of global capitalism) but in action the “liberated multitude” is a wishful illusion writ large.

Progressives address the problems at hand and their interconnectedness. They are too busy washing dishes or emptying the garbage to worry about socialist epistemology. Equal rights, access to health care, and living wages now are *real* concerns. No war and the end to nuclear weapons now are *real* concerns. A clean environment and the preservation of species now are also *real* concerns. And the self-evident connections between these concerns are *real* as well. My volumes of Kropotkin, Deleuze, Gramsci, and Negri, as exhilarating and weighty as they are, will by themselves not get us

out of Iraq, liberate Tibet, stop the deforestation of old-growth forests, or end the occupation of the West Bank.

Ken Knabb posits that engaged Buddhism is somehow at an impasse. In relation to what? The concept of an “impasse” presumes a state of immobility, of being stuck somewhere. It certainly might appear that way, since given the overwhelming resources and power favoring the status quo, any progressive engagement involves hard, incremental work. Having collective “maps and visions” can be good, but I posit that the heart of progressive work is the joy of finding the road and stepping onto it. What is “valuable” is what we *do* with mindfulness of the relationship between issues and root causes, and respect for what each of us is *doing*. If this is so, why should we care if the person *doing* hasn’t read a stitch of Foucault or Debord? How absurd! ❖

Michael Veiluva is counsel to nonprofit foundations including San Francisco’s Agape Foundation and the Western States Legal Foundation, an antinuclear organization and a member of the coalition United for Peace and Justice. He recently spoke on the environmental effects of war at the most recent Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon. (The views expressed here are not intended as the views of the above organizations).

The Radical Way, continued from page 39

actions, it arouses no opposition and, in any case, since it operates leaderlessly in full public view, is impossible to infiltrate or suppress.

Forgive me if this example seems facetious. It’s a both lighthearted and earnest exposition of the radical way of addressing a grave, large-scale social problem, a way that goes straight to its root. How else can trust be regenerated? With congressionally mandated trust-training for federal workers? Through an inter-religious initiative? By convincing Hollywood screenwriters to inject trust themes into their scripts? All fine ideas, perhaps, but difficult, costly, slow to implement, and sure to reinforce the status quo in process. I concede that the radical approach is best suited to problems of a nonstructural nature, like erosion of trust, and that it’s harder to imagine that it could help resolve problems involving huge structural forces, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or global warming. Yet imagine it I do. How about you? ❖

Nelson Foster tried his hand at activism by cofounding BPF and the Pacific Campaign for Disarmament and Security and by working for a decade as a staff member and volunteer with the Quaker-based American Friends Service Committee. A dharma heir of Aitken Roshi, he stepped down this year from leadership of the Honolulu Diamond Sangha and now teaches mainly at Ring of Bone Zendo in the Sierra Nevada.

My volumes of Kropotkin, Deleuze, Gramsci, and Negri, as exhilarating and weighty as they are, will by themselves not get us out of Iraq, liberate Tibet, stop the deforestation of old-growth forests, or end the occupation of the West Bank.

Two Poems by Ko Un

EARLY MORNING

Ah, my enemy!
Not darkness
but the sun.

The sun makes it impossible
for us to exchange quiet
chin-on-hand glances.
So after foam-like splendor,
brightness
is far from truth.

Ah, my enemy:
my awakening!

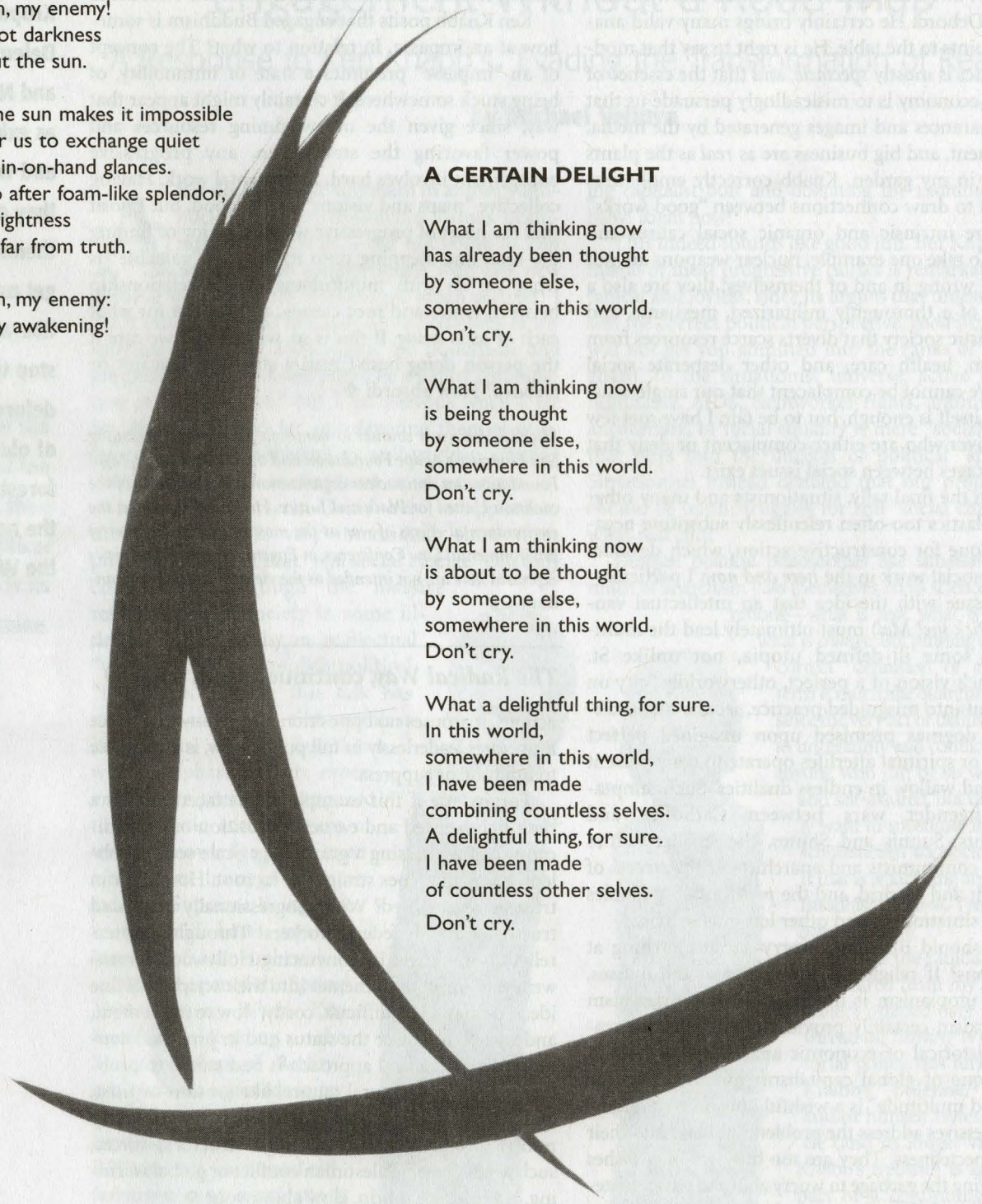
A CERTAIN DELIGHT

What I am thinking now
has already been thought
by someone else,
somewhere in this world.
Don't cry.

What I am thinking now
is being thought
by someone else,
somewhere in this world.
Don't cry.

What I am thinking now
is about to be thought
by someone else,
somewhere in this world.
Don't cry.

What a delightful thing, for sure.
In this world,
somewhere in this world,
I have been made
combining countless selves.
A delightful thing, for sure.
I have been made
of countless other selves.
Don't cry.



Ko Un

Former Buddhist monk Ko Un is the
author of 135 books.

What Would Buddha Do?

by David Loy

Maybe every generation feels confronted by some crisis that will determine the fate of the planet. But unless your head is buried in the sand, or some Buddhist equivalent, it's not possible to be ignorant of the extraordinary planetary crisis that confronts all of us today. Environmental collapse no longer merely threatens: we are well into it, and it's already apparent that civilization as we know it is going to be transformed in some very uncomfortable ways by the mutually reinforcing breakdown of ecological systems—global climate change, ozone depletion, rapid disappearance of species, and various types of pollution, including some we don't know about yet.

Although our globalizing economic system is a wholly owned subsidiary of the biosphere, the CEOs who direct this system (as much as anyone controls it) can't plan much further than the next quarterly report, any more than politicians can think further than the next election. Overpopulation, pandemics, and the increasing deprivation of basic necessities for vast numbers of people threaten social breakdown, while the media—profit-making enterprises whose primary focus is the bottom line, rather than discovering and revealing the truth—distract us with infotainment and assurances that the solution is “more of the same”: keep the faith, hang in there long enough, and eventually technological development and economic growth, more consumerism and greater GNP, will resolve our problems.

As if that were not enough, our ignorant, corrupt, and arrogant leaders—or rather, rulers—have shown themselves to be inept at everything except lying and gaining power. Now that their deceit and incompetence are coming back to haunt them, their popularity has been plummeting—but at the same time they have been consolidating their power. The faces will change, while the power structure remains much the same, unless we find ways to do something about it.

One of the most important tools for maintaining their power is fear, which requires replacing the Cold War with a never-ending “war on terror” that means never-ending profits for a military-industrial complex that fattens on war and would collapse without it. Intentionally or not, the war on terror has been prosecuted in a way guaranteed to produce a dozen more despairing people who hate the U.S. for every “terrorist” we kill. Our aggressive efforts to suppress terrorism ensure that it will continue. As Peter Ustinov put

it, terrorism is the war of the poor; war is the terrorism of the rich. The violence of small terrorist groups such as al Qaeda is, in the final analysis, trivial compared to the “state terrorism” (including sanctioned torture) that we feel justified in unleashing on anyone else who scares us or challenges our “national interests.”

I do not offer the above reflections as political opinion (“C’mon, we must hear the other side too!”) but as fact. It is the critical situation we find ourselves in today, and Buddhists, like everyone else, need to face up to it quickly. To be quite blunt, if you are not at least dimly aware of these urgent problems, then you are living in some very strange bubble devoid of news (perhaps in the late stages of a 20-year retreat in some Himalayan cave?), or there is a deficiency in your spiritual practice. Either you are not paying attention, or something is wrong with your ability to see.

There is a special place in hell—the Buddhist hells as well as the Christian one—reserved for those who refuse to give up the self-centered indifference that allows them to rest indefinitely on their cushions while the rest of the world goes to pieces. Buddhism encourages mindfulness and awareness, and especially today it's necessary for that awareness to extend beyond our sitting cushions and dharma practice halls, to embrace a broader understanding of what is happening in our world, to our world—a world that cries out in pain. Like Kwan Yin, we need to be able to hear that pain.

Sometimes we think that meditation practice means “just seeing, just hearing, just feeling is *good* and concepts are *bad*.” There are times and places when we need to focus on immediate sensory and mental phenomena, yet such practices are by themselves incomplete, like a Buddhist awakening that liberates us without also motivating us to address the liberation of everyone. Otherwise we may end up like frogs at the bottom of a deep well, oblivious to the wider world that exists outside. If your Buddhist practice makes you allergic to all concepts and abstractions, then you'd better be prepared to visit the South Pole, to experience directly your own ozone-hole sunburn and the arctic tundra, to wallow personally in the melting permafrost mud, and to witness the slums of Bogota and Rio de Janeiro, to see for yourself how families try to survive there, and in Baghdad, to learn for yourself what “bringing democracy to the Middle East” means on the ground and a lot of other places as well, in order to become aware of what is happening in the world right now.

Those of us who do not have the time, money, or energy for such travel need to develop wider awareness in other ways, ways which do not rely on junk media or the Bush spin machine. We must employ our critical faculties to understand the enormous challenges facing the world we live in. *Concepts and generalizations are not bad in themselves.* Rejecting them is like blaming the victim, for the problem is the way we misuse them.

Believing that “mindfulness means attentiveness only to my immediate surroundings” and placing such

from others’. We awaken from our own self-suffering to discover ourselves in a world full of suffering. To awaken is to realize that I am not other than that world.

But it’s all empty, right? Yes and no. To focus solely on the emptiness aspect is to dualize again and misunderstand the essential teaching of Mahayana. Form is emptiness, but emptiness is also form. Phenomena have no essence, yet our formless essential nature manifests in one form or another; without manifestations it remains nothing, amounts to nothing, has no meaning. Not to cherish the intricate web of life that

Our aggressive efforts to suppress terrorism ensure that it will continue. As Peter Ustinov put it, “terrorism is the war of the poor; war is the terrorism of the rich.”

limits on our awareness is really another version of the basic problem, which is our sense of separation from each other and from the world we are in. *Anatta*, non-self, means that it is delusive to distinguish “my own best interest” from what is in the best interest of everyone. The world is not that kind of zero-sum game. That is why karma works the way it does.

There are two other common Buddhist responses to this argument, which try to justify focusing solely on one’s own practice and enlightenment. “I must tend to my own liberation before I can be of service to others; and from the highest point of view there are no sentient beings—everything is empty—so we needn’t worry about their fate, or that of the biosphere.” Neither of these answers will do, however, because in different ways they are both dualistic half-truths at best.

To begin with, we can’t wait until we have overcome all our own suffering before addressing others’ suffering, because the world is speeding up, and events are not going to wait for you and me to attain great enlightenment. Since the degrees of enlightenment are infinite (even the Buddha is only halfway there, according to a Zen saying), we need to contribute whatever we can here and now. More precisely, we need to do what we can according to where we are in our practice right now.

Furthermore, that objection misunderstands how spiritual practice works. We don’t wait until we overcome our self-centeredness before engaging with the world; addressing the suffering of the wider world is *how* we overcome our self-centeredness. Contrary to a common way of understanding the bodhisattva path, bodhisattvas don’t defer their own perfect enlightenment in order to help others; helping others is how they perfect their enlightenment, because they know that their own liberation ultimately cannot be distinguished

the earth has miraculously spun—including us, deluded as we are—is to denigrate the wondrous activity of the essential nature that we share with all other beings. Enlightenment is not about attaining some higher reality or transcendental dimension, it is about realizing our essential oneness with the world, which is the same as realizing the emptiness of our self-being, and acting accordingly. Without a healthy biosphere, the possible forms available to emptiness are much diminished. Without healthy societies, the possibilities for fulfilling human activity, including following the path to enlightenment, are damaged.

What would the Buddha do? How would he respond to our situation?

I sometimes wonder what he would think about Buddhism today. The Buddha never taught Buddhism; we can even say that he was not a Buddhist, just as Jesus was never a Christian. Shakyamuni taught “the dhamma.” Buddhism isn’t what the Buddha taught, it’s what the Buddha began. Buddhism as we know it is how the dhamma and sangha developed over the centuries, in many different places and cultures. Would he be pleased with what his efforts begat?

His teachings emphasize impermanence and insubstantiality. He wouldn’t be surprised by the history of constant change, or by the extraordinary adaptability that Buddhism has demonstrated wherever it has spread. He wouldn’t expect us to simply follow and repeat his ways of teaching, nor to cling to the rules that evolved for regulating the sangha in his day. Surely he would not want us to remain unaware of the challenges that face us collectively, nor would he expect his followers to ignore them. In his time the sangha could largely ignore political struggles and social conflict by retreating back into the forest; today there is nowhere on Earth to hide that is not under

some threat. The traditional duality between lay and ordained does not apply in this situation. Our fates cannot be distinguished.

What would the Buddha do? Is the answer that we can't know, because he's not here? If the Buddha doesn't live in us and as us, he is indeed dead. If we are unable to answer that question for ourselves, Buddhism is dead. Or might as well be. The challenge is for you and me to apply the most important Buddhist teachings to our present situation. If those teachings do not work for understanding and addressing the global crises we face today, so much the worse for those teachings; maybe it's time to get rid of them.

But I do not think that is what is called for. The most distinctive Buddhist teaching is also the one that gives us the most insight into the collective crises confronting us: the relationship between *dukkha* and *anatta*, between suffering (in the broadest sense) and the delusive sense of self. A sense of self is inevitably uncomfortable since, being a psychological construct, it is groundless, and the usual ways it tries to ground itself to feel more "real" just make things worse. This essential truth about the individual self is just as revealing about "collective selves," which also try to secure themselves by promoting their own group self-interest at the price of those outside. This gets to the heart of why sexism, racism, nationalism, militarism, and species-ism (the alienation between human beings and the rest of the biosphere) are self-defeating: if a sense of separation is the problem, embracing our interdependence must be at the heart of any solution. Our rulers are failing so miserably because their policies embody and reinforce the delusion of separation, which is why they keep aggravating the world's *dukkha* rather than alleviating it.

Such interdependence is not merely a realization to be cultivated on our cushions. A suffering world calls upon us to realize interdependence—to make it real—in the ways we actually live. This includes finding ways to confront institutionalized greed (our present economic system), institutionalized ill will (our militarism and punitive justice systems), and institutionalized delusion (the propaganda and advertising systems maintained by the media). It will not be easy to work out the best ways to challenge and transform these institutionalized evils. (A few possibilities: revising corporate charters to make them more accountable; helping to educate and organize military recruits; challenging corporate domination of the media.) If we Buddhists do not want to do this or cannot find ways to do this, however, then Buddhism is not the spiritual path that the world needs today. ❖

David Loy has been a Zen student for many years. He teaches philosophy and religion at Bunkyo University in Japan. His most recent book is *The Dharma of Dragons and Daemons: Buddhist Themes in Modern Fantasy*.

Two Poems by Ko Un



ko un

Go to Somalia
and look at your capitalism
look at your socialism
Look in eyes of starving children

The sleeping face
under the prison cell's 60-watt bulb
were all children who had once been in my womb

Brief poems and brush drawings by Ko Un are forthcoming in *Flowers of a Moment* (BOA Editions Ltd) and *Songs for Tomorrow* (Green Integer). All poems translated from Korean by Brother Anthony of Taizé, Young-moo Kim, and Gary Gach.

Palestine/Israel

Ferrying Everyone Across to the Shore of Liberation

by Annette Herskovits

[This article was completed before the Israel/Hezbollah conflict began in July '06.]

Since the beginning of this year, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have attacked the Gaza Strip, a narrow corridor five miles wide and 25 miles long, between Israel and the sea, from every possible direction: with artillery from land, sea, and air (some 8,500 shells—about 50 a day—through June, punctuated by 150 missile attacks). The roar of Israeli jets and attack helicopters fills the sky. Jets breaking the sound barrier release sonic booms to keep people awake at night.

According to the Israeli government, these attacks are to prevent Palestinian factions in Gaza from firing rockets into Israel. These rudimentary Qassam rockets mostly fall on open fields, but they have caused 10 Israelis deaths in the last two years. Israel has the right to try and stop them. But the brutal Israeli response hits 1.4 million Gazans, almost half of them under 15. That is collective punishment, a war crime.

Israeli journalist Gideon Levy writes from Gaza, "Thunder after thunder... the children scream in fear." Levy describes a five-year-old child he saw in a house hit by a shell: "Little Meisa walks around barefoot among the ruins...stepping on a carpet of glass splinters. Her grey face expresses shock.... It is impossible to get even a trace of a smile from her."

In the fall of 1943, when I was four, I lived with my brother, then 17, in a hotel room in Paris. Four months earlier, our parents had been deported to Auschwitz. The Nazis were rounding up Jewish children, but my sister, brother, and I had escaped arrest, as our parents had removed us to shelters in the countryside some months earlier. I have no memories of those four months between my father's last visit to us in the countryside and my return to Paris in the fall.

The hotel was near a train station often targeted by Allied bombers, because German war materiel passed through there. My brother worked at night and spent part of his days looking through the city for food, friends, and news, so I was sometimes alone in the room during an air raid. I can remember the howling of sirens and the explosions. My brother did not believe in going to a shelter. "Better to die quickly," he said.

A bomb fell on the building next to the hotel—I remember walking past the rubble, holding my brother's hand. It was quiet then, but I had overheard my

brother say that people trapped below the debris had screamed for days. I cannot recall what I felt looking at the ruins, but I do know these events are deeply etched into my body and mind.

Now, 63 years later, the state of Israel is using its military power to terrorize children in ways that will be deeply etched into their bodies and minds as well. There is a double irony in this. First, Israel was founded as a haven for persecuted Jews, and the violence to Palestinian children is done in the name of forever sparing Jewish children the kind of harm that befell me. Thus Israeli policies place a much higher value on the lives of Jewish children than on those of Palestinian children. Second, the policies are based on a premise that has proved wrong over and over again: that violence and oppression of a people can bring peace and security to the oppressors.

Pitiless Force

French philosopher Simone Weil, herself born into a Jewish family, wrote in 1940, as the Nazi troops were victoriously overrunning Europe: "Force is as pitiless to the man who possesses it, or thinks he does, as it is to its victims; the second it crushes, the first it intoxicates." In the same essay, "The Iliad or the Poem of Force," Weil writes, "The victor of the moment feels himself invincible...he forgets to treat victory as a transitory thing." The victors of the moment are not content with winning the victory they sought—"What they want is, in fact, everything."

Israel's intoxication with military success started with their stunning victory over Arab armies in the 1967 Six-Day War, in which they conquered the West Bank from Jordan, Gaza and the Sinai from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria. From then on, Israel chose to hold onto conquered territory, in contravention of international law, rather than offer it in exchange for peace with its Arab neighbors. For many Israelis, religious or not, security was not enough. They felt that all the territory now held by Israel belonged to the Jews—whether as a gift of God or of History. Only a very few in academia and the press saw the danger ahead—that Israel would have to control and dominate 1.3 million Arabs who lived there, and that this would eventually shackle the Israelis themselves.

Israeli confidence was shaken by the 1973 Yom Kippur War, in which Syria and Egypt attacked Israel,

My brother did not believe in going to a shelter. "Better to die quickly," he said.

and Israel's final victory came only after hard combat. In 1979, U.S. President Jimmy Carter steered Egypt and Israel into signing a peace treaty that gave the Sinai back to Egypt in return for Egypt's recognition of Israel's right to exist.

However, the belief in Israel's right to the rest of the land conquered in 1967 remained strong. Prime Minister Menachem Begin expressed it most forcefully after signing the treaty with Egypt: "I have stated and reiterated that we have an absolute right to settle in all parts of Eretz Israel [the biblical land of Israel, said to have included Gaza and the West Bank], as this is our land." Jewish settlers moved into the West Bank by the thousands, in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

There are now close to half a million Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Every Israeli government since 1967, no matter which party, has promoted settlement—taking land from Palestinian owners under various pretexts and making it available to settlers, and providing infrastructure, subsidies, and military protection for the settlers.

In East Jerusalem, Israel has used various subterfuges to reduce the Arab population and increase the number of Jews. For instance, the Jerusalem municipality systematically refuses to issue building permits to Palestinians but approves all requests from Jews.

Israel now has the fourth largest military force in the world, in large part because the United States gives more military aid to Israel than to any other country—a total of \$2.22 billion in 2005. According to the conditions of the aid, Israel must spend most of this money to buy military equipment from U.S. defense firms, in a noxious symbiosis. So Israel, with its population of 6.6 million, has 200 nuclear warheads, 15,000 tanks and other armored vehicles, three submarines, 600 jet fighters, 100 attack helicopters, ballistic and cruise missiles, and sophisticated computer systems—much more armament than any of the neighboring Arab states, and probably more than all of them put together.

Israel may feel threatened by its Arab neighbors, but its defense forces have been used against essentially unarmed civilians to encroach upon Palestinian land year after year, to demolish houses, to destroy orchards, agricultural land, and wells, to restrict freedom of movement through checkpoints, closures, and curfews, and, recently, to build a wall that completely surrounds some towns and often separates villagers from their land. Palestinians are now deprived of most features of a normal life: political and civil rights, economic activity, and free access to schools, health care, work, friends, and family.

True, none of this legitimizes the attacks on civil-

ians and suicide bombings committed by a small minority of Palestinians. Besides being war crimes according to international law, these acts have again and again been used by Israeli governments to sow fear among Israelis and to gain acquiescence for their increasingly brutal policies.

Some Who Stopped

What can break this spiral? In fact, other voices are increasingly being heard in Israel and Palestine.

Chen Allon, a major in the IDF, is a founder of Combatants for Peace, an organization that brings together former Jewish and Palestinian fighters. At the group's first meeting in a Palestinian town, Allon spoke of serving in the Occupied Territories: "I feel emotional now...because I have never spoken about it in front of Palestinians until today.... In 1987–1988, when I began chasing Palestinians...throwing stones at us in the refugee camps, I was told, and also told my soldiers, that we were protecting the State of Israel.

"In 2001, I demolished a house not far from here.... Later the same day, we initiated a curfew over the village of Husan," effectively turning it into a prison. "I could see Arab girls as I was speaking to my wife on the telephone.... It hit me profoundly that these girls are no different than my own daughter.

"It was then I decided I will no longer take part in this situation, no matter what price I have to pay."

Suliman al-Chatib, a Palestinian member of Combatants for Peace, fought the occupation from the age of 12 by throwing stones and preparing Molotov cocktails. "At 14, I stabbed Israeli soldiers, with a friend." Al-Chatib was sentenced to 15 years in jail. "For the first two years, I was in the children's section in the Hebron jail.... Settlers from Kiryat Arba [a West Bank Jewish settlement known for its zealotry] ...on the jail staff enhanced the suffering.... For example, often there was a lack of drinking water.... Hitting prisoners, spraying tear gas into prison cells, and stripping prisoners were daily occurrences."

Later, he was transferred to another jail, where he worked in the library and read widely, "also about the history of the Jewish people. This is when I started having new thoughts about the conflict." When freed in 1997, he established the Abu Sukar Center for Peace with other Palestinians.

Voices echoing Allon's and al-Chatib's are multiplying. Refusers—Israeli soldiers and reservists who refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories—now number 1,666. In 2002, they published a letter explaining their position: "We shall not continue to fight beyond the [pre-]1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people."

And many Palestinians have become committed to nonviolent ways of resisting. In particular, Palestinian

The Fourth Geneva Convention states: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

farmers whose land is being confiscated by Israel to build the Wall have engaged in nonviolent demonstrations, with Israeli activists joining in significant numbers. Israeli writer Tanya Reinhart says, "Along this route the story of the other Israel-Palestine is being born."

Peace or War Without End

As ex-president Jimmy Carter said: "The preeminent obstacle to peace is Israel's colonization of Palestine"—not terrorism and not Arab refusal to accept the existence of Israel. There is a consensus in the international community about the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The main obstacles to its implementation are Israel's expansionism and U.S. complicity. These facts are hidden in the fog generated by the U.S. press and successive administrations.

The solution involves a two-state settlement; Israel's withdrawal from all lands occupied in 1967; and the creation of a Palestinian state that includes Gaza, the West Bank, and, as its capital, East Jerusalem.

In 2002, the Arab League assembled in Beirut and adopted a peace plan with these very provisions, guaranteeing Israel's security if it withdraws from all territories occupied in 1967.

The Beirut plan also calls for just treatment of Palestinian refugees. According to international law, refugees have the right to return to their homes after a conflict. About 750,000 Palestinian Arabs fled their land in the 1948–1949 war that followed the founding of Israel. About 4.6 million Palestinians—survivors and their descendants—still live in refugee camps in neighboring Arab countries and the West Bank. While Israel must acknowledge this right of return, all Palestinian leaders say they are flexible about the actual number who would return to Israel itself.

More than 83 percent of Palestinians support the Arab League plan, even though it assigns less than a fourth of historic Palestine to their state. They accept that the past will not return and cannot be recovered by violence.

In sharp contrast, current Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's "convergence plan" seems to be a prescription for lasting war. When he spoke to the U.S. Congress in May, Olmert said, "Our deepest wish is to build a better future for our region, hand in hand with a Palestinian partner." But in truth, the plan would complete the dispossession of Palestinians and leave them in barren and disconnected enclaves, with Israel controlling borders, skies, and all resources—making economic and community life impossible.

Olmert's plan does involve evacuating Jewish settlements scattered beyond the Wall, but Israel would annex "greater" Jerusalem and all the West Bank's best agricultural land and water resources, and would control a wide security zone along the Jordan River.

Olmert is among those who believe Israel has an inalienable right to all of Palestine but who also realize that Israel cannot annex all the Occupied Territories without becoming an Arab-majority state, as the Palestinians' birth rate is much higher than the Israelis'. Most Israelis fear this "demographic time bomb."

Olmert proposes to impose his plan "unilaterally"—that is, without negotiations with Palestinians—claiming Israel "does not have a partner for peace," although time and again Palestinian leaders have asked for talks with Israel and have been refused.

Dangerous Times

Last summer, then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon evacuated Israeli soldiers and settlers from Gaza, claiming this was a first step toward ending the occupation (though in fact he was promoting the growth of settlements in the West Bank at the same time).

Although pleased at first that they could travel across Gaza without waiting hours at checkpoints, Palestinians soon realized that they were essentially living in a large prison. With no airport or seaport, goods and people could only move into and out of Gaza through crossings controlled by Israel. Israel opens the gates when it pleases.

In January, Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian parliament. Hamas is responsible for attacks against Israeli civilians that have cost hundreds of lives. Its charter calls for "armed struggle" and for establishing an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine and refuses to recognize the existence of Israel.

But most Palestinians did not vote for Hamas because they approve of its program. Rather, they wanted to remove Fatah, long in charge of the Palestinian Authority, which they see as corrupt, a bad manager, and so weak in negotiating with Israel that the chances for a two-state solution have been all but destroyed. In addition, Hamas runs a broad network of desperately needed social programs—schools, clinics, orphanages, etc.

Hamas is not a monolithic group of fanatics; its political wing is flexible and realistic. Some of its leaders have said repeatedly that they are ready to recognize Israel but not without reciprocity; Israel must on its part commit to withdrawing from the Occupied Territories, stop its violence against Palestinian civilians, and free Palestinian political prisoners (numbering around 9,000, many held without charges).

Moreover, it is with enemies that one needs to negotiate, not with friends. Many former "terrorist" groups have eventually joined legal governments, including the Jewish Irgun and Stern Gang, responsible for many civilian killings before Israel's creation.

Israel refuses to talk with Hamas, has been shelling Gaza continuously, and is strangling its economy. The

More than 83 percent of Palestinians support the Arab League plan, even though it assigns less than a fourth of historic Palestine to their state.

U.S. and European Union have cut aid to the Palestinian Authority in an attempt to bring down Hamas—further impoverishing the people of the West Bank and Gaza, including 1.6 million children under 15. They also called on Hamas to recognize Israel's right to exist, forswear violence, and accept previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements. Reasonable enough, but no parallel demands are made of Israel: to stop its violence against Palestinian civilians and commit to the creation of a viable Palestinian state.

As I write this, in the summer of 2006, the IDF has invaded Gaza in force, destroying waterworks and power supplies, as it seeks the release of one Israeli soldier and an end to the firing of Qassam rockets. The Palestinian factions who captured the soldier are calling for the release of women and children held in Israeli jails. Hamas' military wing participated in the capture, some say without the knowledge or consent of the political wing.

The liberal Israeli daily *Haaretz* titled an editorial "The government is losing its reason," calling its actions those "of a gang, not of a state."

Traumas

While some Israelis, especially in the government and military, have become intoxicated with power, many ordinary Israelis are just afraid, and are swayed by fear-mongers like this *Jerusalem Post* writer: "Israel is openly threatened with annihilation—not just physically, by a potential Iranian nuclear capability, but demographically, by Palestinian claims of a right of return."

For Israeli Jews, annihilation is not an abstraction. Jews live with the knowledge that a nation and maybe the entire world willed them all dead. There is something staggering about that, something many perceive as an attack on life itself.

This came to me forcefully when my brother's daughter gave birth to a son. I visited her in the hospital, and to my surprise, at the sight of the newborn boy, sobs welled up in my chest, their meaning perfectly clear: life had gone on after all, my mother and father had a descendant, even though the Nazis had killed them and had wished to extinguish their children and their children's children.

It is not surprising that many Jews have felt cut off from the rest of humanity, a people apart. There have been genocides in other times and places, but arguments about whether the Holocaust was the most barbaric, or about whether colonialism or slavery were "worse," are a waste of time. The horror of each must be acknowledged and we must focus our energy on ending every form of violent subjection and bloodshed.

The Palestinians too have suffered deep trauma—a massive expulsion in 1948–1949, which they call the *Naqba*, or catastrophe, remembered in particular by two atrocities: the massacre of 115 men, women, and

children in Deir Yassin by Jewish militia; and the "Death March," when about 40,000 Palestinians were forced out of the towns of Ramla and Lydda and marched toward the hills in the direction of Ramallah 20 miles away, in the heat of July. Many died as water ran out, especially the old and the children. During that war, Jewish armies razed 400 Palestinian villages to the ground to prevent people from coming back to their homes.

In 1967 again, some 200,000 to 300,000 Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes. The occupation that followed is now in its 40th year.

But rather than dwelling on trauma and sowing more seeds of hatred, we must all strive to imagine how we can rescue the future.

Hope

Suheir is 15 and came from Gaza to the U.S. recently to stay with her cousin. Suheir, who gets nervous every time a plane flies overhead, did not believe any Jews felt compassion for Palestinians; her cousin arranged for her to meet me. Suheir asked:

"You were in hiding: the Nazis were looking for you to kill you?"

"Yes," I said, but, I explained, "hiding" did not mean I was in a hole or cellar, although that did happen to some children. I lived in the open under a false identity and I was moved from place to place for protection—to foster homes and orphanages.

"And what happened to your parents?"

"They were killed," I said. She looked at me with her full attention, eyes wide open, trying to grasp the full meaning of what I said, to integrate it into a new understanding of history and her picture of me, a Jew. A deep current of love passed between us.

We must have faith in the multiplication of such moments of deep connection. Dr. Eyad El Sarraj, a psychiatrist and the founder and director of Gaza Community Mental Health Program, tells of another such moment. He was driving with a friend to a Gaza border crossing. An Israeli soldier in the concrete-fortified post called him over and asked, through the narrow opening, "Your friend says you are a psychiatrist. Can I ask you something?"

"Yes," replied Dr. El Sarraj warily.

"I have a problem, doctor. I live in a settlement in Hebron, and I want to leave."

Dr. El Sarraj replied after a moment's reflection: "I think it is best if you talk about your feelings with your mother and father. It will be best if you convince them of your decision. But I want to tell you something else, my friend.... By choosing to talk to me about yourself, you made me feel proud of humanity and sure of its future."

The soldier stretched his arm through the hole to shake the doctor's hand, saying, "I trust you." ❖

What You Can Do

These are difficult times. I remind myself:

Actions must come from a deep place in you, a place of selflessness, in touch with loving all life. When the fate of the earth is in question, we cannot afford to repair one injustice by creating another, to correct violence with violence.

Contempt and righteous indignation are signs that something is awry. Be attentive to your thoughts and feelings and rigorous in your intention to root out self-seeking. But be gentle to yourself. Do not dwell on faults—self-blame will suck out your energy. Be alert to what is right for you.

Your skills, your intelligence, your will for peace are not yours alone—they belong to everyone.

Manage your time wisely. As one of six billion conscious human particles on the planet, what is your own path?

Think long-term—like the 500-year peace plan that Dr A. T. Ariyaratne, founder of Sarvodaya (www.sarvodaya.org), imagines for Sri Lanka.

Remember to love your enemies.

* * * * *

- ◆ Support divestment from companies that profit by providing equipment used in Israel's violence against Palestinians. A number of faith- and school-based groups have chosen this path, for instance, the Presbyterian Church—USA (TW Summer 2005). Many groups participate in the Caterpillar Campaign (www.catdestroyshomes.org).
 - ◆ Support boycotts of Israeli products and of Israeli groups that support Israel's violent policies. Google can help you find current boycotts.
 - ◆ Support suspension of military aid: urge your congresspeople to cut military aid to Israel as it violates the U.S. Arms Export Control and Foreign Assistance Acts, which state explicitly: "No assistance may be provided to any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."
 - ◆ Learn the history of the conflict. A good, balanced text is Charles Smith's *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, published by Bedford/St-Martin. The website of Jewish Voice for Peace (www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org) has an excellent bibliography under Resources.
 - ◆ Read publications outside the U.S. mainstream. Three excellent websites offering articles from the international press are www.electronicintifada.net, www.palestinemonitor.org and www.bitterlemons.org.
 - ◆ Educate Congress about the true nature of the conflict—the terrible conditions in the Occupied Territories (which include Gaza as long as Israel controls its borders) and the massive injustices visited on Palestinians. Pressure your representatives to vote
- against proposed bills that harm the Palestinian people
- ◆ It has been said that AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) is so powerful because no opposing voices are heard in Congress. Help build up these voices. Join or create an organization whose mission is to educate Congress.
 - ◆ Join a local organization working for peace in Palestine/Israel, Jewish or not. There are such organizations in almost every state.
 - ◆ Support Israeli and U.S. Jewish organizations that oppose Israel's occupation, such as Jewish Voice for Peace, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom (www.btvshalom.org), and Gush Shalom (www.gush-shalom.org).
 - ◆ Travel to Israel as an international (e.g., with the International Solidarity Movement or the Christian Peace Teams) to join Palestinian villagers in their non-violent protests against the Wall or protect Palestinian children from attacks by Jewish settlers.
 - ◆ For the latest Action Alerts, see the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation (www.endtheoccupation.org), a coalition of organizations working for peace in the region.
 - ◆ Give money to humanitarian projects, e.g., Middle East Children's Alliance (www.mecaforpeace.org) or the Palestine Children's Welfare Fund (www.pcwfund.org). To learn about other organizations, consult "Palestinians and Israelis Building Peace Together," TW Winter 2005, posted on the BPF website.
 - ◆ Invite Palestinians and Israeli opponents of Israel's policies, such as refusers, to speak in your community.
 - ◆ Join an Arab-Jewish dialogue group in your area. Most groups will accept people committed to peace in the Middle East who are neither Arab nor Jewish.
 - ◆ Buy Palestinian products—olive oil, soap, embroidered dresses, and cushions, etc. (see TW Winter 2005).
- These are peaceful, legitimate means to put pressure on violent states, and they do not in any way manifest anti-Semitism. But it is important not to say "Jews" when you really mean "some Israelis," or "some Jews," or "the Israeli government." The pro-Israel lobby (AIPAC) claims to "speak for the Jewish community." This is not true. Many U.S. Jews are distressed by Israel's violence, and many work actively to stop it. Reassure hesitant Jews that your target is the injustice of the Israeli state, not the Jews. ❖

Annette Herskovits writes about politics and human rights for Turning Wheel.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

The Practice of Dhammic Socialism

by Santikaro

The term “dhammic socialism” was coined by Ajahn Buddhadasa in the late 1960s in response to the growing political polarization in Southeast Asia. Through the sixties, Thailand had been pulled into the geopolitical mess of which the Vietnam War was the major conflagration. As the sixties developed, growing violence between the Communist insurgency and the right-wing military backed by the U.S. resulted in the murders of thousands in Thailand. During this time, Buddhist monks were told not to speak about politics, a silencing compounded by decades of cultural conditioning that politics and other “worldly affairs” were none of their concern. This was the climate in which Ajahn Buddhadasa began talking about dhammic socialism.

Since the forties, when he had come to national prominence, he was one monk who did not fear to discuss politics. At first, he did so primarily in terms of democracy, which Thailand merely pretended to have. During the sixties he began to assert, openly and forthrightly, that Buddhism is basically socialist in nature. He was the first major figure in Thailand to do so (some Burmese leaders had used the term “Buddhist socialism”) and the first to approach the topic with the particular meaning he gave it—something he continued to do for the rest of his life.

His understanding of “socialism” was not a Marxist understanding. The Thai translation literally means “in favor of society” or “to be on the side of society.” In this sense, socialism means taking the side of society and can be contrasted with individualism. While individual responsibility is important in Buddhist ethics, “the individual” cannot ultimately be found and Buddhism was never meant to be individualist, though it may often look that way in the modern era. Rather, dhamma teachings naturally emphasize the collective good, though not at the expense of the individual (he didn’t go that far). Social well-being cannot be sacrificed to personal desires.

This notion of socialism arises from the core perspective that dhamma is nature and nature is dhamma—inseparably. Since everything is dhamma, there is nothing that is not dhamma. Dhamma also means “natural law,” which is the law of conditionality and interrelatedness. If you look at our world, and our place in the world, with these eyes, it’s not hard to see how nature operates more like a collective than

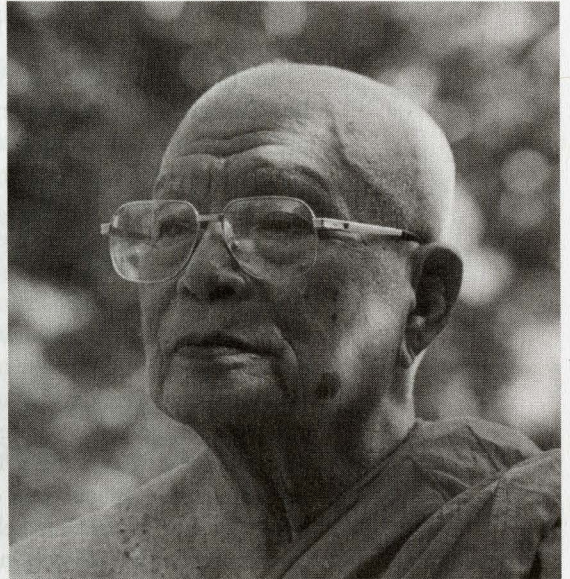
according to individualist competition. In an interconnected world, individual responsibility is emphasized over individual rights, and one is as responsible to the collective as to oneself.

The most prominent forms of socialism at that time—Marxism and Maoism—were materialist visions of socialism. Buddhism, however, is not a form of materialism, nor is it the kind of idealism that sees the world as an illusion. Reality is the interdependence of body and mind, group and individual, and so on. Therefore, Ajahn Buddhadasa insisted that a Buddhist socialism could never be a materialist socialism.

In addition, the primary historical forms of socialism have not abjured violence, and clearly a Buddhist socialism would be nonviolent. Ajahn Buddhadasa critiqued communism and Marxism, with their terminology of class war, as primarily motivated by revenge. He contrasted “bloodthirsty capitalism” with “vengeful Marxism,” and endeavored to create an alternative, middle-way understanding. Thus, he described a socialism that is primarily a moral system based in spirituality. This sort of socialism can only work if we curb egoism; it won’t work with the usual incentives—such as greed and fear—that are employed by non-dhammic systems.

In Practice

Ajahn Buddhadasa founded the monastery of Suan Mokkh in 1932. Under his influence it developed a character quite different from most Thai monasteries. At Suan Mokkh, he himself practiced the principles of dhammic socialism. Because nature and natural law are a part of dhammic socialism as he understood it, Suan Mokkh emphasizes intimacy with nature. He believed that to be able to understand the “socialist nature of nature” one must live close to



In the nine years I lived with him, he never told me what to do, even when I begged him to.

nature. Without such intimacy, we have only abstract notions about both dhamma and politics. Thus, he lived immersed in natural surroundings and developed a place for others to do the same.

Similarly, he guided Suan Mokkh as a cooperative enterprise. A market-oriented version of cooperatives was promoted in Thailand by German experts, while Marxists pushed a form subject to party control. Ajahn Buddhadasa had his own perspective on cooperatives. He pointed out that nature is a cooperative: In the forest, the plants, animals, bugs, and germs are all doing their part to sustain the forest. Those who live closely with nature observe this. He believed that human beings, too, can learn to live in a cooperative way with the natural environment.

In the administration of Suan Mokkh, Ajahn Buddhadasa's style was not one of "administering people." In certain ways he ran Suan Mokkh as if he were in charge, making the important decisions that he considered his responsibility. While he was a strong leader in that respect, he didn't run people. In the nine years I lived with him, he never told me what to do, even when I begged him to. He advised me to "find my duty" and take responsibility for my own life, actions, and practice. The work I did, such as translation, and the places I went to teach were decided upon by me. When someone took responsibility for certain work or an area of the monastery, he gave them full authority in what they were doing. If someone had difficulty working something out and wanted his help, he would discuss circumstances with that person, but he wasn't fond of assigning jobs. People chose the work they wanted to do and he advised them on how to go about it as dhamma practice. For such a place to work harmoniously, everyone must be motivated to do his or her part.

Most activities at Suan Mokkh were optional. There weren't many rules, and Ajahn Buddhadasa didn't monitor how much people meditated, what they read, or whether they came to chanting. On the other hand, he could be tough, which was in line with his view of nature. He didn't mince words or suffer fools. He worked hard all his life and didn't put up with self-centered people unwilling to work for the common good or self-important donors. One man who dug a large pond by hand, after starting to make demands, was told to fill the pond in. Nature can be tough; clinging results in suffering. Though he could be hard on people, Ajahn Buddhadasa also gave them a lot of freedom to make their own choices and mistakes and to learn from life itself.

Suan Mokkh always had an ecological vision. Ajahn Buddhadasa was among the first in Thailand to point out that the forests were dwindling quickly and that action needed to be taken to preserve them. His ecological vision was rooted both in Buddhism and in

his own childhood experience, where forests were part of everyday life, as were the rice fields and the sea.

His ecological concerns translated naturally into a preference for simplicity. At Suan Mokkh, most of the talks, ceremonies, and other activities were outdoors. Until the end of his life, construction was kept to a minimum and the food was simple. Dhammic socialism can only be effective if people were willing to live simply. As soon as affluence creeps in, certain people will have more material goods, will acquire more power, and thus will have more opportunities to exploit others.

During the period of violent competition between capitalism and communism, Suan Mokkh served as a middle ground for both left and right. Even in Thailand's military-dominated governments there were high-ranking people who were students of Ajahn Buddhadasa. The most prominent was Chaophaya Ladplee, the Minister of Justice for many years, who arranged for him to give dhamma training to a generation of judges. Ajahn Buddhadasa didn't turn anybody away, so soldiers, bureaucrats, and businessmen were all welcome at Suan Mokkh, as were Marxist insurgents, radical students, activists, and peasants. Moderate people from both sides sought him out. He had honest discussions with both sides and was one of the few religious figures with whom Thai leftists felt they could talk.

During the seventies several bloody massacres took place, spurred by growing anti-communist feeling and rhetoric. The violence finally shredded the illusion of a happy Thai society, as military oppression became increasingly brutal. Soldiers literally raped female students, including high school students, with bayonets and rifles. Dead students were hung from trees in the middle of campus, and their corpses were whipped and burned. The brutality created a huge wound in that generation that is still festering 30 years later.

In the midst of this military brutality against the perceived threat of communism, Ajahn Buddhadasa chose to talk about dhammic socialism, pointing out that Buddhism is more socialist than capitalist. In his view, capitalism is about making money—a system of greed more interested in personal profit than the common good. Although he at times spoke positively about democracy, he noted that it often plays out as a system of individual selfishness. As noted before, he was critical of the violent side of Marxism as well. Due to his integrity and authority as a monk and teacher, his perspective could not be ignored.

Allying Buddhism with a socialist understanding helped to protect people who were advocating nonviolent progressive change. We can't know how many lives were saved by this creation of neutral ground, but there were people in high places, including in the military, who were influenced by him. He surely had a role in the

shift by the military government of the early eighties to a “hearts and mind” approach and the eventual lessening of political violence.

The space Ajahn Buddhadasa helped create also allowed for the development of numerous NGOs. Some were originally started by underground Marxists, others by non-Marxists seeking a middle ground. Among these, Sulak Sivaraksa and his students were prominent. Sulak was strongly influenced by Ajahn Buddhadasa and continues to be a leader in the Thai social justice movement and engaged Buddhism internationally.

Ajahn Buddhadasa inspired many people working in education, the environment, and village development, among other things. It is no longer dangerous to speak out about social issues in Thailand, thanks to the fact that he was a pioneer at a time when people were killed for opposing the government. Because of his prestige, he was in little danger of being killed. Still, in the fifties the Thai supreme patriarch disliked him intensely and tried to have him arrested, creating trumped-up charges against him and accusing him of communism. The charges were dismissed, but the threat was clear.

Role of Education

When I asked him how dhammic socialism would come about, he recognized that it might take a long time. Nonetheless, the thousand-mile journey always begins with just this step. He thought that education—including state-sponsored schooling, Buddhist education, and creative alternatives—had a crucial role in fostering dhammic socialism. A prominent teacher himself, he had many teachers and educators among his followers. Central to his teaching was the truth that dhamma and society, spirituality and politics, cannot be separated, and that unselfish living is the sole way to harmonious living. ❖

Santikaro lives, practices, and teaches at Liberation Park, which is relocating to a small valley in western Wisconsin (www.liberationpark.org). He lived with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu during the last eight years of the teacher's life and is his primary translator.

The Neutrals' Wake-Up Call

I am the “let be” in between bygones and
bygones.
I am the battlefield
Iraqis and Americans die on.

Between the Batman and Joker
I am the Gotham.
I am the Fahrenheit 911
between Mr. Bush and Mr. Bin Laden.

Wake up, wake up, wake up.
Separate the lies from the truthful,
the vital, the unuseful,
and in all this I am the neutral.

I do not love Hate, nor hate Love,
I am not real nor made up,
blood, I am what arrives early
in the morning before the dump truck.

I am the neutral,
the call
to wake y'all up.

—Robin Black

From the WritersCorps anthology Solid Ground, containing writing by San Francisco youth and edited by Judith Tannenbaum.

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, reexamine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem.

—Walt Whitman

What the U.S. Can Do to Uproot Terrorism

by Thich Nhat Hanh

The following are concrete steps that could be taken by the U.S. to uproot terrorism and to ensure the peace and safety of the American people and of people in nations around the world that are in relationship with America. The foundation of the whole process is communication—listening to the difficulties and experiences of those involved and using that understanding to inform our actions.

The first step of the process is to listen to and understand the difficulties of American people. A National Council of Sages could be created. The National Council of Sages would be composed of people who have experience in the practice of reconciliation and peacemaking and who are in touch with the suffering and the real situations of people in America. This National Council of Sages would function as a support for the American government and the Congress by offering advice and insight as to how to reduce the suffering of people within America.

Secondly, an International Council of Sages would be formed to create a forum for listening to the difficulties and the real situations of groups and nations who are believed to be the base for terrorist activity towards the U.S. The understanding gained from listening and looking deeply into the situation would be the foundation for implementing concrete strategies to uproot the causes for terrorism and to begin to take actions to heal the wounds of violence and hatred that have been inflicted on the parties involved.

The Practice of Listening

The Council of Sages would practice listening deeply, without judgment or condemnation, to the suffering of people in America. Representatives of people in America who feel they are victims of discrimination, injustice, and exclusion should be invited to express themselves before the Council of Sages. People who experience exclusion may include poor people, minorities, immigrants, homeless people, Jews, Muslims, the elderly, people with HIV/AIDS, and so on.

The Council of Sages should be made up of non-political people who have lived closely with and understand the suffering of the above-mentioned people. This practice of deep listening (or compassionate listening) should be conducted in an atmosphere of calm and non-fear. It could last from five to eight months or longer. These sessions could be televised so that the American people could participate in

the practice. The practice will be a success if the concerned people are able to describe their fears, their anger, their hatred, their despair, and their hope.

The question could be asked, "What concrete steps can the American Congress and government take to reduce the suffering of the people living in the U.S.?" Representatives of diverse groups in America could answer this question with details in the presence of the Council of Sages. After which the Council of Sages could make a presentation to the American government and Congress offering insight into the current situation and concrete recommendations based on what they have heard from the representatives and their collective wisdom.

Result of the practice: Even before the government and Congress begins to do anything to reduce the suffering, a relief will already be obtained, because the people who suffer will feel for the first time that they are being listened to and are being understood. This practice can already inspire respect on the international level, because other nations will see that America is capable of listening to the suffering of her own people.

We can learn from the experience of other countries such as South Africa, where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to heal the wounds of apartheid. The commission was headed by Bishop Desmond Tutu and received the support of both blacks and whites as a legitimate forum for understanding and reconciliation to occur. Televised sessions were organized where members of the different racial groups were able to listen to and be heard by each other, bringing the tangible result that blacks and whites could begin to find a way to coexist peacefully and respectfully together in South Africa. This is a concrete example of the powerful effect that direct and compassionate communication can have on a national and international level.

The Practice of Nonviolent Communication

In interpersonal relationships we know that open and caring communication is essential for a healthy relationship. On the national and international level honest and nonviolent communication is also essential for healthy and supportive relationships to exist between members of a society and between nations.

Following is an example of how the government of the U.S. might address the people and countries who are believed to be the base of terrorism:

"You must have suffered terribly, you must have

hated us terribly to have done such a thing to us (the September 11, 2001, attack). You must have thought that we were your enemy, that we have tried to discriminate against you and to destroy you as a religion, as a people or as a race. You may believe that we do not recognize your values, that we represent a way of life that opposes your values. Therefore you may have tried to destroy us in the name of what you believe in. It may be that you have many wrong perceptions about us.

"We believe that we do not have any intention to destroy you or to discriminate against you. But there may be some things that we have said or done that have given you the impression that we want to discriminate against you or to destroy you. We may have taken actions that have brought harm to you. Please tell us about your suffering and your despair. We want to listen to you and to understand your experience and your perceptions so that we can recognize and understand what we have done or said that has created misunderstanding and suffering in you.

"We ourselves do not want to live in fear or to suffer and we do not want your people to live in fear or to suffer either. We want you to live in peace, in safety, and in dignity because we know that only when you have peace, safety, and dignity can we also enjoy peace, safety, and dignity. Let us create together an occasion for mutual listening and understanding which can be the foundation for real reconciliation and peace."

The Practice of Looking Deeply

Looking deeply means to use the information and insights gained from listening to the suffering of others to develop a more extensive and in-depth understanding of our situation.

A safe and peaceful setting should be arranged for representatives of conflicting groups and nations to practice looking deeply. An International Council of Sages facilitated by spiritual leaders could create such a setting and help conduct the sessions of deep listening and deep looking. Plenty of time should be given to this practice. It may take half a year or more. Sessions of deep looking should be televised so that people in many parts of the world can participate and gain a deeper understanding of the experience and real situations of the participants.

This practice should be conducted as a nonpolitical activity. Therefore, it should be supervised by humanist, humanitarian, and spiritual leaders who are known to be free from discrimination and partisanship.

Countries representing the six continents (Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia and Pacifica, and Europe) should be invited to sponsor and support this practice.

Political, Social, and Spiritual Solutions to Conflicts

Negotiations for peace, reconciliation, and mutual cooperation between conflicting peoples and nations should be made based on the insights gained from this process, namely deep listening and mutual understanding, in order to maintain the peace and safety of all nations. People from various sectors of society in the involved countries—schoolteachers, spiritual leaders, parents, union workers, business people, artists, children, social workers, nurses—should be able to participate in each step of the process by expressing their insights and their support for a peaceful resolution.

Military and political leaders could also participate in these processes by listening to the representatives of various peoples from the nations that are in conflict. But priority would be given to listen to those voices that are not represented already in the decision-making processes of the involved nations, for example, citizens who are not military or political leaders.

By taking these steps America will show great courage and spiritual strength. If America is capable of such acts of listening and understanding she will be making a great contribution to the peace and safety of the whole world. America will be acting in the spirit and with the support of her forefathers such as Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, who made great efforts to promote democracy, mutual respect, and understanding among peoples of different backgrounds and beliefs, for the peace and security of everyone. ❖



And He Is Among You
painted tile by Khadijah Chadly

(erroneously printed upside-down in the last issue)

Thirteen Grandmothers Healing the World

by Margaret Howe

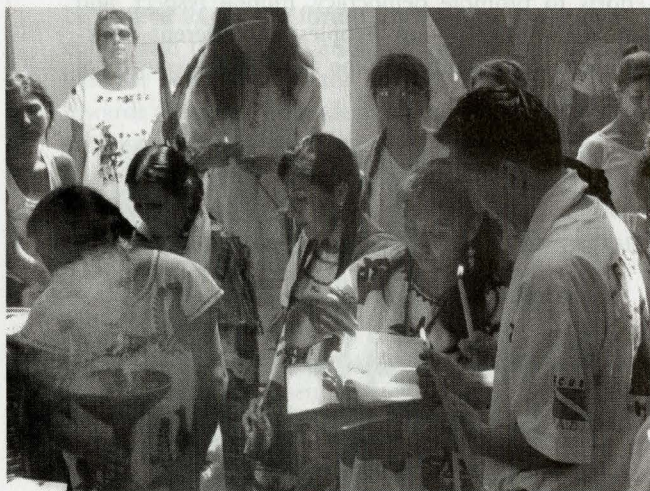
We, the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, believe that our ancestral ways of prayer, peacemaking, and healing are vitally needed today. Believing that the teachings of our ancestors will light our way through an uncertain future, we come together to nurture, educate, and train our children.

We are deeply concerned with the unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth, the contamination of our air, waters, and soil, the atrocities of war, the global scourge of poverty, the threat of nuclear weapons and waste, the prevailing culture of materialism, the epidemics which threaten the health of the Earth's peoples, the exploitation of indigenous medicines, and the destruction of indigenous ways of life.

We join with all those who honor the Creator, and to all who work and pray for our children, for world peace, and for the healing of our Mother Earth.

—from the statement of the International Council of Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers

Twelve grandmothers stepped off the chartered



The grandmothers offer a prayer for children
Photo by Margaret Howe

bus in their ornate traditional outfits—a spirited pastiche of green, red, yellow and blue—after the arduous journey up the Sierra Madre Mountains in central Mexico. They had traveled for two days to arrive at their third gathering together, coming from the Arctic Circle, North, South, and Central America, Africa, and Asia. They were greeted by a welcoming crowd, about a hundred local folks, including 10 Mazatec Indian women dressed in equally colorful traditional

clothes, clouds of copal incense smoke circling them, a marching band, and the Princess of Monaco. At the bottom of the bus steps, Doña Julieta, the 13th grandmother, warmly embraced each of them.

Passing through archways of flowers, the grandmothers proceeded down the streets on their way to Julieta's home, where they were cleansed by laurel branches, water, and more copal incense. Local shamans and healers and officials from the town of Huautla came to offer their *bienvenidos*. It was an extraordinary entrance befitting the grand nature of the women's work together.

These medicine women and spiritual teachers recognize the threat that a world so out of balance poses to us all. Their prophecies have foretold of this crisis time. They have guarded their traditional beliefs and spiritual practices like precious jewels passed down by their ancestors. Many have endured personal suffering and incredible hardship, yet, like bodhisattvas, they are devoted to relieving suffering in the world.

These grandmothers are resurrecting an ancient tradition. In many tribal cultures, the grandmothers' voices were often the last word on important matters, even the waging of war. Bernadette Rebienot, a Bwiti elder from Gabon, Africa, told us, "In Gabon, when the grandmothers speak, the president listens." The mission of the 13 grandmothers is to speak in a unified voice that will be listened to by the "presidents" of this world.

In May of 2006, I had the good fortune to participate in this two-week gathering. It was a remarkable experience to serve these women as they worked together. The magic unfolded as we lit the sacred fire that burned night and day. We began and ended every day with prayers offered from each woman in her own tradition. The prayers often lasted two or three hours, becoming the centerpiece of the day. Gods and goddesses from all over the globe were present in that mountain town, blessing each day. The grandmothers moved effortlessly between prayers for global peace, personal healings, and public councils and meetings.

The Grandmothers Council does not take this work lightly. Eighty-one-year-old Agnes Baker-Pilgrim, considered a living treasure by the Takelma tribe of southern Oregon, and the coordinator of the council, reminded us all that the earth does not belong to us, it belongs to our children. The suffering earth must be preserved for our children and for seven generations beyond us. She said, "The grandmothers of the world want to talk not only to the

women of the world but to the president of the United States and to world leaders.”

The council was initiated when Jyoti, an American spiritual teacher from the Center for Sacred Studies, and Bernadette, from Gabon, realized they shared a dream of creating a global council made up of wise women. Through their contacts, they created a gathering of women who represented various spiritual traditions and who came from the four corners of the Earth. The meeting took place at Tibet House in Phoenicia, New York, in the fall of 2004.

At that meeting, the women formed the Council. Their mission was simple: to enlighten more people and to tell world leaders that there has to be a better way. As Agnes Baker-Pilgrim put it, “We are the nurturers of the Earth Mother, who needs our help and our prayers. We need to tell the women of the world that prayer works.”

However, these are women of action as well as prayer. Many of their people are suffering greatly. Their traditional practices have been oppressed and their resources are greatly threatened. Tsering Dolma Gyalthong, the Tibetan grandmother, spoke movingly of the need to soften the Chinese leaders’ hearts so that His Holiness the Dalai Lama can go home before he dies. “If His Holiness doesn’t go home,” she said softly, “my people will never go home.” Tsering founded the Tibetan Women’s Association after escaping from Tibet in 1959 with her two children on her back.

Sitting at a great round table covered with a subtly colored mandala representing the Earth, Jyoti spoke of how the grandmothers were bringing people together to pray without competition between prayers. Margaret Behan, a Cheyenne grandmother, said her prayers with the traditional Tibetan white scarf wrapped around her head. On another day, a local family brought their disabled baby to morning prayers for healing. Without hesitation the focus shifted from the general to the specific, as each woman brought her healing powers and prayers to that baby girl.

The council is currently working with lawyers to consolidate their organization and to have a voice at the United Nations. They are also negotiating with the Vatican to finally revoke the 500-year-old papal edicts that granted dominion to European nations over lands which native people had been occupying for thousands of years.

Decisions do not come quickly to this group. Several levels of translation were happening at once, and many of the grandmothers were not accustomed to Western ways of meeting with agendas and proposals. At least one of the women is not literate. Many times a grandmother would say that she needed to pray before agreeing to a project. The mix of traditional customs and the Western meeting model created tension at times. On one particular day, there were

many proposals presented to the grandmothers. They stopped the process and took some time to connect in more personal ways.

While these women were treated with great respect in Mexico, many of them endure discrimination in their home countries. All the grandmothers are women of color, and some of them live with few resources. One Native American grandmother did not have water for two months last winter. Another lives in a trailer on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, one of the most economically challenged places in the U.S.

Several of the women told us that they did not bring many of their sacred ceremonial objects or dresses because of the possibility of confiscation at the border. So while we witnessed the Inuit wolf dance, the dancer, Marie, did not wear her bear hat or eagle-feather wings as she danced. There was also difficulty getting visas for

Bernadette Rebienot, a Bwiti elder from Gabon, Africa, told us, “In Gabon, when the grandmothers speak, the president listens.”

some, and Aama Bambo, the Tamang shaman from Nepal, almost did not get out of Kathmandu because of the political upheaval going on in her country. Some of their people question the rightness of their coming to these gatherings when their own people are suffering. But to the grandmothers, all the Earth’s peoples are related, their fates all intertwined.

For me, it was a remarkable time. The opportunity to serve these holy yet down-to-earth women was a privilege, one that made me acutely aware of the great privilege I accept as birthright. I had hope, as we prayed and worked together, that our world could be turned from its disastrous course. With these wisdom-keepers leading, it seems possible.

Speaker Carol Moseley Braun summed up my feelings when she addressed the grandmothers’ gathering in New York: “Dr. Martin Luther King has said that the arc of the moral universe is long, but that it bends towards justice. You all make it more likely that the moral arc of the universe will bend towards justice.... You are the embodiment of a great new spirit and the wisdom of the ages.” ♦

At the next meeting in Dharmasala, India, the Grandmothers Council will meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. For more information go to www.grandmotherscouncil.com.

A BPF member since 1985, Margaret Howe currently lives in Northern California.

Carving Buddhas for Peace

by Zoshi Takayuki

I am a wood carver, mostly of Buddha statues. I'm 56 now. When I was 32, carving Buddha statues came to me. I used to own a hair salon in Japan. I was married with two children. I wasn't happy internally and would complain daily. I ended up reading many religious books, hoping to get out from the uncertainty of life. At the time, my Zen master informed me about a peace walk in the U.S. against nuclear tests. Instantly I felt like this might be a chance to break through my eggshell, and I decided to join.

I wondered if I could do something, if I would come home safely, if I was running away from reality. Still having some doubt, I arrived in Los Angeles in October 1981, and four days later, October 24, I started walking, heading to New York.

The period from that day to June 7 of the following

year was the most concentrated time in my life. I put my entire self into every day. I walked all over this vast United States with 13 other companions, chanting and drumming. My days were filled with these thoughts: how can we possibly ever stop the nuclear tests for weapons that are meant to kill people in the name of nations which consist of large forces of organizations that I don't quite comprehend.

We were all serious peace activists. We gathered people at a school, church, community center, or person's house and talked about the danger of nuclear weapons that Japan had experienced in the past, and about the new ones, many hundreds times more dangerous. We collected signatures, but most of our action was praying and chanting a sutra, which had a very powerful peace vibration.





When we visited a missile base, I experienced my spine freezing, beyond words, with deep fear and anger. We walked through the middle of a freezing winter in the East. It says in my diary that there was a record cold day of -32 degrees Centigrade. I feared for my life. I saw horses and cows dead from the cold. In that stormy condition, we visited missile bases and sat down in front to chant for peace. At one place, we prayed and chanted from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, sitting the whole time.

We encountered many people who were against our peace walk. In serious cases, people threw rocks and empty bottles at us. I got hit by rocks three times on my head. If we had picked up those rocks or bottles and thrown them back, a small level of war could have begun right there. Under the name of peace, we could have started war easily. Just because two people have different concepts, the idea of "I am right and you are wrong" creates the act of putting the other one down.

Through this life-threatening experience, I was finding out what I can do. When I was offering the peace prayer at one missile base, I saw a glimpse of it: These missiles were created by humans. The motivation of this human mind was to see how many beings it could kill and destroy in a second. So many people joined their knowledge to create these nuclear weapons. The worst are the missiles.

In Buddhism, the human mind has ten levels. The worst is hell mind and the highest is Buddha mind. Missiles symbolize the lowest mind—worse than animals, violence, ego, and destruction. When I could see through this clearly, I understood that the only thing to overcome war is the far opposite—something created by Buddha mind, religion, chanting, meditation.

I thought about the Buddha statues I had encountered growing up in Japan. When you walk in the Japanese countryside, you see stone Buddha statues everywhere. Their loving energy lets us see our gentle mind. Humans also created Buddha statues, with the

motivation of love, wisdom, forgiveness, and recognition of our own Buddhahood, which is the same as the mind of vast universe.

I felt like I could do something, and I started carving small Buddha figures during the walk. I started believing that by adding more peace energy, someday nuclear weapons would disappear. Ever since then, my new way of living started. I have carved so many different styles of Buddha.

We arrived in New York and attended a large peace demonstration. Our extraordinary peace movement came to an end. Before I joined the peace march my life was very difficult. I was looking for how to survive in this life. My inside and outside world were always insecure. That long walk was a trip to search for my peace life.

I hope my Buddha statues speak for themselves. ❖

Zoshi Takayuki lives in Benicia, California.

The Earth Precepts

by Pepper Trail

Every major religious and philosophical system has a set of commandments, injunctions, or precepts that codifies the core beliefs of the moral person. Most familiar in the West are the Judeo-Christian Ten Commandments, or Decalogue. Islam has a very similar list of injunctions in the Qur'an. Buddhism's Ten Grave Precepts embody many of the same principles. In every case, these are a set of instructions on how to live with our fellow human beings in harmony. They are social precepts.

Today, humanity is awakening to the realization that our relationship with the Earth is equally in need of guidance. This planet, our home, is a biosphere, sometimes called Gaia—the Earth and all its physical, chemical, and biological systems that support life. We know of no other such pool of life in the limitless lifeless void. Until very recently, humanity took this greatest of all gifts for granted. But now, due to advances in scientific understanding and to the simple observation of cause and effect, we can no longer ignore or deny the damage that our activities are causing to the Earth.

If we are to survive as a species in a harmonious relationship with the Earth, we need a set of Earth Precepts as simple, universal, and powerful as the social precepts that have guided our social relations for so long.

The Earth Precepts

Honor the Earth, upon which all life depends.

This is the simplest, most basic of the precepts. It contains all the others. As every Buddhist practitioner knows, simplicity is the most difficult practice. To honor the biosphere is to vow to treat it with appropriate gratitude, respect, care, and love. It is to say: "My life, my very being, is an unearned gift, given by the biosphere. Thank you. In gratitude for my life, I will care for Life. I will care for you."

Consider the consequences of all environmental actions over at least 100 years.

Despite the great pride that we human beings take in our rationality, we are chronically careless of consequences over any biologically meaningful time frame. Even the most far-sighted individual rarely thinks more than five or ten years ahead, and most corporations are now driven by quarterly profits. *Quarterly*: a time span of three months. It is no mystery why, over and over again, we fail to recognize environmental disasters until it is too late. We simply aren't paying attention. In taking responsibility for the Earth, we must try

to anticipate the consequences of our actions over the time frames that Gaia's processes require. One hundred years is certainly a minimum estimate.

Do not destabilize the Earth's atmospheric or aquatic systems.

An essential step in awakening to our relationship with the Earth is recognizing that the atmosphere and the oceans are not infinite and unchanging. These dynamic systems constantly cycle oxygen, carbon dioxide, and water around the planet, creating the Earth's climate. Despite their immense size, the atmosphere and oceans are not immune to our influence. A critical case in point is the sharp rise in carbon dioxide levels due to our unquenchable combustion of fossil fuels. Because carbon dioxide absorbs solar radiation, it contributes to global warming, which threatens to disrupt every human and natural process on Earth. If we are to preserve a stable biosphere, we must preserve the self-regulating chemistry of its atmospheric and aquatic systems.

Do not depend upon energy sources that cannot be replaced.

At the present time, our dependence on nonrenewable energy is almost absolute: 80 percent of the world's energy consumption comes from the burning of fossil fuels. The United States alone, with 5 percent of the world's population, uses 25 percent of that total. Fossil fuels are fast running out. If the transition to renewable energy sources is not made in the next few decades, humanity and the biosphere will experience catastrophic economic, social, and ecological collapse.

Fortunately, renewable energy technologies, from solar and wind power to biofuels, are ready and waiting. To take full advantage of these alternatives, we need to insist that they be favored with economic incentives that reflect their advantages; or, put another way, that nonrenewable energy sources include a surcharge to reflect their true costs. Since those costs include the alteration of global climate and grievous injury to the systems that sustain all life, it is hard to imagine a surcharge that would be too high.

Do not remove living resources, including soil, trees, and marine life, faster than they can replace themselves.

The essence of this precept is sustainability. But what does this often-misused term really mean?

First, we must insist that sustainability is an *ecolog-*

ical, not an economic, term. For example, so-called “sustained” yields in agriculture may be due only to ever-increasing inputs of chemical fertilizers. Such agriculture is not truly sustainable. Second, we must work with care to account for all the variables in a particular “sustainability” equation. For example, a sustainable logging plan must preserve the health of the river that runs through the forest, as well as replace the trees that are cut. Finally, we must be clear about the time span encompassed by the term. The time span for sustainability must be “forever”—or at least that tiny slice of forever that is within human powers to predict, which is on the order of a few centuries.

Exploitation of the Earth must be accompanied by restoration of the Earth.

The basis for this precept is simple: the Earth is finite. Damaged land cannot be replaced, so it must be restored. Here the knowledge of indigenous peoples is of critical assistance. For example, for decades federal land managers have excluded fire from the forests of western North America. As a result, millions of acres have become tinderboxes, with dense thickets of stunted, highly flammable saplings. What is needed is a return to the Native American practice of setting cool-burning fires to maintain forest health and prevent the buildup of excess dead wood. The work of restoring the Earth is perhaps the deepest personal practice of the Earth Precepts—to engage, with a beginner’s mind, with the numberless paths of dependent co-arising that create environmental health.

Preserve the world’s biological diversity—all the Earth’s species and ecosystems.

The Earth is currently experiencing an extinction rate one thousand times higher than normal. This present mass extinction, caused almost entirely by human activity, could rival the catastrophic meteor impact that ended the age of the dinosaurs. To stop this disaster, we must take action *before* species are critically endangered. The best approach is to focus on preserving entire ecosystems, the integrated arrangements of life that cover the Earth. This protects all the connections in the web of life, and thus automatically preserves most species.

Ecosystem conservation requires that large stretches of the planet must remain, if not wilderness, at least wild. This may seem a daunting challenge, until we consider that there is no other way to assure the biosphere’s integrity, upon which all life, including our own lives, depends.

Do not have more than two children.

Our overwhelming success as a species has placed human beings in a paradoxical position: to truly love our children, we must have fewer of them. To preserve

life, we must restrict our own fertility. It is not consistent with our responsibility to the Earth to have more children than will replace ourselves.

During the 20th century, almost 4.5 billion people were added to the population of the Earth. That is more than all the people who existed in the history of the world up to that time. If present birth rates hold steady, the world population will reach 14.4 billion by 2050 and continue to climb. However, if a birth rate of 2.0 were adopted immediately and universally, it would produce an essentially stable world population of about 7.3 billion by 2050. It is hard to imagine a more important goal for us to reach in our quest to maintain a healthy, livable Earth.

Do not assert ownership over species or their genetic codes; they are not ours to claim.

With the development of DNA sequencing technology about 25 years ago, corporations began to assert ownership of basic genetic information and of life forms themselves. These genetic codes developed over millions of years without human knowledge or contribution. It is as if a guest were invited to a sumptuous feast, pushed the host aside, locked up the kitchen, and forced the other guests to buy the food at ruinous prices.

The problem with the claim of ownership over genetic material is not simply its profound ingratitude. Patent rights, and the profits they promise, are the fuel driving the explosive growth of genetic engineering. Withdrawing that fuel is the best way to regain control over this deeply problematic activity. While genetic engineering may provide benefits, it also entails ecological risks and threatens social inequities that we have only begun to imagine. Our responsibility to the Earth requires that this uncontrolled experimentation with life itself be halted until we have developed a far better understanding of the possible consequences.

Do not exempt corporations from the environmental precepts that individuals must follow.

This final precept looks beyond personal moral responsibility to the Earth, to encompass the actions of gigantic impersonal organizations. If humanity does not assert control over corporations, all our efforts to foster a life-centered culture will fail.

As presently organized, corporations exist for one purpose: to maximize profit for shareholders. All other considerations, including the welfare of workers and the effects of corporate operations on the environment, are secondary. Every way in which corporations act as “good citizens”—such as honoring minimum-wage laws or pollution regulations—is due to legal compulsion. Indeed, the phenomenon of globalization is simply the relentless attempt by corporations to

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Rethinking Plastic

by Stuart Moody

Did you go shopping this week? If so, chances are you brought home some plastic. This simple fact has become so commonplace that most of us do not even notice it. But the consequences are enormous. Eliminating plastic from your life may be one of the most important acts in your mindfulness practice. Why?

Five Problems with Plastic

- **It's not biodegradable.** Our biological and cultural memory tells us that everything returns to dust, and from dust life is born again. Plastic polymers, though, are complex structures, rigid and impervious to the biological processes of decay. With the possible exception of one or two compounds, no plastic product can be digested by any creature on Earth. Whatever plastic we make will remain forever, whether in its original shape or in tiny pieces. In 2005, the annual production rate of plastic in the U.S. reached 50 million tons. Where will it go?

- **It's not recyclable.** An estimated 3.5 percent of plastic waste gets recycled. Due to its many forms and their chemical constituents, plastic is hard to recycle. And "downcycling" is a more accurate term. When a plastic bottle, for example, is reprocessed, it is made into another type of article, such as a polar fleece jacket. That fleece, though, cannot recycle. The lint from the jacket, and eventually the worn-out garment, goes into the air, the water, and the landfill.

- **It's choking the ocean.** In the 1990s, researchers found 317,000 pieces of plastic per square kilometer of ocean surface. In 2001, they found 1 million pieces. In parts of the Central Pacific, plastic now outweighs zooplankton by a factor of six to one. This debris comes primarily from land-based sources.

- **It's killing wildlife.** Over 100,000 marine animals and 1 million seabirds die from

plastic ingestion or entanglement each year. "Ghost fishing," the entrapment of fish and crustaceans by abandoned traps and fishing gear, adds to the toll.

- **It's toxic.** Many types of plastic are associated with increased incidence of cancer, asthma, and other disorders. Plasticizing agents such as phthalates and bisphenol-A are associated with hormone disorders, including precocious female puberty, malformation of male sex organs, and diabetes.

Responding with Awareness

The first step in spiritually engaged activism is awareness of our connectedness with all of life. While meditation develops a fundamental, nonverbal sense of oneness with the world, we need to cultivate a discriminative awareness as well, to see cause-and-effect connections between acts of living and the health of the world. From this kind of awareness, mindful action naturally arises. This means changing personal habits: refusing plastic bags at the checkout, buying bread wrapped in paper, taking our own mug or bottle to the smoothie store, repairing electronic equipment rather than throwing it out, and so on.

We begin with awareness, and move into the world by embodying the change that we would like to see. But there is a third, vital step: education. The essence of engaged Buddhism is to respond to suffering with compassion and lovingkindness. Knowing our interdependence with the makers and distributors of harmful products and packaging, we approach them with loving attention. As the Dalai Lama reminds us, everyone wants to be happy, and everyone wants to avoid suffering. No one wants to see the ocean fill up with plastic; no one wants to see hormonal disruptions in their children.

Gautama Buddha was a great teacher, alleviating the suffering of many through his wise words and shining example. Using the tool of education, we, too, can help to alleviate the suffering of millions by bringing an end to the plague of plastics.

Stuart Moody serves on the advisory board of Green Sangha, an affiliate of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. To participate in the Campaign Against the Plastic Plague or to learn more about Green Sangha, call 510/532-6574 or visit www.greensangha.org.

Anarcho-Buddhism and Direct Action

by **Matthew S. Williams**

As I go to peace demonstrations on the Boston Common, where we gather to protest the Bush administration's war-making and other cruel, unjust policies, I am encouraged by many of the things I hear and see. In these times when despair comes easily, it gives me a small measure of hope to see people speaking out for peace, coming together to amplify their voices. At the same time, I am troubled by the demonization of the Bush administration that I see many protesters engaging in. This troubles me as a Buddhist, since the Buddha taught that we should cultivate compassion towards all beings, even those engaged in acts of great evil. This also troubles me as an anarchist, since attacking individuals misses the fundamental point of a radical social critique, which argues that the social system is the main cause of harm, not the individuals who are part of it. When combined, these Buddhist and anarchist perspectives can provide an understanding of how social systems foster ignorance, hatred, and greed in people.

To overcome the suffering caused by social injustice, we must understand the roots of injustice and then determine the skillful means through which we can transform its root causes. An analysis of social injustice that focuses solely on individuals cannot do this. It is not only those who demonize the Bush administration that fall into this trap. Many engaged Buddhists do so as well, focusing solely on compassionate dialogue with evildoers in power, failing to see how the social structure blocks the possibilities for such dialogue.

Such hyperindividualist analyses imply that if we simply remove Bush from office and elect liberal leaders, we will have addressed the root causes of the war. Many liberals and centrists in American government, however, remain deeply committed to an aggressive, militaristic foreign policy. And many U.S. elites are critical of the Bush administration's war-making policies not for principled reasons but because the Bush administration's go-it-alone approach has alienated the U.S.'s traditional allies in Europe, thus undermining America's world power.

To get to the root causes of social injustice, we need a radical social analysis that helps us understand how social structures shape people, one that looks at both individuals and the larger social context in which they act, and at the interdependent origination of self and society. Thich Nhat Hanh, drawing on the Vijñap-

timatra school of Buddhist psychology, speaks of how our negative thoughts, words, and actions can "water seeds" of ignorance, greed, and hatred both in ourselves and others. Positive thoughts, words, and actions, on the other hand, can water the seeds of generosity, compassion, and wisdom. Our current system, however, tends to water the seeds of vice, not virtue.

In the rallies I attended before the Bush administration began the invasion of Iraq, I heard many speakers say, "If there's enough of us out here, they will have to listen to us!" This belief that legal protest alone would change the course of the Bush administration struck me as naïve. It is understandable that newcomers to the peace movement embraced such a hopeful sentiment, but those with a long history of activism should know better. History has shown us that those with power do not have to listen to those without it—and they seldom do. There are entire social worlds that those with great power know nothing about. In fact, they may only be forced to be aware of them when there is social unrest. And if powerful individuals do not listen, they remain ignorant of the lived experiences of the oppressed and the marginalized. This existential ignorance, the Buddha taught us, is the root of all suffering—and systems of unequal power institutionalize this ignorance.

Many activists have painted the Bush administration as motivated solely by greed and power-lust. While these are part of their motivation, if we are to cultivate understanding and compassion for the Bush administration, we must recognize that because they are human, their motives are more complex. I would argue that they are also motivated by fear and a dogmatic form of idealism, which has led them to forcibly impose their vision of a free-market utopia on other countries. All of us have the seeds of greed, power-lust, fear, and dogmatism in us. And, as Thich Nhat Hanh has pointed out, if we had had the social experiences of the members of the Bush administration, those seeds would have been watered in us and we might not be much different from them.

The members of the Bush administration are part of what radical sociologist C. Wright Mills called the power elite, those who stand at the "strategic command posts of the social structure." They are the top-ranking corporate executives, government officials and military commanders—people whose lives and social networks overlap, forming an insular social

Anyone who has participated in a group that makes decisions by consensus has participated in a functioning anarchist system.

world that allows them little understanding of the consequences of their actions for ordinary people. Operating from the peak of U.S. political power, Bush can, with the stroke of a pen, have peaceful activists spied upon, sign a free-trade agreement that impoverishes millions, start the invasion of another country, or command a nuclear strike. Other members of the power elite have similarly devastating powers, such as the corporate executive who can lay off thousands of workers, leaving their families with uncertain futures, in order to increase his company's profits.

The power elite—which includes the leadership of both the Democratic and Republican parties—commands bureaucracies that are not structured to encourage deep listening and understanding. Workers in bureaucracies must pass systematized, sanitized information up the chain of command, while those at the top pass orders down. Systematizing information in this way creates documents that omit many of the complexities of the real world. Bureaucrats have strong incentives to distort information in order to please those who can hire and fire them. We saw this very clearly in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, as top Bush administration officials pushed workers in intelligence agencies to give them findings that would justify their plans for invasion, even if it meant distorting the data. The sanitized language of bureaucracies turns slaughtered civilians into “collateral damage,” and allows those who use such phrases to hide from the ugly realities of war.

Even outside their official roles, the power elite lead insular lives. They attended similar private schools, belong to similar exclusive social clubs, live in similar gated communities, and often serve on the boards of directors of each others' companies. When they have contact with people outside their own social stratum, it is chiefly as their employers, so there is rarely a relationship of equality that might make real communication and understanding possible. These circumstances shelter them from the lives of the oppressed and marginalized, giving them a sense of entitlement to such wealth and power.

Ignorance is compounded by false perceptions perpetuated by the mass media, the education system, and even many religious organizations. Since the days of the first Puritan settlers in New England, Americans have believed that wealth is a sign of virtue, the result of hard work and God's favor. Americans also place great value on individual fame and fortune, which only further waters the seeds of greed. Americans have long believed that as a nation we are a light unto the nations of the world. This fosters great arrogance in our foreign policy; the power elite has no doubt about America's right to intervene in the affairs of other nations. Those who would threaten America's wealth

and power are viewed with fear.

It seems to me that members of the Bush administration suffer more than most members of the power elite from these afflictions. Their greed has led to unbri-dled corruption and showing favoritism to particular corporations like Halliburton and Enron to whom they have personal ties. Their self-righteousness and power-lust has led them to spy illegally on their own citizens and to tamper with elections. The threat that Islamic fundamentalism poses to the U.S.'s unchecked power in the world—something they believe to be their right, mandated by God—has led the power elite to lash out against the entire Middle East in a brutal fashion, invading and occupying Afghanistan and Iraq. Their dog-matic idealism has led them to impose policies that they believe will lead to a free-market utopia, policies which have only caused massive poverty and unemployment. And still they seem ignorant, both of the horror they have wrought and of how much they suffer from their own greed, hatred, and ignorance.

Counter-Recruitment and Nonviolent Direct Action

To transform the roots of institutionalized ignorance and systemic suffering, we must challenge systems of unequal power. One promising strategy that the peace movement is focusing on is counter-recruitment. The power elite rely on poor people with few other economic opportunities and on youth lured by the glamorization of the military to fight their wars for them, sending them out to kill and die. Through counter-recruitment, the peace movement is working to educate potential recruits about the ugly realities of military life and warfare and how little economic and educational gain they are really likely to get from enrolling in the military. Counter-recruiters are helping to transform the socially fostered ignorance of targeted youth, saving them from potential future suffering. They are also depriving the military of the soldiers they need to fight wars, thereby disrupting the power elite's ability to exercise its power.

Counter-recruitment is a form of what anarchists call nonviolent direct action—actions in which the oppressed and marginalized disrupt systems of unequal power, while reclaiming their own power and voice. Direct action can also take the form of labor strikes, economic boycotts, and civil disobedience. These are all collective practices, necessary complements to the individual practice of meditation through which we transform our personal suffering.

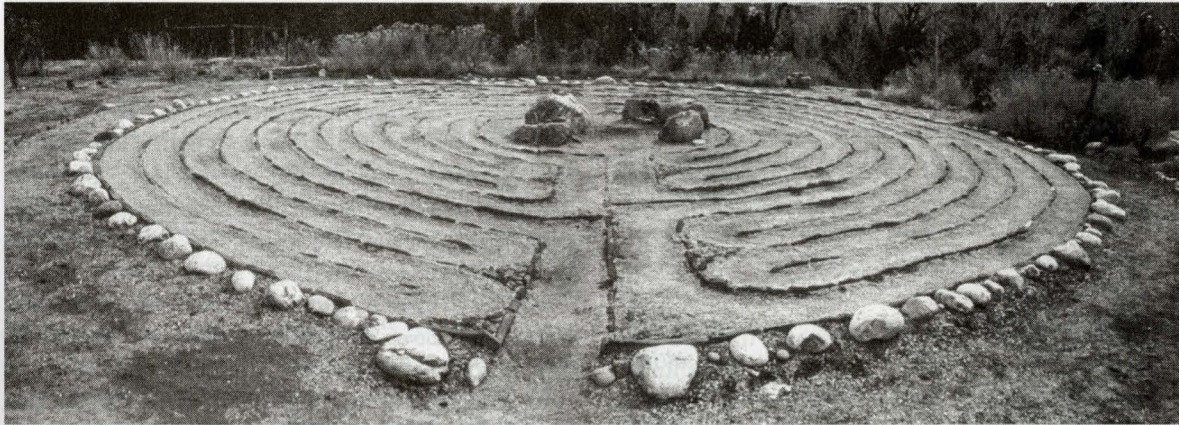
Education through trainings and teach-ins is also crucial to help people to understand the ways in which we can work together to transform the systems that create suffering. The media, educational system, and many religious organizations lead oppressed and

marginalized people to buy into harmful myths—for example, that a military career will help them rise in the world or that the poor are to blame for their own plight. Educational work to counter this is a first step before direct action.

As in the practice of meditation, where we must directly face our suffering to transform it, so in our collective practice we must directly confront systems of unequal power to transform them. This means withdrawing our consent from systems of unequal power, refusing to stand passively by as the military recruits young men and women, refusing to work for or buy from corporations profiting from the war, or simply refusing to obey the law until the government changes its course of action. When major institutions—the military, the economy, and the government—cannot function properly, the power elite has

Sadly, I think that, like Helms, Lott, and Ashcroft, the Bush administration will never truly listen. We may force them to withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is unlikely that they will ever see militarism for the unskillful means it is. We have witnessed administration members who have shown an independent mind, such as former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill—who opposed the invasion of Iraq and supported moderate action on global warming—being forced to leave the administration. Nonetheless, the potential for understanding always remains, and we must not give up on it.

Ideally, in the long run, we will not have to rely on confrontational tactics but on developing social systems that institutionalize equal power and voice. This is anarchy in the proper sense of the term—not chaos and violence, but a society organized without hierar-



Labyrinth

Photo by Hedi Desuyo

trouble exercising its power. But because confrontational action can easily water the seeds of demonization, it is essential not only to educate participants about the workings of the systems of power but about compassion as well. What we must oppose is systematically institutionalized ignorance, not the individuals caught up in the system who suffer from their own unwholesome emotions and false perceptions.

I would argue that direct action is the most skillful means we have to transform the suffering caused by larger social systems. With direct action we reclaim our voices. If there is to be listening and understanding, those who have traditionally been silenced must be allowed to speak. The disruption caused by direct action can force members of the power elite to come to the bargaining table and make concessions. In time, they may even begin to listen to the voices of the oppressed and marginalized. Some politicians, such as George Wallace, who initially opposed the Civil Rights movement after many years came to support it. Others, such as Jesse Helms, Trent Lott and John Ashcroft, never really understood what the Civil Rights movement was about—they made concessions and adapted, but unfortunately remained mired in racism and ignorance.

chy or authority, a society based on direct, participatory democracy in all spheres of life (politics, the economy, family, education, and religion) and an economy of mutual care, which sees that everyone is provided for. Under such a system, decision-making would not be delegated to “representatives” who are cut off from the realities of their constituents’ lives. People would participate directly in the decisions that affect their lives through public assemblies and ad hoc committees; the culture of participatory democracy would be oriented towards consensus, a process that allows everyone to speak and be listened to.

People under such a system may not always choose wisely, but the chances of wiser choices are at least greatly increased because anarchy has the potential to replace institutionalized ignorance with institutionalized understanding. People from different backgrounds will bring their differing experiences, aspirations, and insights to the table. Under a consensus-based system, people must try to understand others’ experiences, to overcome their ignorance of the lives of others. A consensus decision must meet everyone’s aspirations and take account of everyone’s insights.

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What, Oh What, Will We Do Now?

A Shin Perspective

by Diane Patenaude Ames

Shin is nothing if not down-to-earth. So as we ponder what is to be done about an administration that has made Kafka a realist, let me begin by offering a few words of advice to activists.

Know your rights, even if they are becoming somewhat theoretical. Keep the ACLU's number handy. And don't let yourself become clinically depressed. It's an occupational hazard, especially these days. It can land you in what Tibetan Buddhists call a hot hell, in which you withdraw into a little cocoon of anger from which you issue intermittent blasts of verbal abuse and/or gunfire at the outside world. You can find yourself in a

The FBI knocks on your door to ask why you referred to "the sound of one hand clapping" in a recent e-mail. Is it terrorist code?

cold hell, in which you feel so alienated that you crawl into a little box, shut the lid, and just sit there thinking dark, bitter thoughts. Either way, you're not likely to accomplish much. Believe me, I know.

If you find yourself in either hell state in the trying days ahead, the first thing to do is to get out of it by any means necessary. Cognitive therapy and exercise programs have both been proven effective, and antidepressant drugs help some people. Sometimes treating your allergies works wonders. None of this means that the problems you're worried about are all in your head; it means that those problems, and the fact that your concern is not well received by everybody, can mess up your head something awful. The point is not to let this disable you.

All right, so you've done your cognitive therapy, jogged a few miles, and swallowed antihistamines until you are no longer wallowing in rage and despair. Then let's suppose that the president announces that the Venezuelan government "has links" to al Qaeda and was not only in some vague way behind 9/11 but will, if not stopped, give us all the bubonic plague by Tuesday. The terrorism threat level is to be raised to infrared. The president concludes that he is mobilizing all American troops who are not in Iraq—now chiefly the honor guard at the Washington Monument—to invade Venezuela. As the TV begins to show the guards being trucked away from the

Washington Monument, the FBI knocks on your door to ask why you referred to "the sound of one hand clapping" in a recent e-mail. Is it terrorist code?

Of course you refuse, as politely as you can, to answer any questions without having your lawyer present, and you shut the door. But how do you feel? Very possibly angry. And by the time the FBI gets you fired by "interviewing" your employer, you find yourself hating somebody, or a number of somebodies.

This is to be expected. We are only human beings trapped in little human bodies that come with a certain number of built-in emotions. Our natural response to any threat to ourselves, or to what we love, is to want to flee or fight, and the "fight" response has a way of coming to the fore sooner or later. Sometimes we can manage to feel compassion for people we're mad at, but our capacity to do this is limited, because we are in general so limited.

Shinran himself (founder of Shin Buddhism, 1173–1262) never forgave the authorities who exiled him to Echigo, the Japanese equivalent of Siberia, and who hastened the death of his revered old teacher, Honen, by exiling him, too. In the postscript to Shinran's *Kyogyoshinsho*, a work completed some 50 years after these events, he wrote that "the emperor and his minions" had "violated human rectitude" and "acted like idiots" in perpetrating this injustice. Shinran, in other words, was a human being too.

However, we little human beings are not all there is.

It is time to say something about the entity that Shin Buddhists call Amida Buddha. Amida is not a deity, not some sort of mythologized person sitting up on a cloud. True, we tend to personify Amida so as to make the concept easier to grasp. But if we say that Amida is Buddhature, the principle of emptiness, absolute compassion, then Amida sounds like a list of abstractions. One classic Shin metaphor says that Amida is the sun, and it's a very dark, stormy day down here in samsara. Yet no matter how many black clouds there are, some light always gets through. No matter what is going on, there is always some compassion in the world. Amida is always there.

It is critical to remember this. No matter how many people you or I find it impossible to forgive, a point of view is possible from which all of us look like squabbling toddlers. Even if I cannot forgive the policeman who clubs me in the head because I was

foolhardy enough to march for peace in New York City, Amida still loves him, and that thought can at least give me some perspective. Thus, at the very end of that postscript to the *Kyogyoshinsho*, Shinran put in a quotation from the Avatamsaka Sutra:

*On seeing a bodhisattva
Perform various practices,
Some give rise to a good mind and others to
a mind of evil,
But the bodhisattva embraces them all.*

Note that he did not claim that he personally was an ideal bodhisattva or that he was able to embrace the emperor. The point was that he knew that Amida (which is probably what he meant by “the bodhisattva”) embraced everybody—the emperor, his minions, and Shinran, and all—and remembering that had helped him to stay sane.

Although Amida is inconceivably higher and greater than us, he (she? it? Chinese sutras do not give Amida a gender; it only becomes a problem in English) is, when you come right down to it, not really separate from us. It is as if I am a tormented little bubble on a great ocean, constantly upset that some other bubble is bigger or prettier than I am, worried about my position in this bit of foam, always terrified that I must pop someday. Yet I am also part of the ocean, part of something before which all my anguished little bubble concerns are as nothing. And on some level, I know that. We all know that. Bubble I am and bubble I will remain until I pop at last; there is a sense in which that is all there is to it. But there is another sense in which that is not all there is to it, and that is not all there is to me.

When I say that I am like a bubble, I mean that I am “empty” in the Buddhist sense, that I exist only in dependence on everything around me, that I constantly change, that I will not be around forever. That does not mean that I do not exist or that I do not matter. I can act, and I can and do suffer. However, a certain amount of my suffering arises from my illusion that I am all alone.

Other people apparently suffer, too, and so, if I am not totally separate from them, I should try to mitigate their suffering. The effort might even alleviate my sense of separation. However, working to alleviate their suffering can also make me feel hopeless unless I can develop what Buddhists call nonattachment.

Nonattachment does not mean not caring about anything. It’s like the proper attitude with which to play football. You need to care about whether you get the ball to the goalpost; you need to make a maximum effort if the game is to be worth playing at all. But at the same time, you must never forget that it is, in the last analysis, only a game. Otherwise you may get carried away and kick another player in the head, as has been known

to happen. And you might not be able to endure the fact that sometimes you lose. (In fact, if the game is not football but activism, you lose pretty often.)

What has this Shin doctrine got to do with dealing with the Bush administration? Something, I hope. I for one need something to hang onto when all seems lost, including my own capacity to think spiritual thoughts. I can easily lose that capacity when I hear Bush or Rumsfeld rhapsodize about bringing democracy to Iraq, and heaven knows what else is going to happen. ♦

Diane Patenaude Ames is a writer and freelance copyeditor.

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Everyone has approximately equal power, and no one is in a position to shut out others’ voices. Instead, people work to understand each other, watering the seeds of wisdom and compassion. Such a system will certainly not eliminate all human ignorance and suffering, but it can reduce it, eliminating much that is rooted in social injustice.

While anarchism is often dismissed as too utopian, it can be quite practical. Anyone who has participated in a group that makes decisions by consensus has participated in a functioning anarchist system. Quaker congregations and many indigenous tribes and activist groups use consensus as the basis for their decision-making. In movements ranging from the 1970s sit-ins against the nuclear power plant at Seabrook, New Hampshire, to the shutdown of the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle activists have successfully used modified forms of consensus to coordinate the actions of thousands of people. My reading of the history of social movements and my own experience leads me to believe that a society based on consensus, equality, and participation is possible. Even if anarchy in its pure form proves to be impossible, surely moving closer towards it is worthwhile.

It is heartbreakingly clear that we need an alternative to our current social system. We can’t allow groups like the Bush administration to set an agenda of war-making, unregulated markets, a shredded social safety net, environmental destruction, and disregard for civil liberties. We need an alternative that leads to decisions rooted in generosity, compassion, and wisdom, where we take care of each other instead of making war on each other. Nonviolent direct action, with anarchy as an end goal, provides us with a path to this alternative.

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How Civilization Is Made

by Lin Jensen

Today, an Iraqi family of five—a mother and father, a teenage boy, a nine-year-old girl, and a nursing were crushed to death beneath the collapse of their house, which was inadvertently struck by a missile during a U.S. attack of a suspected insurgent stronghold. Neighbors came out into the street, and as the dust and smoke began to settle, they heard the little girl calling from under the rubble. They dug to get to her, calling her name repeatedly, listening for her call in response. But she fell silent before they reached her and found her dead, her legs trapped and crushed beneath a slab of masonry. She was dressed for school, wearing a hand-knit sweater and cap. The family had been eating breakfast when the missile struck.

It was 1946 and I was fourteen when I opened a thin little book that began with the following description of a moment in the life of a young Japanese woman:

At exactly fifteen minutes past eight in the morning of August 6, 1945, Japanese time, at the moment when the atomic bomb flashed above Hiroshima, Miss Toshiko Sasaki, a clerk in the personnel department of East Asia Tin Works, had just sat down at her plant office and was turning her head to speak to the girl at the next desk.

John Hersey's *Hiroshima* altered for good the direction of my life. Toshiko Sasaki was just about to say something to the girl at the next desk, perhaps a simple morning greeting or a comment on the pretty dress she was wearing or a curiosity about a date she'd gone on the night before. But whatever it was she meant to say, it was never said, because before she could speak, the world in which such things might be said was swept away in a flash of immense heat and blinding light.

I became an advocate for peace because I was never able to put out of mind all the little ordinary things that people were doing in Hiroshima the instant the bomb ended a hundred thousand lives. I'd known about the bomb for over a year at the time, ever since it had been dropped. And I knew that something terrible had taken place, but it wasn't until I read John Hersey's book that I understood that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was something that should never have happened to anyone anywhere on the earth. I also somehow knew that the Toshiko Sasaki of Hiroshima, the clerks and factory workers, housewives and schoolteachers, the nameless "inconsequential" inhabitants of that doomed city, lived lives that consti-

tuted a genuine human civilization.

The conventional view of history postulates a civilization that advances on a colossal scale with grand events: the coming to power of great leaders, wars won and lost, the framing of constitutions, the ratification of treaties, the overthrow of governments, the rise and fall of sovereign nations. It's mostly a history of the accumulation of power and the use of force, a chronicle of things built up only to be torn down again, things joined only to be divided once more. There's no question but that these broad historical events exert great influence on human matters. They are the forces that wrench, twist, and dislocate the lives of humans everywhere, but they are not the factors that shape genuine civilization. Civilization is made by families who gather together for breakfast even in time of war and by mothers who knit little sweaters for schoolgirls to wear. It's a quality of kindness in human affairs that sustains what little civilization we can manage.

The factors that actually shape civilization are acts so random and ordinary that their significance goes unmarked. In the Southern California farm country where I was raised the women put up food for the winter months in the manner they'd learned from their mothers and grandmothers. In my family of five—my mother and father, my brother Rowland, my sister Evelyn, and me—we began the process of canning and storing away food from the moment the garden began to yield in late spring until we'd exhausted the last remnants of it in the late fall. All the farm families had a garden and orchard, and not much cash. They either planted and harvested and preserved or they couldn't expect to eat very well when the days shortened and darkened toward winter.

The mornings my mother took the canning pot with its bottle rack from a pantry shelf and hauled it into the kitchen, she would never have thought she was doing anything for anybody but herself and her family. And when she scrubbed the pot clean and filled it with water to boil and went to the garden to pick a basket of string beans, she didn't know her actions were sustaining what little sense and decency the world is capable of. She would never have presumed that the rows of jars, neatly labeled and dated, lining the pantry shelves of a winter afternoon, were the orderly makings of a civilization. Yet it is these numberless little acts, this uncalculated responsive-

ness to the needs of the moment, more than all the dictates of empires and presidencies, that draws us into common community.

We do it best when we don't know we're doing it at all. Wiping a kid's runny nose or sticking a thermometer under a sick child's tongue are actions taken without self-consciousness of any sort. When I see my townspeople hanging out the wash or raking fall leaves or setting the table for the evening meal or jogging behind a child snuggled up in an infant carrier in the town park, I know that I am witnessing exactly those forces that counteract the divisive ambitions of military and corporate aims.

Civilization only asks of us that we live kindly and now. We are wise beyond our knowing when we do so. It's not policy or ideology that makes us neighbors. It's not the defense of state sovereignty or "national interest" that sustains communities. It's much more a kitchen and yard thing, an elementary school and town park thing, in which we are watchful of one another.

When the Jensen family had need of more farm acreage and leased a farm further out of town, the contents of the kitchen pantry with all its canned goods moved with us. But in the moving, we inadvertently loosened the seal on a jar of string beans. And when Mother, failing to notice this, served them for Sunday afternoon dinner, we were made desperately sick as a consequence. We were all of us—except my baby sister, Evelyn, who was only two at the time and hadn't eaten any of the beans—so dazed and debilitated by the sudden effects of food poisoning that we were unable to help each other. Neither Mother nor Father could even make it to the phone to call for help. We crawled into the bathroom and lay on the floor with the ceiling and walls swimming about us, and when one of us had to retch we dragged ourselves onto the rim of the toilet to throw up, and Mother, lying where she was, could just reach the toilet chain to flush.

Gradually night came on and the house grew dark. I think it was Mother who took my hand in hers first. I was able to reach my brother with the free hand, and he my Father, and Father back to Mother. And Evelyn crawled around and over us, supposing I guess that it was some sort of game. My mind hovers above that old farmhouse now, surrounded by dusty fields. I see the four of us there on the bathroom floor, a sprawl of stricken flesh, legs and arms askew, joined hand to hand, on a background of faded linoleum. Struggles of ambition and fear characterize the grand enterprises that pass for the history of civilization. They are the forces that threaten to strike down everything that is good about us. They may kill us someday. But a single family that remembers to join hands will sustain by small effects kindness and generosity until the very end.

Eventually Mother recovered enough to reach the



by Hamlet Mateo

phone and call Dr. Robbins from his bed to come to our aid. He came, yawning, in the middle of the night, bearing the instruments of diagnosis and treatment he'd been given by his predecessor. He managed to get each of us into bed, and he found something in the kitchen to feed Evelyn and left her asleep in her crib. He said we wouldn't die but that we'd be a few days recovering, and would Mother like him to call our neighbor, Mrs. Reeder, to come by in the morning and give a hand.

Later Mother cried to dispose of the rows of string beans she'd worked so hard to put away for the winter, her heart responding to a small error that might have cost her children and husband their lives. She would have cried equally for any family whose economy and lives were threatened by error. We were in the midst of World War II and Mother would sometimes cry over the radio news. She was never an activist, nor did she have a conscious mission of any sort. She was too busy making life happen to notice that civilization

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Hamlet Mateo lives in Sonoma County. His work may be viewed at www.poemcomix.net.

Thai Buddhist Women Calling for Change

Written Anonymously, Excerpted by Sandy Boucher

In Thailand, a Southeast Asian “developing country,” a social movement has arisen among Buddhist nuns and laywomen to address serious inequities and exploitation in Thai society as a whole, through insistence on changes within the Theravada Buddhist religion. These women argue that there is a relationship between the inferior position of women in Thai society and the low status of women in Thai Buddhism (particularly as Theravada Buddhism is the state religion and most Thais are Buddhists), and they see the problems of rampant sex trafficking, child prostitution, and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDs as results of this inequity. In particular, they work for the full ordination of women, to establish a *bhikkhuni* (nuns’) *sangha*.

When I was in Bangkok at the “Outstanding Women in Buddhism” ceremony in March 2006 (see *TW Summer 2006*), I met some of these women and asked one of them, a nun, to submit an article to *Turning Wheel*. The following are excerpts from her analysis of the situation of Thai women in Buddhism. This new activism is very much underground, and the women are harassed and threatened in various ways by traditional Thai men and by the Theravada Buddhist establishment. For her safety, the author is not identified.

However, this document is a hopeful one, offering a practical approach to the problems plaguing Thailand, through the full participation of women. The women who speak here are obviously visionaries who have developed a road map for positive transformation and peace. —SB

Let’s take a close look at the life of a *maechee* in Thailand.

Now I will tell you about when I first ordained as a *maechee* (eight-precept nun in Thailand). The leader of the nuns in the temple told me, “We do not offer money, just a small stipend, but we do offer food to you. You must cook for the monks, wash dishes and cups for the monks, clean the kitchen, clean the temple. Then, when finished, you will get food.”

For two years I worked in the temple and did everything for the monks. Then I decided to stop because I got an idea. ‘I have an education. Why should I cook for the monks in the temple?’

Some monks spoke rudely of me; they said, “Lazy nun, bad nun.” I practiced meditation alone. So they cut my food. They cut my tiny allowance. I began to take dhamma classes outside of the temple, because

the temple monks wouldn’t teach a woman. A cousin helped with small money for food and bus fare.

Here is the experience of a Western nun in Thailand who has been active for women’s rights within Theravada Buddhism.

The police have attempted my arrest on three occasions in Thailand, I was also shot at in Bangkok near Sukhumvit Road, and once there was an attempted kidnapping of me off of a bus in central Bangkok. In the countryside, the gate to my temple was locked. The water supply to my temple was cut. A gang came and threatened my nuns, saying the nuns must give them an enormous sum of money, or face violence. In the same village four men attempted to kidnap me as well. There were numerous visa obstructions, and the refusal to issue a visa as a religious worker. I have travelled the world and never been denied a religious worker visa except in Thailand, or treated in such a manner as in Thailand.

She looks at the root of the problem in a poem she wrote:

*I see a luxury tour bus go by on the highway,
and it is full of little Asian boys in orange robes.
I look to see if there are any little girls.
There aren’t any.*

There aren’t any. And, it is just this lack of young poor girls in temples that results in the presence of young poor girls in brothels. Poor boys have an option, but poor girls do not.

The Influence of the Doctrine of Karma

According to the Thai interpretation of karma, a woman is beaten by a man because she beat him in a past life. A woman is raped by a man because she raped him in a past life. A woman is sold into sexual slavery because she sold a person in the past.

In the teachings of the Buddha, karma should not be used to blame the victim of a crime. A person is simply to be aware of one’s actions in the present. However, in Thailand karma has a negative connotation, imbued with predestination, control, and superstition. These teachings of karma are misuses of Buddhism to oppress women.

For example: one starts out born a woman because of bad karma, gives money, food and gifts to the monks throughout one’s life, even going into sexual slavery to support a brother’s religious career, in the hope of a bet-

ter rebirth, and finally, to be reborn as a man. Religion can be viewed as spiritual pimping in the case of a young woman who engages in sex work and receives money to give to the monks in order to gain merit.

This gender inequality results in cultural lack of respect for women; no appropriate spiritual counsel or refuge for women and girls; fewer life options and opportunities for upward mobility for girls and women; epidemic prostitution, domestic violence, and child abuse; AIDS; increased poverty; and infrastructural decay in Southeast Asia.

And, from an individual level to a national level, influenced by poverty, global militarization, economic disparity and so on, gender inequality goes from life to life and becomes a pathway for sexploitation, supported by the mis-teachings of a religious ideology to blame women. Over time, this is the result: one in 22 persons in Cambodia is living with HIV/AIDS, one in 50 in Burma, and one in 60 in Thailand, with an expected half million AIDS orphans in Thailand.

How the Process of Change Will Take Place

The Thai populace is in general passive and change-resistant in many areas, especially in the area of religion. However, behind the scenes, the energy of women is mounting, and women are beginning to no longer tolerate the extreme discrimination and injustices and are venturing out on their own to establish refuges.

For Thailand this is a time in which different ideas are coming into conflict in the domain of the Thai Theravada Buddhist religion. It is important that the scholars keep their critique heavy on the flaws of the religion and point out a better future direction. Scholars may call upon the U.N. Declarations on the Rights of the Child to protect the young boys from the epidemic pedophilia in Thai Buddhist temples. Writings of this nature will benefit children, decrease faith in monks, and challenge the community to empower women as spiritual leaders.

Spiritually, in Buddhism, we will see women masters arising as *bhikkhunis*, and in other roles as well. They will provide refuge and training for women and girls. In Thailand, we have 30,000 temples for men and about 24 temples for women. We have 330,000 monks and a couple dozen fully empowered women masters. Thus, we face a social disease of prostitution and AIDS. With equal numbers of temples for women and men scattered throughout the country, and equal numbers of fully ordained women, the social disease will decrease, and stability will increase. It may take a few generations, yet it is going to occur, as the Buddha noted that the health of a community is based upon the four-fold sangha of *bhikkhus* (monks), *bhikkhunis*, *upasakas* (laymen), and *upasikas* (laywomen).

The religiously inspired social development may first begin with helping village women become economically strengthened through job training. Then the movement can expand into counseling. The lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and lives overwhelmed with personal problems that impede women's ability to cope and cause poor motivation can be addressed through small job-training programs. The village women need to be brought into the circle of interaction with the emerging women spiritual masters in order to establish effective relationships. The women in the communities can learn to work harmoniously together, rather than, at worst, selling each other's daughters into the sex trade. This will take women spiritual leaders who are organizers and change agents. Women who can move funds. Women who can bypass the local elites and male leaders in their quest for change to empower women and girls.

Women masters will need to understand some fundamental feminist ideology and gender-equal teachings, as the integration of feminist and Buddhist teachings will have far-reaching and lasting impact.

For example, we can hear of one woman's awakening experience.

I grew up in a traditional rural village located in northern Chiang Mai, Thailand. Thirty years ago, our way of life was influenced solely by Buddhist and local Thai culture. The village had no electricity, no tap water, and unpaved roads, which made the community economically self-sufficient. The temple was the main community center for both religious and social life. The temple abbot was from our area and was very committed to his practice and to the dharma training of young male novices. Whenever someone was ill, he would be the one to pay a visit and conduct ceremonies to help ease their mental suffering. In return for his spiritual guidance, the community pitched in to take care of the temple's material needs. It was a tradition that the best food should always be offered to the temple. Throughout most of our lives, both personal (birth, sicknesses, deaths) and communal (weddings, house warmings, festivals) activities have been connected to the temple and the monks.

My father was a devout Buddhist. If he would have had the means to, he would have chosen to donate huge amounts of money to the temple. As my father aged, he maintained a close relationship with the temple and the abbot. My father did not drink but he did have several wives. He was a generous person but also a violent and controlling husband and father. Back then, poverty was a common experience of suffering for many of the village folks. However, the difference between my family and our neighbors was the constant violence that occurred in our household. I do not recall that I ever felt bad about being poor; the most difficult part of my childhood was that I always lived in fear of the violence that could erupt at any moment. Whenever we did not

have enough food to eat we could always borrow some from our neighbor, but when our father threatened or beat us, we had nowhere to turn for help. Likewise, nobody ever came to rescue us. The abbot would pay visits to the poor and the ill, but when a man was beating his wife and children, he did not intervene.

It was only when I became a feminist in my late twenties that I could make more sense of the events of my childhood. My personal experience with domestic violence has fostered my commitment to feminism and nonviolence work.

Each person enters human society and internalizes the society's communicative rules and symbolic order. The more we understand the sexual politics of a cultural/intellectual/spiritual heritage, the better able we are to "deconstruct" and "transform" it. So,

- Let the women speak.
- Let the women quest for their independence
- Let it be known that it is good to be born a woman.
- Let it be known that it is good for women to have friendships with other women.
- And women leaders must strategically accept all women's group identities (lay women, *maechees*, *samaneris* [novices], *bhikkhunis*, *theravada*, *mahayana*, and *vajrayana*) in order to mobilize political solidarity.

Poverty is fueling the prostitution epidemic. We need to shelter and educate girls in equal measure as we do the boys. Therefore we encourage ratification and full implementation of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols on the involvements of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

We will intensify our efforts to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions, including trafficking and smuggling in human beings.

Now the women at the grass roots can have a vocabulary with which to discuss issues of violence against women and children—a vocabulary which supersedes the mis-teachings from the Buddhist religion of southeast Asia.

A Transformed Thai Society

When social development goals are accomplished for women in Buddhism in Thailand, there will be a women's temple in every village—a place for women and girls to study, practice, and become leaders and protectors of their communities. There will be early childhood care and after-school educational programs, as well as relationship and general counseling services.

The prostitution epidemic and AIDS epidemic will lessen, and the women's economy will become more localized and sustainable. The sex trade income will decrease as a major source of national income.

Thailand will experience an increase in literacy. In the rural communities now, many cannot read and write. Thus, adults and children alike will have an opportunity to more fully participate in society.

Thailand will experience greater health care and social service provisions, as the women masters will coordinate health clinics and care for the elderly and the orphaned children. Women's temples will also serve as a refuge for women in need, women in transitional periods of their lives, and women experiencing domestic violence or lack of right livelihood.

Women masters will reduce poverty by researching the needs of villagers in order to connect them with programs in skills training and other resources.

The key is to inspire and uplift the existing women in Buddhism. Honor the current women spiritual leaders, and help create new ones. ❖

Jensen, continued from page 69

was flowering in her own kitchen. I followed her one morning to the garden, which lay fallow now, and watched her unscrew the lids of the bean jars and dump the contents onto the compost heap. And when she saw me there, she mopped her eyes dry on her apron and put me to work helping her.

Mr. Mujaku and his wife had an agreement to meet at a certain fountain in a square in Hiroshima in the event that their house was destroyed in an air raid. Mr. Mujaku was at work in the outskirts of Hiroshima when the bomb exploded, and Mrs. Mujaku was at home. They both survived the initial blast, but their house was left leaning precariously while the whole neighborhood was being consumed in sudden flames. Mr. Mujaku, realizing how extensive the destruction of the city had been, left work in search of his wife. Finding their house and neighborhood in flames and not knowing if his wife was even alive, he went to the fountain where they'd agreed to meet. He found her waiting for him there. She'd rescued a few biscuits and some tea from the house before it caught fire. And while Hiroshima lay in waste about them and their very bodies hummed with the lethal radiation that would one day take their lives from them, Mr. and Mrs. Mujaku, in a saving gesture beyond the power of any bomb, sat on a bench by the fountain and drank their tea and ate their biscuits as they'd always done. ❖

Lin Jensen is the founder of the Chico Zen Sangha in Chico, California, where he writes and works in defense of the earth. His most recent book is Bad Dog! Love, Beauty, and Redemption in Dark Places (Wisdom Publications, 2005).

American Buddhists and Worker Justice

A Call to Action

by **Mushim Ikeda-Nash**

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate lovingkindness and learn ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. —Thich Nhat Hanh

In the richest country in the world, more than two million full-time, year-round workers live below the poverty line, struggling to pay for necessities such as food, housing, healthcare, transportation, and childcare.

—U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty in the United States: 2002"

The Thich Nhat Hanh quote, above, is a contemporary interpretation of the traditional Buddhist precept "Do not steal." It calls upon us to deepen our investigation of what "stealing" is: we may not be robbing banks, or breaking and entering other people's homes, but are we supporting exploitation of workers through the clothing, shoes, and food we buy? How far are we willing to go out of our usual comfort zones, how deeply are we willing to dig into our pockets, in order to support fair-trade goods and worker justice?

How many Buddhist clergy and lay leaders turn up at worker strikes to show their support, in alliance with interfaith efforts? How many teachers giving dharma talks or Buddhist sermons address the issues of living wage and worker rights? And if we ourselves are laboring in exploitative workplaces, do we feel we can reach out to Buddhist coalitions for solidarity and support?

Buddhist teachings provide a big-picture view spanning many generations, acknowledging that systemic greed, hatred, and delusion do not change overnight. When we examine the "ancient twisted karma" of innumerable human choices and actions, we can see that intertwined with the cause of worker justice in the United States is the plight of immigrants and undocumented workers, the "life-threatening disease" of racism, and the breakdown of American public education.

We all need the basics: food, shelter, clothing, and medical care. Grinding poverty, for those who are working as hard as they can, leads to constant suffering and fear. As American Buddhists, we need to help ourselves and others realize the means to attain Right Livelihood, or nonharmful ways of making a decent living. Everyone, without exception, wants to live with dignity and safety, in happiness and in peace. When we help others, we help ourselves.

So, what can we do? Reflecting on our own actions, we can appreciate choices we've made in the past that sup-

port worker justice. When my son was seven years old, the Oakland, California public school teachers went on an extended strike. We never crossed the picket line, but I hadn't been prepared to do home schooling, and my own work schedule was disrupted completely. I recall arriving at a local science museum one afternoon and finding a group of similarly desperate parents sitting outside, with screaming kids swarming over a large cement dinosaur. Greeting each other with exhausted nods, we sat together in silence. Convenient? No. Necessary? Yes! We supported the Oakland teachers' union, and we made it through the strike, one day at a time.

Let's take a vow today to take a step, small or large, for worker justice. Let's think of one thing we can do, no matter how seemingly small, to help workers in our neighborhood, our schools, and our community to earn a living wage and improve their situations. Working together, we can do it!

May all beings be happy.

May they be joyous and live in safety.

—from the Buddha's teaching on lovingkindness ❖

Mushim Ikeda-Nash writes the Family Practice column in Turning Wheel and is a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship's International Advisory Council.

Interfaith Worker Justice

is a network of people of faith that seeks to mobilize the religious community in the U.S. to support workers.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Connect with a local Interfaith Worker Justice affiliate group in your area. See www.iwj.org for a list of local IWJ groups.
- Invite a union leader to speak to your congregation about the values shared by the religious community and the labor movement.
- Support union organizing campaigns by participating in rallies and candlelight vigils and writing letters to your local newspaper.
- Ask your elected representatives to support public policies that seek justice for all workers. Visit www.iwj.org to learn about current policy issues.
- Buy products that are union-made or fair-trade certified, and stay at union hotels when you travel. For union-made products, visit www.unionlabel.org; for fair trade products, www.transfairusa.org; and for union hotels, www.hotellaboradvisor.info.



F · O · R · U · M

What's a Buddhist to Do?

In this time of planetary suffering, we can be helped and encouraged by specific models and examples of what to do and of what others have done. Each person's time and energy is limited, but working on different fronts, we can all be part of what Joanna Macy calls "the great turning."

So we asked readers and writers to send us 200 words or less about what actions they suggest we take to foster peace on the planet—before it's too late.

A wonderful chorus of voices replied (not all of them in 200 words), and we hope you find our forum thought-provoking.

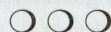


Gun violence is far too common in my hometown, Milwaukee. Usually involving minorities and the young, it seems to make the newspapers nearly every day. As a vipassana practitioner with ties to the Quaker community, I've watched this trend with increasing pain and a sense of futility. Finally, about four years ago, a small group of parents, teachers, social workers, and community activists met, adapted a plan used in Indianapolis, and created the Peace Learning Center. To date, we have offered workshops in nonviolent conflict resolution to more than 1,300 inner-city fourth-graders. After a day of sharing, role-playing, and cooperative games, both kids and their teachers have offered strongly positive feedback.

With financial backing from private donations, our board has plans for follow-up sessions and expansion to other grades. Sometimes, of course, we "peacemakers" find ourselves at odds with one another. We also continue to learn as we struggle with our own fear, greed, and ignorance.

Will our modest experiment make a difference? I hope so. Our police chief noted recently that people need alternatives to violence. If, at some point, just one person uses something learned with us instead of reaching for a weapon, we will have mattered.

—Don Austin, Codirector, Milwaukee Peace Learning Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin



My Two Cents

The current world situation is, as one friend has put it, a race between fear and consciousness. We can use the troubling crises we face as opportunities to help people wake up and become agents for positive change. For instance, with war an ever-present concern, we can help young people clarify

their values regarding the first precept by helping them develop a portfolio for conscientious objector status in the event of a draft. In the process, it opens them to real spiritual inquiry.

Most importantly, whatever action we engage will be most beneficial to ourselves and others if it comes from loving life. Underneath anger and indignation is deep caring and compassion. Seeing *An Inconvenient Truth* recently, I was struck by how the presentation appeals to our love for the Earth and our caring about life as a basis for action. Actions that are based in that positive energy magnetize and inspire others to act much more effectively than actions rooted in anger and fear. Help people get in touch with what concerns them and how their actions can express their caring in a way that most inspires others.

—James Baraz, Berkeley, California



200 Words and Over 2,000 Years

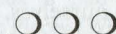
Buddhism is relatively new in North America, coming here and surviving through immigrant Buddhists and teachers from Buddhist cultures. In our process of integrating the teachings of mutual causality and interdependent co-arising let us take a look at some of our responses to the religious and cultural sides of what these communities offer. Here is a story from Reverend Ryo Imamura, born into an 18-generation lineage of Buddhist priests of the Jodo Shin sect, currently a professor of East-West Psychology at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington.

He took his class to two Buddhist temples: one was an immigrant Buddhist temple, all Asian, and one was a convert Buddhist temple, all of the dominant culture, European.

He later asked the students to talk about their experiences. The students reported that they learned in detail about meditation practice in the convert Buddhist temple, but in the immigrant Buddhist temple they learned very little about meditation but they nevertheless felt that the community embodied kindness and compassion and the teachings and "they got lunch."

Perhaps a focus on our spiritual hunger for connection and community is required in order to fuel any effective engagement in the world.

—Michele Benzamin-Miki, Manzanita Village Retreat Center, Warner Springs, California





In the U.S. we have been seeing the imposition of increasingly draconian measures, named after the Greek lawmaker who so loved the death penalty that his name is still known. It's as if Draco has come back to life and is striding across the land, bringing with him the trials of children as adults, decades-long sentences for addicts, the incarceration of over 2 million Americans, life without possibility of parole for thousands, the incarceration of the mentally ill and disabled, sensory deprivation cells, the "rendering" of nameless people into secret prisons, imprisonment without charges at Guantanamo, government-authorized torture, and lethal injection. All of these are connected strands in the cord of repression that is strangling our Constitution and our civil rights.

As gratitude practice, whenever I open a door, my key in my hand, I think of those who are locked away.

Rights have never been guaranteed but are always won through struggle. An example of something simple you can do to support human rights is to join the ACLU and Amnesty International, two leading groups fighting for human rights.

—*Melody Ermachild Chavis, Berkeley, California*



As a Buddhist who tries on a daily basis to be just a good friend and to help others only because it's the right thing to do. I see a trend that is leading us toward a world of greed, hatred, and the loss of our human rights.

Fear and mistrust of others is seen daily in the eyes of our fellow beings. We do not hear, see, or speak of the evil that surrounds us as we go about our daily lives. We refuse to see the horrors of war, the suffering of the homeless (90,000 in L.A. alone). Our country is being sold off right before our eyes, and our government leaders lie to us and keep us in a state of fear and dread as we slowly lose our freedoms bit by bit. We must speak out to our youth to help them find constructive means to change the path we have taken, for this path leads to total loss of our freedom as human beings.

We need to pay attention to what our leaders are doing as they slowly take our rights away under the veil of fear. We need to wake up to the fact that people need jobs, low-cost housing, medical care, and better education for all. These are the things our congresspersons should be working on. Little has been done to help those who lost their homes in the Katrina tragedy. People are still displaced and jobs are lost. We need to work for change in November by getting rid of those who are not serving the people.

—*Ven. Suhita Dharma, Los Angeles*



The most critical thing we can do toward alleviating suffering is to radically rethink our relationship to our cars. This is not only an environmental issue, it's a public safety issue (1.2 million people die in auto accidents each year), and it's at the root of our dysfunctional and war-torn relationship with the Middle East. Driving a car is the most harmful thing we do on a daily basis.

For two years, while living in New England, I undertook an experiment of living a car-free life. It wasn't easy. I had to make life choices based on that commitment. I moved into an apartment within walking distance of my office. I shopped at small local stores rather than mega-malls and bought only what I could carry home. I walked through snow, sleet, and sun. I took the bus to visit friends. By not even owning a car, I made sure I didn't have a choice. Renunciation, in the tantric tradition, is about simplifying one's life, not for the sake of deprivation but rather to cut away everything that is extraneous and make space for what is essential.

Not having a car liberated me from the tyrannical hold that time has on most people. Because I didn't have the option of rushing around and cramming more things into my schedule, I became more relaxed. And my destructive footprint on the planet became much smaller.

Now, living back in California, the causes and conditions in my life have led me to choose to own and drive a car again. I have mixed feelings about this, and sometimes feel bad that I haven't lived up to my own high expectations on this issue.

I hope to return to a car-free life.

What can we do to get out of cars, or at least to lessen their impact? Try out Zipcar (www.zipcar.com) or one of the other car-sharing programs that have started in recent years (see www.carsharing.net/where.html for a global directory). Become an advocate for public transportation. Support the development of transit villages in your community. And best of all, if you can, sell your car and rediscover the joy of sore feet and deep breaths.

—*Maia Duerr, Oakland, California*



In a system as far gone as this, my jaded view is that specific, pragmatic actions simply put Band-aids on ever-spreading symptoms. Regardless of our efforts, the voracious corporate-capitalist dragon survives. Only starvation—NONCOOPERATION WITH THE SYSTEM—will ultimately bring it down. The rub is that noncooperation requires sacrifice and commitment, takes a long time, and is usually successful only in cultures where people are already so poor they have little to lose by taking such risks. Unfortunately, the majority of us in the U.S. are far too comfortable and have far too much to lose to dare engage in, say, a GENERAL STRIKE, or a major boycott. Nor are workers' unions strong enough these days to support this kind

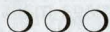


of radical action.

Nevertheless, I dream of the day when critical mass is achieved and a general strike actually shuts the system down, leaving the dragon stunned, reeling, crippled, on its knees, naked.

Meanwhile, as I practice noncooperation to the extent I am able, I wonder how many other people riding bikes, growing food, eating locally, simply, and seasonally, buying only necessities, will be required even to slow the dragon down?

—Dot Fisher-Smith, Ashland, Oregon



**Next Step for Democracy:
Sortitionally Selected Legislators**

Every passenger on the ship of state is supposed to have a ticket equal to every other. Since 300 million of us can't all sit in the same ship at the same time, we vote for representation.

But electoral balloting requires candidates to fight, at best in the dialectic of ideas, at worst...too well known. The process skews towards aggression, as well as oodles of money, media savvy, lack of disfigurement, shoe leather, and the right connections.

Huge numbers of erstwhile passengers—too humble, too poor, too plain, not shameless enough—never leave the dock. Their energy, their enthusiasm, their insights are left on the dock as well.

How to assure that every ticket counts? That representation is more closely proportional to population?

Sortition—that is, random selection, choice by lot.

Agreed, not everyone would want to take the job. And some would worry about incompetence.

OK, in order to put one's name in the pot for random selection, voluntary registration and a civics test—no more difficult than one for a driver's license—would be required. Once people were sortitionally selected they would receive orientation, training, staff, resources.

How to make it happen?

Think, organize, advocate.

See www.TheCommonLot.com.

—David Grant, Washington, DC



Being with Dying

What if I were to die today, or next week? What would I wish that I had done or said? Why wait?

These questions have been arising every day since I began volunteering at the Zen Hospice Project in San Francisco a few months ago. As I sit with residents who are dying, read to

them, feed them, or wheel them to the garden for a cigarette, I am aware of the fragility of their lives, of my life, of all life.

On my first afternoon at Zen Hospice we celebrated the birthday of a woman who was close to death. Her husband brought a cake large enough for everyone on the ward. He and his brothers were by her bedside as the staff and volunteers brought balloons, sang "Happy Birthday," cut the cake, and scooped ice cream. It seemed to me that she was surrounded by love. She died two days later.

Life is fragile, and life is precious. Every life, the life of every person on the planet. The life of planet Earth. Being with death, I am more aware of all the ways I can honor life.

—Tova Green, Muir Beach, California



Opening one's eyes to the fact of *dukkha* brings about a rude awakening from a state of spiritual slumber and is the first step on a path toward global healing. Such an awakening led the young man Gautama to begin his quest for ultimate liberation. But merely reading about statistics and happenings in far-off and unfamiliar places may not be sufficient to occasion this rude awakening. The young Gautama felt the "jolts" that turned his life around when he left the confines of his castle and went out to encounter persons afflicted with different forms of *dukkha*. We, too, may need to leave our havens of security and open ourselves to such encounters with our fellow human beings, for whom this global *dukkha* is an immediate reality.

Perhaps a trip south of the U.S. border to a rural farm in Latin America, perhaps a visit to a village in Southeast Asia, or to a refugee center in Africa, or to an inner city in the United States, may open new horizons in our own lives, and cause us to ask, "How can this be, in this twenty-first century world of ours?"

If I choose not to turn my gaze away, I find myself now a member of the sangha of those who acknowledge this global *dukkha*, and who seek to lead a life directed toward its healing.

Our fellow sangha members are not necessarily Buddhists. They may be Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Wiccan, Baha'i, secular humanist, atheist, concerned citizen, ordinary human being. But as we share our sense of our global woundedness, and as we seek to lead our lives in ways that will contribute to its healing, we celebrate this common ground we share as sangha.

As we continue with eyes wide open and give ourselves to some particular task we choose for global healing, we may meet companions along the path in unexpected places. It could be in a study group at a local church or synagogue or practice center that focuses on a theme such as global poverty, ecological destruction, or militarization. It could be in an information campaign to call attention to the violence in



Darfur. It could be in calling on acquaintances to send assistance to earthquake victims in Indonesia. It could be in writing letters to congresspeople for legislative action toward justice for immigrants. It could be in getting together with some friends to form a Buddhist Peace Fellowship chapter, or an ecumenical action group, in one's own area.

"You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one." We can find joy in meeting others who give their lives to addressing global dukkha in their own particular ways, especially when we are feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of our global malaise. This is so, even in the midst of the pains and travails and frustrations that await us on this path. Companions on the path empower us all the more to go on, together, toward realizing the impossible dream.

The Bodhisattva vows, familiar to many of us, come to mind:

*Sentient beings are numberless; I vow to free them.
Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to extinguish them.
Dharma gates are innumerable; I vow to master them.
The Enlightened Way is unsurpassable; I vow to embody it.*

—Ruben L.F. Habito, Maria Kannon Zen Center, Dallas, Texas



Building Sangha

I can't help but feel a slight bit of embarrassment when someone says, "Thank you for all the activist work you do." I haven't done very much. In my view, someone who has gone to Iraq to deliver medicines has done a lot. Someone who has gone to Palestine to prevent the bulldozing of homes has done a lot. Yet I suspect those people would also say, "I've done what I can, but I haven't done enough."

I don't mean to discount what I have done. In the wake of 9/11, I looked around and bewailed the absence of a Buddhist Peace Fellowship chapter in Portland, Oregon. With the encouragement of some friends, I took steps to bring one into being (again). As I put one foot in front of another, I realized that I was stepping into a new vow: to nourish this fledgling Buddhist Peace Fellowship chapter until it could be sustained beyond me and my own participation. But along with that vow was an understanding that it had taken a war to shake me out of my complacency. If a BPF chapter had existed, I would have belonged to it, but until this urgency propelled me forward, I had been waiting for someone else to step forward, someone who was a leader, someone who had authority.

Taking on this new vow also meant taking on a different flavor of Buddhist practice. How does one negotiate a small democratic group? How does one lead without leading? I am learning that whatever small piece I do is important and allows a space for someone else to do their important piece. For now the most important work for me is to build the group towards self-sustenance.

For many of us, the most important work we do is building sangha: nurturing friendships and families; connecting to each other in creative ways that allow for new models of being peace. This may not be dramatic work, but it has the potential to reach far. On a practical level, a strong sense of sangha allows a chapter member to act not only on her own conscience but as a representative of the Portland BPF, as my friend Christina Hulbe did when she and others got themselves arrested in the office of our senator, Ron Wyden. Since then Wyden has urged the Senate to "act as a co-equal branch of government," and to vote on how long we keep troops in Iraq.

There is always a need to do more. As we say in Zen, "Train as if your hair were on fire." But we can be most effective if we also recognize what we *are* doing to contribute to the cause of peace in the world. And we can't be waiting around for someone else to do it.

—Heidi Enji Hoogstra, Portland, Oregon



If you're over 40 years old, invest some serious time and energy in the next generations. We might die before the planet is totally wrecked; they might not. What do young people need? Find out and give it! Youth need mentors and adult friends who care about them.

Things you can help a younger person with: how to balance a checkbook and reconcile a bank statement; how to write a business letter; how to shop for car insurance; what it means to register with Selective Service; how to cook a healthy meal; how to calm down if your boyfriend/girlfriend dumps you; what your options are if you are having a conflict with your teacher at school; basic computer skills; basic research skills; critical thinking skills; what to do if you think you have a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Remember that this is for their sake, not yours—ask them what they need and let them take the lead. Ask them to teach you: what music they like, what movies they're watching, what games they're playing, what their experience is in their own words.

—Mushim Ikeda-Nash, Oakland, California



In the fall of 2004 with the war in Iraq entering its second year, I began sitting daily peace vigils on the streets of Chico, California, in protest of war. I took to the streets because I couldn't do otherwise. There are times in my life when I've felt a call that demands an answer. This was one of those times. Almost every day now for nearly two years I've bicycled from the "Avenues" neighborhood where I live and crossed Chico



Creek into the downtown area, where I pick out a patch of sidewalk on Main or Broadway streets. There I put down my meditation mat and cushion, and sit an hour's peace vigil. I do this as a public witness for nonviolence in a time of war.

I've brought my protest to the very place where my townspeople come to shop or get a cup of coffee. They may acknowledge me or ignore me as they see fit, but I am here, nevertheless, to remind them that something has gone drastically wrong in our nation, and I'll be back tomorrow to remind them again.

—Lin Jensen, Chico, California



I want to challenge fellow Buddhists to be more Buddhist about engaged Buddhism. Are we for the most part no more than Buddhists who are socially engaged? Even if we are quiet and sit down when doing it? To dharma friends, magnetized by one issue or another, who rush off to get more engaged with this or that, I suggest that we tend to be long on the engagement and short on the Buddhism.

First, shouldn't we be particularly concerned with following the example of the Buddha and trying to communicate, both to fellow activists and the wider public, the Buddhist diagnosis and the Buddhist remedy for the big issues of the day? To do so without religious homily but in convincing, down-to-earth language is a challenge worth taking on.

Secondly, I would urge more recognition that it is the inner work of self-awareness which distinguishes the Buddhist activist, the turning inward of attention to what motivates the self below the surface of urgent busyness. This is our unique gift, of which we are at present selling the world short.

Yet it is not only our own emotional insight that is vital. We must also persuade a significant number of fellow citizens to undertake the inner work. Unless, with like-minded allies, we build the foundation of a whole radical social culture of awakening we shall never achieve a global, ecologically sustainable commonwealth. The many projects proposed in this *Turning Wheel* will give us credibility, and some audience access, and even do a little bit of good in the world. But they are only the starting point. And not our fundamental dharmic work.

—Ken Jones, Aberystwyth, Wales



• Work less. We all work too hard and usually for some system or another (the establishment or the anti-establishment establishment!). We don't have time to honor our familial obliga-

tions (both small and large), create community, and work with others on issues of social justice.

• Take the time to be with children—they only have a toe or two in the system and can show us the folly of our "important" jobs and lives.

• Practice restraint. Living on less, dampening our personal desires, and sacrificing for the welfare of others are virtues rarely rewarded by our current economic system. Restraint is at the heart of any spiritual path and characterizes spiritual development and maturity. Not buying into our personal and societal projections is the beginning of a true revolution.

• Experiment with the power of love, kindness, and service. The Buddha is purported to have said, "If you knew what I know about the power of giving, you would share your meal any way you can."

—Larry Keil, Seattle, Washington



Engaged Buddhists need to think more specifically about societies that would embody wisdom, compassion, and nonviolence. In recent decades, E. F. Schumacher called for "economics as if people mattered," Chögyam Trungpa urged an "enlightened society," and Buddhadasa explored "dhammic socialism." Now we must amplify these visions. Imagine, for example, an education system that incorporated the cultivation of mindfulness. Or what would it be like to live in a community that had mastered the art of ecological sustainability? Rather than starting from assessments of what is "realistic," it is liberating to start with an ideal and work back from there. Yes, utopian schemes failed horribly in the 20th century, but that does not mean we should stop thinking constructively about the future. In traditional Buddhism, intimations of pure lands and buddha realms inspired sacred texts, great art, and strong practice. How would we visualize a pure land today? Embracing the future in a bodhisattvic spirit is a way to look forward without devaluing the present. Buddhism affirms that individuals can awaken to their inherent wisdom and compassion, their boundless Buddhature. Do societies have Buddhature too?

—Kenneth Kraft, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



We are in the middle of an extreme situation. Our president has proclaimed himself above the law, claiming he is entitled to wage preemptive wars of aggression, establish torture camps around the world, spy on Americans without oversight, and issue signing statements ignoring laws of Congress, all of which he has actually done and promises to continue doing.



He calls himself the "Decider," which de facto makes him the unaccountable dictator of the country's policies. Perhaps most alarming, all this has happened without significant opposition from Congress or the mainstream media. What's a Buddhist to do? First, we can resolutely speak the truth we see, as I have just done. Buddhism is about awareness and caring. I do not know how we will stop the war and restore accountable governance. But I know that awareness has transformative power. As a practice, I share information, forwarding news articles and commentaries from alternative sources to an ad hoc e-mail list. I also initiated a Teach-in and Vigil about Torture and the Unaccountable Presidency at U.C. Berkeley Law School, whose Prof. John Yoo is one of the legal architects for these Bush policies (see *Turning Wheel*, Summer 2006). We do not know how our world will transform, but our diligent efforts to encourage independent awareness are part of the solution.

Further, as Buddhists we must not succumb to debilitating anger or despair. May we be mindful that the problem is not merely the fault of a small group of greedy men, but that we ourselves are part of a larger context, a culture of consumerism and corporate greed, and a national economy based on militarism. Our truth-telling must include this wider reality.

—Rev. Taigen Leighton, Berkeley, California



Engaged Buddhism sometimes requires that we put our bodies on the line in civil disobedience.

Since the No Child Left Behind Act mandates that public schools allow military recruiters on campus, we decided to insist on our equal access rights in countermessaging military propaganda. We are members of Floating Leaf Sangha, and in conjunction with a local peace group, we initiated nonviolent civil disobedience at the local high school while military recruiters were present. We were arrested for criminal trespass and are facing trial.

Our children unwittingly put themselves in a position where they may take human lives. We want them to consider this very seriously beforehand. We want to help them cultivate a reverence for life.

Our goal is to create a statewide precedent whereby concerned parents and citizens in every Alaskan community will enjoy the right to present opposing viewpoints to military service. For those interested in this work, further practical information is available from www.leavemychildalone.org, www.afsc.org, and www.veteransforpeace.org.

—Michael LeMay and Deborah Poore, Homer, Alaska



Excerpts from a Journal

Walk for life. Walk into the future with a sense of purpose, with a lively step, even if walking into the claws of defeat. Walk on the road that will make you more alive, not the safe path that will change little in yourself, in others. Walk because it will give life to your spirit, life to the spirit of the people you walk with, life to the spirit of the people you walk for. Dhammayietra gives one a simple lifestyle, a being with, dwelling with, being on the road with, dwelling in wats, not following the conventional.

Truth must be spoken to power. No lie can live forever. Speak out with love, speak out with hope, speak out without fear. Continue to speak with your feet.

Affirm the generation who walks ahead. Foster the generation who walks after. For indeed the walk we are on never ends. Keep walking these days. Keep listening. Walk in the spirit that walks on when the flesh drops away. Don't be afraid.

Speak from where your feet have walked. Speak for the people who have no feet. Speak for the people who are tired of war. Speak of what you know. Speak of policies that kill. Speak to whomever will listen. Speak from your poverty, not your wealth. Speak for the people who share the same short breath of life.

—Bob Maat, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



One of my main concerns in these times is how I keep my own spirits up.

I am 65 and want so much to embody the joy amidst the "bad news," as the Dalai Lama does. So I have to choose my actions carefully and reserve time for my wonderful friends, all the flowers, my dog, and my partner Howard, and not fizzle out with a broken heart.

I think that our "homework assignment" is to embody as much light and love as we can muster, like flashlights in this very dark night of our country's soul. To do that, I'm trying not to do things back to back. So I pick a few things closest to my heart and work on them with people I love.

That means four areas for me. First, our disastrous policies in the Middle East have caused me to join the Fellowship of Reconciliation on trips to the Occupied Territories, Gaza, and Israel to work with people on both sides who believe in nonviolence. On my return I have shared what I learned with as many people as possible. Another trip is planned for November 2006, with Scott Kennedy, who has been to the region over 20 times. Other peace delegations are planned throughout the year (contact www.forusa.org).

Another group with whom I went to Iraq is Voices for Creative Nonviolence, formerly called Voices in the Wilderness and led by Kathy Kelly. They are planning a number of activities here in the U.S. this coming year.

Second, I work with Kyoto-USA. We go to towns and cities all over the U.S. to ask them to sign on to the Kyoto Protocols



and in this way bypass the Bush administration's refusal to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Check out our website at www.kyotousa.org.

Third, we have raised puppies for the organization called Canine Companions for Independence based in Santa Rosa. They train dogs to assist people in wheelchairs. If you don't have time to do that but you already have an animal you would like to share with people who are "shut in" at convalescent homes and hospitals, check the website of the Friendship Foundation, www.friendship-foundation.org.

Lastly, we try to connect with kids who have had a very hard time and could use a mentor for everything from homework to hikes in the lovely hills (contact Youth Homes, at www.youthhomes.org). And when we are in Yosemite, where my husband works, we have kids from various children's shelters come and stay with us and hike and swim in the mountains.

This is a long-winded way of saying, let's follow our hearts and fill them up with the wonderful people around us, so we don't lose hope in our world or each other. In the film *Harold and Maude*, Harold asks the 79-year-old Maude why she doesn't give up on life and on people. She jabs him in the ribs and says, "But Harold, they're my species!"

—Lynn MacMichael, Walnut Creek, California



Being the Teachings

Escalation of violence is everywhere. Newly elected Prime Minister Steven Harper, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, has just announced a \$15 billion infusion into the Canadian military. More than 2,000 Canadian soldiers are in Afghanistan with more on the way. They're going after the poppy fields.

I'm witnessing the militarization of Canada! My Canada—where only 10 years ago I took pride in knowing that our entire military could fit into one U.S. destroyer. I boasted that we were repelling the world's largest military power by throwing potatoes. But we're not throwing potatoes anymore. Steven Harper and his conservative government aren't repelling the U.S. Instead, they are turning Canada into a wing of the American military.

I walk the edge between despair and empowerment with this news. How do I hold firm with *bodhicitta*, now?

The teachings nudge me toward empowerment. I can model kind speech and friendliness in my family and in my community. I can speak out for peace in "Zen Force," the column I write for our local paper; I can act for peace by joining the board of the Golden Women's Centre; and I can teach peace at conferences and workshops. My practice turns me into a walking example of the teachings of Siddhartha. When I become the teachings I create pockets of peace wherever I stop and speak.

—Kuya Minogue, Golden, British Columbia, Canada



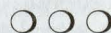
Artists and Activists Working Together

Do any of us think we are doing enough during this planetary crisis? I didn't. After a 10-day intensive with Joanna Macy in the summer of 2004, I resolved to use my craft as a writer/performer more effectively by connecting with organizations doing the work I cared about and creating original performance pieces that dealt specifically with their objectives.

I had the opportunity to do this when Tri-Valley Cares, a citizen's watchdog group monitoring the Lawrence Livermore Nuclear Laboratory (in Livermore, California), invited me to appear at their yearly fundraiser. I developed a performance piece about the making of the atomic bomb, using the storytelling mode. I created a fictional character—a woman married to one of the scientists—as the narrator of the piece. The story she tells is based on facts, and the quotes I used are actual statements made by several scientists on the project. The feedback I received at the event affirmed the power and impact of the performance. Excerpts from the script are on the following page.

I would love to see every organization dedicated to saving the planet have an artist working with them in order to reach the public with more impact. I can imagine a website that would facilitate these partnerships. Too often, vital information is communicated in less than vital ways. Facts are not enough. We need to reach people's hearts, minds, and guts so that they are motivated to take action.

—Naomi Newman, Mill Valley, California



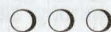
The going is rough and the defeats are many. So it helps hugely when activists are given the chance to see their work in a larger context. An artist can help them step back and get a fresh perspective on the significance of what they are doing.

I was one of the speakers the night that Naomi Newman gave her presentation at the fund-raiser for Tri-Valley Cares. My talk was about depleted uranium, and the information I had to give was essential but depressing.

When I was done, I sat down, and with great relief I watched Naomi take her place alone at the front of the room. She began to play the harmonium and then to speak in the voice of the Los Alamos wife, and I saw the attention in the room deepen. I saw muscles relax. She invited us to see the struggle in terms of *story*. We stepped beyond our own little agendas to a place where we laughed and cried together.

People blame themselves for their defeats, rather than seeing the beauty of their intention. Art takes us beyond the constant measuring of how we scored. We deserve this.

—Joanna Macy





The Wife's Story

by Naomi Newman

I've come to tell you a story, a tale of unintentional folly, of human brilliance and human blindness, of men, good men, who unleashed a force they didn't fully understand. How do I know? I was the wife of one of those men.

December 1938. I'm not so good with dates but I remember that one because my first son had just turned one year old. My husband came late from the laboratory—silent, pale, looking older than I remembered him. It was a very cold night in New York. He took off his hat, coat, scarf, staring at the wall, and then blurted out, "Can you imagine, my dear, Otto has split the atom!" Otto Hahn was a chemist friend we had left behind in Germany a few years before. After the Nazis came to power, Jewish scientists were...oh well, you know all about that! He looked at me as if I should say something that would change what we both understood. "The implications, my dear," he said, "the implications. The world is headed for grief!"

We moved to Los Alamos, New Mexico, in the summer of 1943. My son was five and a half years old. The United States government had gathered the most brilliant physicists from around the world to work, hurriedly and secretly, on a project to help end the war. That was all the wives were told. We were sworn to secrecy without even knowing what it was we were not allowed to talk about.

The men worked so hard, sometimes through the night. They seemed to be driven by demons. But at the same time they were excited, exhilarated. There was a kind of mania in the air. Once, at a New Year's Eve party, we were all a little tipsy. A few of the men were hovering in the corner, rather like a football huddle, when one of them shouted out in an angry voice: "As a scientist it is my responsibility to make things work that will work. How they're used is not my responsibility!"

I tried to put the pieces together. But it was useless. I stopped asking my husband questions. He would become so agitated, rubbing his hands together like Lady Macbeth. Yet it was very, very clear that he would not break whatever oath they had sworn him to. The husbands and wives orbited around each other in two separate circles, the men trying to save the world and the women trying to save some semblance of normal life.

The rest of the sad tale you know. You know how in August 1945, Hiroshima and Nagasaki became

boiling cauldrons of hell on earth. I still have the letter my husband wrote to me while I was visiting my mother. It said, "Using atomic bombs against Japan is one of the greatest blunders of history. Dropping the bomb on Hiroshima was a tragic mistake, dropping it on Nagasaki was an atrocity. I tried to prevent it, but without success. It is very difficult to see what wise course of action is possible from here on."

When we first came to Los Alamos our husbands explained that the work must proceed so quickly because they were in a race to accomplish this "Project X" before the Nazis could. But when Germany surrendered, revealing they had no atomic bomb, the project continued full force. Only two scientists out of hundreds resigned, only two. My husband was not one of them. Also, when I look back I realize there was not one Asian scientist in the group.

My husband is dead now for many years. He does not know that his adopted country spends over six and a half billion dollars a year to make bigger and more deadly atomic weapons. He doesn't have to face that there are hundreds of nuclear reactors around the world producing tons and tons of poisoned waste no one knows how to handle. He doesn't have to be haunted by the never-ending parade of people killed or maimed by exposure to nuclear energy, or worry about its effect on future generations.

I, on the other hand, know. I do not want to. I try to forget, to distract myself. But then I remember how the citizens of the Third Reich made themselves "not know." How they kept silent. I cannot deny. You see, I have three grandchildren.

I often wonder what might have happened had the wives known what their husbands were doing. Could we have stopped them? Would we even have tried? Maybe yes, maybe no. We were very young, in our twenties and early thirties.

Curious, is it not, that the generals in charge believed it was necessary to keep the men from confiding in their wives if the project was to succeed.

I do remember that we stopped one general from bulldozing a stand of pine trees when we discovered his plan. He was so furious his face turned beet red and he humphed and grumphed like an angry giant about to explode.

Ach, there are so many angry giants in the world. Please remember it is important for awake people to be awake. The darkness around us is deep. Thank you for listening to my story. ❖



The Top Three Things to Do on My List

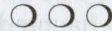
1. Help strengthen the international movement to reverse economic globalization.

The deregulation of international trade and finance is responsible for leveling biological and cultural diversity, eroding democracy, and dramatically increasing poverty and pollution. It separates producers and consumers ever further from one another, making it virtually impossible to act out of wisdom and compassion. You can voice your opposition in a positive way using creative media, by speaking out and passing around relevant leaflets, DVDs, and books. Or join a circle of friends to deepen your understanding of these global issues and find ways of taking community action.

2. Join the localization movement now, before the oil runs dry, before democracy is further eroded, before poverty and violence escalate even further. Buy locally, and more importantly, start or join community initiatives that focus on food, energy, and/or financing.

3. Reconnect to both people and nature. Celebrate life through song, music, and dance!

—Helena Norberg-Hodge, Dartington, Devon, UK



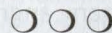
A deep ecological consciousness and a deeply ecological world cannot come about without global power and global institutions being turned to the task of localizing.

The Green Party is the preeminent vehicle for withering the power that currently strangles the communities of the world. If there is to be the Great Turning that Joanna Macy speaks of—and there must be—then its foot soldiers must take the risk, face their demons, and get party-political. The Buddhist vision of a pure land is unrealizable without experiments in utopian socialism—and just as unrealizable without a mass reinvolvement in good old electoral politics.

Let Buddhists “get their hands dirty.” Buddhists, I would argue, should join a party with the values that we need, now and in the future, a party that is determined not to repeat the betrayals of other left parties that sold out our past aspirations because the stakes were too high.

It's a Green future, or no future.

—Rupert Read, Norwich Green Party, Norwich, UK



Buddhism evolves to meet the needs of its adherents. We imagine that the dharma is always pristine and unassailable, but we re-create it in our own image, time after time, century

after century. Now we are living at a time of systematic violence and the exploitation of humans and natural resources on an unprecedented global scale. How can Buddhist teaching and practice guide us? It can certainly be a great tool for sticking our virtuous heads in the sand. But I trust we can do better than that. How about our capacity for critical thinking? Buddhist practice gives us the tools to take a long hard look at what is often very painful within ourselves. Can we not use that combination of intuitive and cognitive intelligence to look at what our responsibility might be, both individually and collectively, in these times? Politics and the issues of society have largely been kept out of the dharma discourse except in the most cursory way. I believe that this somewhat arbitrary division is symptomatic of a limitation in our understanding of the essentially interconnected nature of things. It's time for us to take a long hard look at what we have assumed the practice of Buddhism to be about.

—Caitriona Reed, Warner Springs, California



The Time Bank System, created in the U.S. during the 1980s, is a system of exchange of services and time. Let's suppose, for instance, that a member of a Time Bank needs help to paint the walls of his house. He can contact the Time Bank and its staff will search the database of the bank in order to find and contact other members who are willing to help. The time and labor donated by these other members will be registered in their “bank accounts” as “deposits,” and later, they will be able to exchange these “credits” for services and labor donated by other members of the Time Bank. This system can be used to promote the concept of interdependence in a very practical manner. Thus, I think that every Buddhist center should have its own Time Bank system. Non-Buddhists should also be invited to participate in these Time Banks.

—Francisco Eymael Garcia Scherer, Porto Alegre, Brazil



What's a Buddhist Prisoner to Do?

We can't always stop others from committing violent acts, but we can be strong examples of peace. Prisoners tend to revere strength. Through vigorous personal exercise, such as calisthenics, weights, running, or the like, we can cultivate a strength our fellow prisoners can see in addition to our strength in the dharma. By exemplifying fitness and discipline in our body and mind, we can create a strong platform from which to speak up for peace. Before acts of violence occur in a prison, be they one-on-one fights or riots



between groups, word usually gets around that this fight or that incident is about to go down. We can speak up for peace during these initial whispers. Even in the aftermath of violence, we can speak against it to our associates. We can help clarify the downside of violence: the victim's suffering and the aggressor's karma. We may not be able to prevent violence outside of our own mind and behavior, but we can surely become compassionate advocates for peace who are respected by our fellow prisoners, rather than merely getting out of the way or remaining silent through weakness and fear.

—Billy Tyler, *Calipatria, California*



Recently at Amida Trust we had a week of training in engaged Buddhism, and we spent time as a group looking at various types of communities. It was inspiring. We made field visits to two communities based on different cooperative models, but both centered around strong values of social action, cooperation, peace, and justice. Sadly, these communities are losing long-term members. I would encourage more people to choose to live in intentional communities as a way to foster peace.

1. Choose a cooperative model based on shared values. Working through difficulties and differences builds cohesion and clarifies each person's intention.
2. Consider income-sharing schemes to help foster a close bond of trust and support.
3. The lower cost of cooperative living can enable one to work less and volunteer more for social causes.
4. Encourage people to visit your home. Act as an inspiration and demonstrate an alternative.
5. Work on projects together in your community; get involved with others.
6. Live with less. Encourage sharing instead of competition.

—Lisa Urbanic, *Amida Trust, UK*



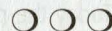
Earlier this year, in the beautiful and sad city of Jerusalem, I was trying to bring some understanding to a pervasive experience of shame. Although I now practice Buddhism, I was raised as a Jew and retain that label as part of my self-identity. Now I was seeing some very harmful acts being committed and they were being committed by "my" group.

If nothing else, being right in the situation was a strong lesson in clear seeing. It showed the distortions inherent in allowing our views of what is happening to be mediated by our

group identifications. These identifications are, of course, part of the illusory self. Moving closer to the conflict and encountering those involved allowed me to start seeing the reality.

Trying to bring the reality of the situation to groups and individuals has been difficult. When to some degree I have succeeded, it has been a result of being able to convey the human impact of the Wall by recounting the words and situations of the participants in this tragedy: Palestinians cut off from work and family and Israeli conscripts realizing the pain and dehumanization inherent in being the oppressor.

—Richard Wark, *Durham, North Carolina*



"Educate, Agitate, Organize"

These are the words of the revolutionary Indian Buddhist leader B.R. Ambedkar. Today in the U.S. we are confronted with a myriad of pressing social issues. It is no doubt that we need various forms of social action which aim at the short-term alleviation of these problems. Yet, at the same time, I myself am more of a long-haul person. I also believe that the Bush administration is not really an aberration or that Bush simply cheated his way in. Bush and his entourage are an expression themselves of our culture. Thus, we need deep-seated cultural change and a shift to a culture of awakening rather than just short-term political change. For this reason, my work focuses on education, especially with young people. We need to begin now to plant the seeds of a culture of awakening by rearing young people in a radically new educative environment—away from the industrial paradigm of memorizing facts and competing for honors and toward a postindustrial communicative paradigm which entails wisdom (knowledge within context) and compassion (cooperative life creation). As a Buddhist, I try to impart the numerous dhamma tools available in our tradition to help empower students in their understanding of society, others, and themselves. Right now, I live in Japan and am teaching young students at a university as well as developing a socially engaged Buddhist study-practice group specifically for young people. As for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in the U.S., I think more resources should be put into developing BASE groups all over the country. I believe that in 20 or 30 years the fruit of planting such seeds would be tremendous and could even give rise to a significant public intellectual and/or political leader.

—Jonathan Watts, *Tokyo, Japan*





Twelve years ago three parks near San Francisco Zen Center were uninhabitable due to drug dealing and prostitution. A group of neighborhood advocates rallied the community, raised funds to renovate the parks, and created programs to build community stewardship. Parks in impoverished neighborhoods are oases of opportunity for turnarounds. Today these parks are jewels of the neighborhood, meeting spaces that bring residents together, creating a healthy and safe community.

We began a community garden in Koshland Park across the street from the Zen Center. With the help of a Buddhist Peace Fellowship intern, one Saturday we built the garden with fencing and planter boxes. The next day we were growing pumpkins, squash, lima beans, tomatoes, strawberries, radishes, collards, lettuce, and more. Today the park group raises money for two garden educators who work daily in the garden with kids from a local elementary school, high school, and youth guidance center.

Our parks group completed a seven-year Peace Empowerment Program in the surrounding schools and community centers. For six weeks each, in 20 classes of K–8th grades, we were able to talk about peace. We gave students the opportunity to express anger, fear, resentment, doubt, and peace through drawing. At the end of the project, 1,600 peace tiles were created. This fall these tiles will go on the wall of Koshland Park.

Times have changed. The neighborhood is vibrant and connected. Our challenges can be faced because we are working together. If you want to get involved, contact <hvparks@hotmail.com>, or go to www.koshlandgarden.blogspot.com.

—Barbara Wenger, San Francisco, California



In Koshland Park, San Francisco



I know there's much more I should be doing as a socially engaged Buddhist, but I'll mention one of the actions I take. I'm a poet. I write from stirred energy, from as deep as I can go. Like many artists, I can't dictate to the muse what I'll make art of. One thing I can do, though, because I live in a degree of rural isolation, is to deliberately turn my face to the experience of others around the country and the world as it comes to me on television, in movies, especially documentaries, and through newspapers and radio. Daily, I am committing myself to extending the range and accuracy of my interconnectedness with others. If I feel this deeply enough, it will find its way into my poems. Here's one such, long overdue.

Emmett Till

Little has been said about the photographs of Emmett Till taken at his open-coffin viewing, which were first published in JET Magazine and shunned by mainstream news organizations.

—*New York Times*, on the 50th anniversary of Emmett Till's murder

Now, fifty years later, his body exhumed,
the crime re-examined, a documentary made
showing white people joking after the trial
which acquitted most of those who were there
the night he was grabbed from bed
where he slept next to his cousin
tortured in the presence of how many
we still don't know
before he was shot and dumped in the river
and dragged out of the river
and delivered to his mother
in a sealed coffin
which she demanded be opened
so she could see and then make everyone
(but not the readers of white-run newspapers) see.
Is that why he hasn't haunted me before?
I'm white. I didn't read JET.
I was twenty-two, with two babies, in the North.
CANNOT/WILL NOT IMAGINE IT.
Now, fifty years later, my grandson, fifteen,
full of himself, liable to walk straight into a mess
he can't imagine how bad and get himself hurt,
or worse, I look at the famous photo
even now the white paper prints it blurred, distant.
Once Emmett had round dark eyes, mischief
his brimming mother, Mably, tried to keep a lid on,
he was good at art and science, she said, playful, full of fun.
This is what was done to a fourteen-year-old boy,
eyes removed, a hole drilled in his forehead,
I want everyone to see what they did to him,
this brought to me now when I'm old enough
to open my eyes, to recognize
what are the terms on which we become human.

—Sondra Zeidenstein, Connecticut

Vegetable Roots Discourse Wisdom from Ming China on Life and Living

Translated by Robert Aitken with Daniel W. Y. Kwok
Shoemaker and Hoard, 2005, \$24

Reviewed by Jim Brown

The collected writings known as the Caigentan, or “vegetable roots discourse,” set down around 1590 by a Chinese scholar and philosopher named Hong Zicheng, offered thoughts on self and society during the political and cultural upheavals of the Late Ming Period.

This collection of 360 brief teachings, all that survives of Hong’s work, spread from China into Japan and Korea and remains a popular mainstay in many parts of Asia to this day. The fact that Chairman Mao Zedong venerated the collection makes me wish that his contemporary counterparts—the powerful government leaders in the West—would benefit from reading *Vegetable Roots Discourse: Wisdom from Ming China on Life and Living*, the first-ever English translation of Hong Zicheng’s wisdom by the venerable Robert Aitken.

One of America’s most eminent Zen teachers and an elder of socially engaged Buddhism, Aitken first encountered the Caigentan while interned in wartime Japan in 1943. The book weaves together quotations from Confucian ideals with Daoist and Buddhist teachings.

Many years later, Aitken persuaded publisher Jack Shoemaker to reprint the collection and agreed to do the translation himself. When Aitken suffered a stroke midway through the project, he contacted his friend Daniel W. Y. Kwok, history professor emeritus from the University of Hawaii, who restored the original Chinese (the earliest printed versions are in Japanese) and wrote a substantial afterword that explains the discourse’s origins and place in Chinese cultural history.

This new translation, with Aitken’s text sharing the page with Kwok’s original Chinese, invites casual browsing. Plain and direct, many of the thoughts embody the spirit of the collection’s rootsy name: “If your heart is bright, then even in a dark chamber there is blue sky. If your thoughts are gloomy, then even in broad daylight cruel demons appear.”

Other passages reflect Hong’s keen eye on the nature of power and status and seem to hint uncannily at present-day headlines:

In practicing virtue and pursuing the Dao, you will need to keep wood and stone as your models, for once you feel envious of another’s fortune, you become covetous. In managing affairs of state, you will need to conduct yourself with the sensibilities of a monk, for once you feel acquisitive, you fall into danger.

Hong even seems to point to the transformative possibilities of an engaged dharma practice:

Deal with deceitful frauds by touching them with your authenticity. Deal with the fierce and violent by affecting them with your sincerity. Deal with the wrongheaded and corrupt by encouraging discipline with your justice and integrity. Thus in the entire realm no one will be unaffected by your forge and kiln.

On the chauvinistic view of women and sex reflected in original Chinese, which he wisely chose to preserve in translation, Aitken writes simply, “The Caigentan offers a fine view of Ming China, warts and all. Our warts are bigger, it seems to me.” Aitken also chose to translate Chinese idioms literally, rather than use more familiar Western counterparts. These choices make the resulting translations as accessible as they are rich with the sense of the original Chinese, especially for those of us who don’t read or understand the language.

This simple and elegant new version of what Aitken calls one of his favorite “little books”—one that has been all but unknown in the West until now—deserves an honored place on any Buddhist’s bookshelf. ❖

Not One More Mother’s Child

by Cindy Sheehan
Koa Books, 2005, \$15

Reviewed by Taigen Dan Leighton

Cindy Sheehan’s passionate, courageous book, *Not One More Mother’s Child*, instantly deserves a place alongside such other classics of American Patriotism as Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense,” Henry David Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience,” and Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Cindy Sheehan does not speak as a historian, nor as one of the pompous pundits who depend on authorized insider government sources. Rather, she speaks truth to power with the unquestionable spiritual authority of a mother who deeply grieves for her lost son. But she is one who will accept nothing less than the truth, and so Cindy Sheehan has become the matriarch of the peace movement, a journey chronicled in this book. By sitting at the president’s doorstep in Crawford, Texas, demanding to hear for what “noble cause” her son died, and by welcoming others to join her “Camp Casey,” Sheehan has come as close as anyone to reenacting Gandhi’s Salt March in this trying time.

As she elaborates, the Iraq War and occupation was initiated through manipulative lies to the American people and Congress, and it is immoral, illegal, and a threat to the true security of our nation and the world. For anyone with a slightly open mind, or who is beginning to question, Sheehan has been a valuable catalyst, and this book ably clarifies that this disastrous war of aggression does not serve any legitimate purpose. The interests of the American people and of honest government have been abandoned

not only by Bush and the Republicans but also by the mainstream Democratic Party, as only a handful of maverick legislators such as Russ Feingold and John Conyers have spoken out strongly against the misdeeds of this government. Neither Republicans nor most Democrats have the simple decency to vote against any more moneys for the deadly occupation of Iraq and for Bush's war-profiteering cronies. Sheehan puts this tragedy in human, personal terms, as she relates the family background of Casey's decision to go to Iraq. She speaks ardently about her anguish at his death, and of her adamant opposition to our politicians' support for the war.

The book collects many of Sheehan's speeches and public letters to Bush and others, and also includes her journal from Camp Casey, which eloquently describes how many people, including Iraq War vets and family members of fallen soldiers, rallied behind her. She also discusses frankly how she has become a lightning rod for vicious attacks from pro-Bush extremists: "The right-wingers are really having a field day with me. It hurts me really badly, but I am willing to put up with the crap if it ends the war a minute sooner than it would have." Still she remains unwayed in her convictions.

Camp Casey taught us that it is not just okay, it is mandatory to raise our voices against the government when the government is responsible for killing innocents. ... I want to let [the president] know that millions of Americans believe that the best thing we can do—for our own security, for our soldiers, and for the Iraqi people—is to bring the U.S. troops home from Iraq now.

The Iraq occupation and Bush's other damaging policies are not due to him alone, but reflect centuries of national karmic darkness, centuries that include the genocide of Native Americans, slavery, and racist exploitation. Nevertheless, Cindy Sheehan and her supporters demonstrate that Americans also retain the bodhisattva-like capacity to speak out with great resolve and uprightness against the massive torture and killing now being conducted by our government. If enough people respond strongly, for example gathering in the streets at the ongoing demonstrations, it still remains possible that even the corrupt politicians and media will need to stop the lies, torture, and destruction.

With great danger comes great opportunity. Change is coming. Cindy Sheehan and her writings are an inspiration to help us keep on paying attention and to find our own ways of nonviolent response, going beyond our concern for personal comfort. This book should be required reading for all American citizens. ❖

Taigen Dan Leighton, a dharma heir in the Suzuki Roshi lineage and teacher at the Graduate Theological Union, is author of Faces of Compassion: Classic Bodhisattva Archetypes and Their Modern Expression, and is editor and co-translator of a number of Zen texts. His forthcoming book is Visions of Awakening Space and Time: The Worldview of Dogen and the Lotus Sutra.

Cultivating a Compassionate Heart The Yoga Method of Chenrezig

by Ven. Thubten Chodron

Snow Lion Publications, 2005, \$15.95

Reviewed by Jan Eldridge

Another book on compassion? Yes, one that is unique in form and content. Ven. Thubten Chodron's guide to *The Yoga Method of Chenrezig* is a clear, accessible, down-to-earth, and often humorous approach to the lofty aspiration of *Cultivating a Compassionate Heart*.

Thubten Chodron is an American-born Tibetan Buddhist nun who travels around the world teaching and leading meditation retreats. She is the author of several other books, including *Buddhism for Beginners*, *How to Free Your Mind*, and *Working with Anger*. This book is another in her series of eminently practical and sublimely inspiring teachings.

In his introduction to the book, the Dalai Lama states that compassion and forgiveness are fundamental human qualities that do not belong exclusively to religion, and that it is compassion rather than religion that is actually important to us.

The main function of the deity of Chenrezig is to develop compassion, a virtue that the world now desperately needs. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche points out, "one individual without compassion can make millions of people suffer." We witness this daily.

In the first section of her book, Ven. Chodron presents the entire *sadhana* practice. Beginning with the motivation and visualization she outlines each step: prayers and offerings, meditation on the Thousand-Arm Chenrezig, mantras, and dedication. This could be overwhelming for someone not acquainted with Tibetan Buddhism; however, in the remainder of the book she explains and clarifies each part of the practice in detail.

The rituals and visualizations are brought directly into our everyday lives. In reference to Chenrezig as the embodiment of our own Buddhature, Ven. Chodron says that "some kind of dependent arising process occurs when we are with holy beings in holy places." Many people have told her that even though they have never met the Dalai Lama before, they start to cry when he walks into the auditorium.

We may wince or smile in recognition when Ven. Chodron describes our own emotional habits that prevent us from being compassionate. Ego cherishes our little and big foibles. She challenges us to extend the limits of our compassion, to look at our convoluted and confused relationships as part of our spiritual practice.

We do this practice for all sentient beings. Even though we may see "a mosquito, a politician, a suicide bomber, or an eighth-grade boyfriend as a hassle, our enlightenment depends on each of them." Instead of hating another person, we practice seeing him or her as a "karmic bubble."

Ven. Chodron's presentation is down-to-earth. The wisdom of the Buddha can manifest in whatever aspect is needed by us—as a blanket, a dog, a spiritual teacher, our best friend and even our worst enemy.

Meditation on emptiness is a difficult and often frightening practice. Ven. Chodron likens it to dying, because we can no longer hold on to the idea, "This is who I am. This is what I like and what I don't like." And many of us have shared her experience that "everyone else in the room looked idyllic while I felt nothing except pain in my knees."

As she says, "We don't just go *poof!* and become a Buddha." But her insight and humor, her skillful way of translating the profound into mundane reality has the potential to open our hearts and minds to more compassion. ❖

Mindful Politics A Buddhist Guide to Making the World a Better Place

Edited by Melvin McLeod

Wisdom Publications, 2006, \$16.95

Reviewed by Jan Eldridge

Melvin McLeod, a lifelong student of politics, says that he has learned the most from editing this book. In it, 34 contributions are divided into three sections: View, Practice, and Action. McLeod cites the fundamental split between self and other as the root of our suffering and says that politics is how we live together as human beings. He views *Mindful Politics* as a guidebook, a practice book of Buddhist wisdom, insights, and meditations. If you are looking for a quick fix or resolution of the horrific chaos that dominates the political scene today, you won't find it here. You will, however, find many proposals and some quite workable approaches to these problems.

Idealists/altruists face daunting challenges when they enter the political arena. It's a David and Goliath situation. David can only win if he keeps his feet on the ground.

Let's take a mindful breath and look at some of the proposals. The Dalai Lama's approach to global politics is based on taking responsibility for the happiness of all people. For this ambassador of compassion, a universal humanitarianism seems the only sound basis for world peace.

Thich Nhat Hanh's poem "Call Me by My True Names" jolts the reader out of complacency. Grabbing one side of an issue and holding on tight to it is too easy. He presents both sides of conflicts produced by nature and man.

David Loy traces many of our social problems to our deluded sense of collective self, which he calls "wego" (group ego). Group-*dukkha* forms powerful dualities compounded by institutionalized greed, institutionalized ill will, and institutionalized delusion.

Altruism meets reality head-on in a panel discussion McLeod conducts with Jerry Brown, Bernie Glassman, and

James Gimian. The participants agree that the word *politics* means duality, and that not-knowing (beginner's mind) may be essential to conflict resolution. Also agreed upon: "Whatever action you take will create conflict in some ways and peace in other ways."


McLeod poses some very tough questions to this panel: How do you take sides without taking sides? How do you present a vision and have openness at the same time? Do Buddhist values call for a particular political position? And the panelists' responses deal with the questions on a down-to-earth level.

Although we might question the usefulness of Thich Nhat Hanh's meditation instruction for transforming the way the U.S. Congress governs, it is a step in the right direction. Pema Chödrön's practice of using patience as an antidote to aggression could definitely produce a change in congressional attitudes.

In their quest for happiness, humans often use cruel methods in response to a wrong done to them. Charles Johnson, a Vietnam veteran and Buddhist monk, suggests, "If everyone stopped the war in themselves there would be no seed from which war could grow." Advice from the Chan master Sheng Yen is, "I follow four dictates: face it, accept it, deal with it, then let it go."

One consistent message throughout this book is that it's up to each one of us to do the best we can to make the world a better place. ❖

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At Canaan's Edge America in the King Years 1965–68

by Taylor Branch

Simon & Schuster, 2006, \$35

Reviewed by Alan Senauke

At Canaan's Edge is the third volume of Taylor Branch's Amonumental trilogy on the United States in Martin Luther King Jr.'s, lifetime. Branch's writing spanned 23 years and 2,800 pages. Through all these pages there are broad themes illuminated by Branch's remarkable storytelling. The flow of history is painstakingly documented, and King's life unfolds, from his childhood in Atlanta and his education, moving on to the life of an evolving prophet and activist—leading movements in Montgomery, Birmingham, Selma, and Chicago—to his assassination in Memphis in 1968. These majestic themes, as Branch writes, are the “twin doctrines of equal souls and equal votes in the common ground of nonviolence.”

If nonviolence is Dr. King's medicine for injustice and racism, America's sickness is endemic violence. Violence haunts this volume. In February of 1965 Malcolm X (whose story illumines Branch's second volume, *Pillar of Fire*) was assassinated while speaking at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom. Not a week later, Selma, Alabama, police murdered Jimmie Lee Jackson, who had been five times turned away from the voting registrar's office. A month after these events came “Bloody Sunday,” when state police attacked 600 voting rights marchers at Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge. Shortly after that came the beating murder of Unitarian minister James Reeb and the Klan shooting of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo (with FBI informant Gary Rowe actually in the murder vehicle). Then came the shooting of James Meredith on his solitary pilgrimage to Jackson, Mississippi, followed by riots in Watts, Detroit, Harlem, and Newark, and King's 1968 assassination in Memphis. These acts of personal and systemic violence are racism's currency. Those of us of a certain age remember some of them. Taylor Branch reminds us of more.

But the narrative brilliance of Branch's work is the interweaving of history and personality, and of the humble and great figures who create history itself. In this sense, Branch's work is not straightforward biography. The first volume, *Parting the Waters*, spotlights heroes like Rosa Parks, Bob Moses, Diane Nash, John Lewis, and Bayard Rustin, and documents the moral qualms of the Kennedys and the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover. *Pillar of Fire* digs deeper into the terrible slanders and machinations of Hoover, and contrasts the life of Malcolm X—with all the excoriating brilliance of his voice and vision of white racism—with the dogged nonviolence of Dr. King.

At Canaan's Edge pairs the story of King's last years with the tragic and contradictory persona of President Lyndon

Johnson. Johnson's progressive social agenda, with its roots in the Texas hill country and in his political coming of age in the New Deal, had its brief season in the sun. His “War on Poverty” initiated programs like Head Start, VISTA, the Job Corps, Medicare, and Medicaid. His visionary effectiveness reached its high point with the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which opened the door for southern blacks to vote by removing all literacy tests, poll taxes, and other barriers to black participation in American politics. And Johnson backed up his beliefs with the full force of his legal resources. At the same historical moment, though, Johnson was ineluctably drawn into an unwinnable and illegal war in Vietnam. With each setback and military loss, his desperate political response was to throw in more troops and bombs. He authorized the first bombing missions in early 1965. By September of 1968 there were more than 530,000 military personnel in Vietnam. Finally, Vietnam and the domestic antiwar movement put an early end to Johnson's political career.

At the same time, deepening violence in Vietnam brought corresponding violence at home. The Harlem riots of 1964 were followed by riots in Watts in 1965, and in Detroit in 1967, as well as uprisings in Cleveland, Chicago, Newark, and other black inner cities. The 1968 Kerner Report and other analyses all pointed to the realities of racism, poverty, unemployment, and police brutality as sufficient fuel for riots. A Black Power movement, impatient with King's nonviolence, arose in the same moment. Led by charismatic activists like H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael (who is vividly portrayed in these pages), the Black Power movement simultaneously captured the imagination of young blacks and militant whites. Both groups equated nonviolence with passivity and identified the U.S. government as the root source of racism, white supremacy, and violence at home and abroad.

On April 4, 1967, Dr. King addressed nearly four thousand people at Riverside Church in New York in a sermon titled “Beyond Vietnam.” His analysis was not so different from that of the growing Black Power movement. Dr. King said:

As I have walked among the desperate, rejected, and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked, and rightly so, “What about Vietnam?” They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. Their questions hit home, and I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government. For the sake of those boys, for the sake of this government, for the sake of the hundreds of thousands trembling under our violence, I cannot be silent.

He then explains how we undid the very freedoms the Civil Rights movement had struggled for. King's was the first major

voice in America calling for an immediate end to U.S. aggression in Vietnam. The response inside Riverside Church was immediate and electric. This is what they had come to hear. But response from the press over the next few days was negative and predictable: Vietnam was a matter of foreign policy, separate and distinct from civil rights. These issues should not be linked, and Dr. King was foolishly venturing into waters that were over his head. Taylor Branch writes regretfully:

The call for segregated silence on Vietnam dashed any expectation that King's freedom movement had validated the citizenship credentials of blacks by historic mediation between the powerful and dispossessed. It relegated him again to the back of the bus, conspicuous yet invisible. King felt cut off even from disagreement, in a void worse than his accustomed fare of veneration or disfiguring hostility, and he broke down more than once into tears.

Dr. King's prophetic vision left him isolated from those who needed him most. In time we have come to see just how clearly he understood the tangled roots of injustice and hatred. But a year to the day after his talk at Riverside Church, he was shot down in Memphis, Tennessee, on the second-floor balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt, wandering the desert for 40 years. He died on the Plains of Moab, overlooking Canaan's Edge, before he could join his people in the Promised Land. The night before his death, Dr. King preached at the Mason Temple in Memphis. He offered these words.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life—longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land.

The second volume, *Pillar of Fire*, recounts the famous march on Washington, where Dr. King offered his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech. I remember standing under a cherry tree, looking up at the Lincoln Memorial as he delivered these words that August afternoon in 1963. I also saw Dr. King at Great Neck's Temple Beth-El (noted on page 194 of *At Canaan's Edge*) in the spring of my senior year in high school. I recall his fiery oration, followed by Ralph Abernathy's strong but good-humored fund-raising pitch. These are wonderful memories, but if Dr. King lives on only as a memory, or as a sound bite, or as an image on a postage stamp, we will have missed the point completely.

Nearly 40 years later—after the end of segregation, after the murder of Dr. King and so many leaders, after Vietnam—where are we? Up to our necks in another illegal and ill-considered war. Racism and poverty are still with us. We demonize "illegal aliens" who are doing the hard, dirty work others do not want to do. We see an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. We know that the poor of the world envy and despise us simultaneously. As a nation, we still allow elections to be stolen, though all the laws we

might use to protect us are in the books. Hard times are not come again; they never went away.

These times call for a new commitment to active nonviolence. When we study Dr. King's life and the lives of those who walked with him, we see women and men who dared to say what was just and what was unjust. They argued over strategy, but not over principles. They may have been unsure of the outcome of their struggles, but they were amazingly brave and determined, prepared to accept the consequences of their actions and beliefs.

Can we study these men and women and learn to live like them? Can we carve our own path through shadowy forests of greed, anger, and delusion? Martin Luther King Jr.'s teachings offer powerful American lessons on nonviolence, on noncooperation with injustice. We have other teachers: César Chávez, Gandhi, Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, nonviolent theorists like Gene Sharp and Johan Galtung. There are vivid lessons in nonviolence to be learned from recent movements in Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, South Africa, the students of Tiananmen Square.

Nonviolence as a political method, a melding of power and principle, is needed more than ever. The compelling message of Taylor Branch's writing is: be brave, organize ourselves and others. This is in accord with Buddhadharmā and all the great spiritual teachings. If Martin Luther King Jr. is to live in us, we can do no less. ❖

Alan Senauke is a Zen priest, writer, musician, and senior advisor to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

Earth Precepts, continued from page 61

escape the legal compulsions that are, however feebly, enforced by national governments.

The present corporate ideology of limitless growth is incompatible with the health of our limited Earth, and cannot be allowed to continue.

Reading this list of Earth Precepts, some may object that these injunctions are impossible to follow. Every day, in some cases virtually every minute, we violate one or more. If the Earth Precepts cannot be followed, doesn't this make them meaningless?

In Buddhism, there is a ceremony associated with the mature acceptance of the precepts: the taking of the Four Great Bodhisattva Vows. The first of these is: "Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to save them." This is equally a Social and an Earth Precept. By declaring our intention to save all living beings, we commit to a goal that is both impossible and indispensable. The bodhisattva and the ecologist share this knowledge: none are saved unless all are saved. We have no choice but to try. ❖

Learn more about the Earth Precepts at www.earthprecepts.net.

Pepper Trail is a writer, Zen student, and professional biologist living in Ashland, Oregon. His writing has appeared in Jefferson Monthly, Open Spaces Quarterly, Oregon PeaceWorker, and the recently released book A Road Runs Through It: Reviving Wild Places.

From the Executive Director

In-Your-Face Dharma

by Maia Duerr

This issue of *Turning Wheel*, inspired by our dear dharma friend and BPF cofounder Robert Aitken Roshi, is all about taking a stand—something that those of us who gravitate toward Buddhist teachings of nonattachment and nonduality may find challenging.

Last November, I was lucky enough to visit Roshi at his home in Honolulu, Hawai'i. For three mornings, BPF board member Chris Wilson, filmmaker Ed Herzog, and I sat in Roshi's living room and listened as he gave us his take on the urgent matter of life and death, and of war and peace.

Roshi made no bones about it—the world is a mess, and the Bush administration has been the primary contributor to this situation. Propped up on one of his bookshelves is a large poster boldly proclaiming “Impeach Bush.” During a talk that Roshi delivered to our BPF membership gathering in June, he described the situation: “In just a short period, the ideals, groundwork, and bulwarks of social justice set in place by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his supporters 70 years ago have been wiped away.”

What are we, as socially engaged Buddhists and as human beings, going to do about this?

Recently, I've used BPF's Mandala of Socially Engaged Buddhism (see *TW* Fall '04) as a starting point for conversations with chapters and other groups to think about how we engage with the world. The mandala has several different layers; one of them is a circle of four “fields of engagement.” One of these is “triage,” which includes actions that are intended to stop other harmful actions. For example, when we block a road to a military base to call for an end to the U.S. war in Iraq, this is triage. The archetype related to this field is the Warrior.

When we talk about the archetypes on the mandala, the Warrior usually draws the most criticism or avoidance from people. We like to emphasize that Buddhism is a path of peace. We note the irony and ineffectiveness in using war metaphors to create peace. On one level, these are valid points. However, as a perennial devil's advocate (or Mara's advocate in this case), I'd like to offer a few thoughts in defense of the Warrior.

As Ken Knabb noted in his essay “Strong Lessons for Engaged Buddhists,” (*TW* Spring '06), students of the dharma are often allergic to any social analysis that seems divisive. The fact of the matter, though, is that abuse of power needs to be challenged, and that it sometimes has to happen in ways that are divisive, at least on the surface. The path of Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi was in-your-face Warrior activism, even as it was grounded in nonviolent principles and love for those whose power was challenged. Real love, as we know when we are graced with the chance to practice it, takes immense courage.

During this time in our history, the role of the Warrior is

an essential part of the struggle for peace and justice. Without people willing to stand up and speak truth to power, a government prone to greed, anger, and delusion would roll over people and other sentient beings. Sometimes it does anyway. The current U.S. administration has shown a special propensity in this regard. Thanks to the general public and elected officials “triaging” and playing the Warrior, some barriers have been thrown up in the relentless path of these abuses. Recently, we've witnessed some small but significant shifts in U.S. policy. Take, for instance, the Bush administration's admission that prisoners at Guantanamo are entitled to basic protections of the Geneva Convention. It's taken strong-willed people persistently standing up in the streets, in the halls of Congress, and in the courts, saying, “NO! Enough is enough. You cannot do this,” to bring this reversal about.

One of the main points of the mandala is that no one field of engagement or archetype can exist without the others. Many of us feel drawn to the positive aspects found in the Creator archetype, and it is vital for us to be creating cultures of peace and alternatives to violence. But without the Warrior, we might not even have the freedom to create such alternatives.

The Warrior archetype begs the question: What kinds of sacrifices are you willing to make for true peace and justice? What are you willing to do for peace and justice for all? Take, for example, the story of Randy Kehler, a vipassana meditation practitioner, and Betsy Corner, the western Massachusetts couple portrayed in the documentary *An Act of Conscience*. Randy and Betsy laid it all on the line. For 14 years, they refused to pay federal taxes used for military spending. They lost their home in the process. I think the prophetic voice of Buddhism—if there is one—is willing to pay a price.

I am often reminded that not everyone is in a position to take part in civil disobedience, or to become a war tax resister. This is true—we need to start where we are. And yet, we need to challenge ourselves and each other, too. It's not enough to stick an “End the War” bumper sticker on our car (why are we always driving, anyway?), or to recycle, or to eat organic foods, and stop there. It's not enough to sit on our cushions or chant our prayers with the intention of developing inner peace and stop there.

In the ultimate dimension, of course we can and should cultivate this kind of peace and spaciousness. But in the relative dimension in which we live every day, thousands are suffering and dying. The essence of the dharma, for me, is contained in the Heart Sutra and the realization that we live in both these dimensions. As Aitken Roshi often reminds us, the key teaching of the Buddha is that all beings awaken together, with the morning star. I cannot find my own peace separate from the suffering of other beings, whether they are Iraqi civilians seeking shelter from violence, the single mother who struggles to find a job with a living wage and take care of her family, or old-growth trees that are being clear-cut.

While engaged Buddhism includes the path of service, it also needs to see beyond it. As Martin Luther King Jr., said, "True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring." And then there is the matter of privilege. Those of us who have the privilege that comes with the color of our skin and/or access to resources have the luxury of sitting in a meditation retreat far from home and not thinking too much about these things. But what about our brothers and sisters who have no protection against the military, economic, and environmental wars being waged on them? In this realm, Warrior activism is practice, and practice is activism.

Playing the role of the Warrior is tiring and can easily cause us to slide into anger or righteousness, making it the archetype that perhaps most requires us to call on our dharma practice to stay grounded in wholesome intention. The tradition of the Shambhala warrior may be the best-developed model of this in a Buddhist context.

So here's to the Warrior, that in-your-face, no-compromise, fierce defender of all beings. May we all find ours.

BPF's 2006 Membership Gathering "Peace in Ourselves, Peace in the World: Wholehearted Practice in Difficult Times"

From Thursday evening, June 22, until Sunday afternoon, June 25, more than 50 BPF members met at the Garrison Institute along the banks of the Hudson River in New York for BPF's first membership gathering in 10 years. The theme was "Peace in Ourselves, Peace in the World: Wholehearted Practice in Difficult Times."

States represented by BPF members included California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.

The event featured dharma talks from BPF founder Robert Aitken Roshi (via a live phone connection to the Palolo Zen Center in Hawai'i) and Hozan Alan Senauke;



BPF Membership meeting, Garrison Institute, New York

workshops on topics as varied as prison dharma and values-based fund-raising; and shared contemplative practices from the Theravadin, Zen, Tibetan, and Quaker traditions.

Heidi Enji Hoogstra of the Portland BPF chapter wrote:

I felt most honored to experience the dharma talk on Friday night by Robert Aitken Roshi, who turned 89 years old that same weekend. A highlight for many of us was his dharma advice to do something drastic—we should be getting naked in the streets! [Roshi invoked the Doukhobors, a pacifist Christian sect that originated in 18th-century Russia. The group participated in mass nudity and burning of weapons in protest against militarism and materialism.]

In his talk, Aitken Roshi spoke with respect of Christian anarchist and peace activist Phil Berrigan. Someone in the audience asked Roshi for his thoughts about tax resistance and other acts of civil disobedience. Roshi told us to consider others who are involved in our lives. He noted that it was a hardship for Phil Berrigan's children that he was in prison for many years. I heard in that a keen understanding of the Middle Way. We must speak, we must act, we must put our naked selves on the line for the good of the world, but in doing so we must consider our loved ones and all who could be affected by our actions.

Several special guests were on hand, including Richard Deats, former director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who spoke to the group about his participation on a recent FOR delegation to Iran, and Iraq war vet Aidan Delgado, who shared how his Buddhist practice had informed his decision to apply for conscientious objector status. Aidan also led a workshop and discussion about how Buddhist communities (and others) can reach out more effectively to soldiers and vets in a collaborative effort to end the war.

One of the highlights of the gathering was a Saturday afternoon Open Space session facilitated by Viki Sonntag of the Seattle BPF chapter. During this time, we generated questions that were particularly "juicy" for us, and formed small groups to discuss issues such as Buddhist economics, "using art to evoke peace and compassion," and ways that the BPF central office and chapters could be in closer relationship with each other.

Perhaps the most meaningful outcome of the gathering was the friendship that we cultivated with each other. As we return to our homes, we look forward to continuing these connections in our regional areas and finding creative ways to build more peaceful societies with the Buddhadharma as our vehicle. ❖

Help Lebanese and Israeli Civilians

In the recent conflict, thousands of Lebanese and Israeli civilians have been displaced. The following three organizations are among those BPF recommends who are providing humanitarian aid to victims on both sides of the border.

- www.afsc.org (American Friends Service Committee)
- www.doctorswithoutborders.org
- www.oxfam.org

Prison Program News

Our Struggle Is Post Release

by Hong Chingkuang

“The prison industrial complex is brutalizing for all the humans involved, and many aspects of our society brutalize people even before they are incarcerated. All of that strengthens my resolve to create a society with alternatives to incarceration and a much more universal system of restorative justice, and to make resources—educational, spiritual, nutritional, vocational—available to all beings.”

—Diana Lion, founder of BPF Prison Program

Only through our own complete transformation can the realization of this boundlessness occur. Some say that it is impossible to make this complete transformation, but it is evident from the conduct of all our past, present, and future saints that true and complete transformation can occur. Shakyamuni Buddha, Milarepa, Ven. Hsu-Yun, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh, and countless others helped to transform the world through their own transformation.

Through our cultivation, we all endure many hardships. Without hardships, we would have no way in which to cleanse our negative energies, nor a way in which to measure our sincere efforts toward actual change. The development of our awareness and innate wisdom is essential to overcoming the growth pains of internal and societal change. If the conditions are not ripe, no true transformation can occur.

Through our work at BPF, we have come to know firsthand the complexities of carrying out post-release work. Our goal, despite all that stands in our way, is to offer methods of self-liberation to those who society despises. As with our inner work, there are many things that are hard to reconcile, and many things that we wish to keep buried. We might think there is no chance of reprise, no chance to redeem our past behavior. We might think it is best not to acknowledge our faults and to continue to exist as if every-

thing were all right. By locking our faults away into the deep recesses of our minds, our problems will only continue to exist, and when the unresolved issues manifest, they will cause us greater suffering.

This is also the case with formerly incarcerated people. When society forces people into an iron-enclosed existence without offering them methods in which to transform their former energies, their destructive habits become more ingrained and more refined, and more difficult to subdue. Consequently, formerly incarcerated people leave prison less able to survive in the community and more inclined to hurt themselves and others.

BPF's Coming Home Initiative seeks to change forms of behavior that society cannot accept, by offering a residential space for utilizing methods of Buddhist contemplations that bring negative and addictive behavior to light. We would like to help formerly incarcerated men and women develop insight and awareness of their problems and to help them to make a conscious effort to change. The aim of the BPF Coming Home Initiative is to eliminate the barriers practitioners face reintegrating into the community. If we can provide a home where they are embraced, loved, and supported in their spiritual development and self-determination, we can help them contribute to the well-being of community. We know through our own experience that if there is enough community support, this process can be very effective.

There are many programs that are available for formerly incarcerated people. Unfortunately, the programs that are available do not remedy the situation. Instead they mask the problem of habitual behavior and they prioritize surveillance over helping people get back on their feet. None of the programs offer methods of self-examination, a space for decarceration, economic self-sufficiency training, and partnerships with community allies and existing services. Many of the programs that are available provide only a hodgepodge of sack lunches, outdated job postings, secondhand clothes, and hotel vouchers for neighborhoods infested with drugs, alcohol, and violence.

If we were to combine our efforts and work together, our resources and knowledge would be immeasurable. We could network and help each other to reach our highest potential, bringing together the ideals of our past and present to create societal change. So why aren't we unified? Why are we like loose sand? I think it's because we are too busy thinking only of ourselves. We are not realizing our larger goals for social transformation. Let's put our self-importance aside and work together to overcome our struggles. We have to unify our efforts and develop stronger, more meaningful relationships, not just within our sanghas but with the rest of our communities—even with people we might not be comfortable with. ❖



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BPF Chapter News

BPF Tampa Bay

by Erin Templeton and Rick Ferriss

The Tampa Bay, Florida, chapter of BPF was born from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Some founding members had attended local demonstrations against the impending war and were disappointed with the prevalence of angry rhetoric. It seemed to be counterproductive to the objective of stopping the war and counter to their Buddhist practice. They felt a need for a Buddhist voice in the antiwar movement and other local progressive causes. The national Buddhist Peace Fellowship office was contacted, and our chapter had its first organizational meeting on June 23, 2003.

The Tampa Bay area centers on two counties: Hillsborough, with Tampa its only major city, and Pinellas, which includes St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and a number of smaller municipalities. Tampa Bay runs down the middle, spanned by three long bridges. The bay defines the area but also presents a barrier to travel. The regional population is near 3 million. It's a diverse, fast-growing area, with many different cultures and lifestyles. In addition to various sports teams and corporations, it's home to the U.S. military's Central Command at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, and the Church of Scientology headquarters in Clearwater.

There are currently over 20 local Buddhist groups, including temples serving Lao, Sri Lankan, Thai, and Vietnamese communities, six Tibetan groups, and groups practicing in traditions such as mindfulness, Nichiren, Thai forest, vipassana, and Zen. BPF-Tampa Bay has made a concerted effort to welcome Buddhists of all traditions, and we have active members from a number of Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana groups.

For our first two years, our chapter met monthly on a Saturday morning. We would spend a couple of hours on business matters and then adjourn for an informal potluck and visiting. Eventually, attendance declined, and we began to schedule other regular activities. Since January 2006, we have sponsored monthly talks about Buddhism in the modern world. Attendance has been variable, and it is likely that our monthly schedule will soon change again.

In addition to regular meetings, we have sponsored a number of public events, including Change Your Mind Day, smaller outdoor meditations, a Non-Violent Communication workshop with Diana Lion, a Hiroshima Day observance in 2005, and vegetarian picnics. We have also had a presence at larger events, including antiwar rallies, a large alternative fair, and Earth Day. We set up a table with literature from various local groups, and sometimes we contribute a speaker. We sometimes offer used books on Buddhism and related topics for free at our table, with "donations welcome"; the open dana basket at such events has become our major method of fund-raising.

Our website (www.bpf-tampabay.org) has provided a public face for both BPF-Tampa Bay and the local Buddhist community. In addition to BPF information, it includes pages of listings and links for special events, regular meetings, and local Buddhist groups. Simple pages of contact information are provided for groups with no web page of their own. Mostly due to the website, BPF has become a common resource for people looking for information about Buddhist groups or Buddhist involvement in a project. We also sponsor a Yahoo discussion group. It has over 50 members and is sporadically active, with announcements, forwards, and occasional arguments.

Involvement in BPF-Tampa Bay has had its ups and downs, but it seems to be generally rising. The average age of active members has been decreasing. New ideas and new people are stimulating our evolution. Our group's changes have been a reminder of impermanence. Our vague leadership structure is a reminder of emptiness. Our obvious room for improvement is a reflection of suffering. Overall, our BPF chapter has been a good teacher of the dharma to those who have worked with it, and hopefully has had some positive effects on the world at large along the way. ❖



Taking shelter from the storm at Change Your Mind Day
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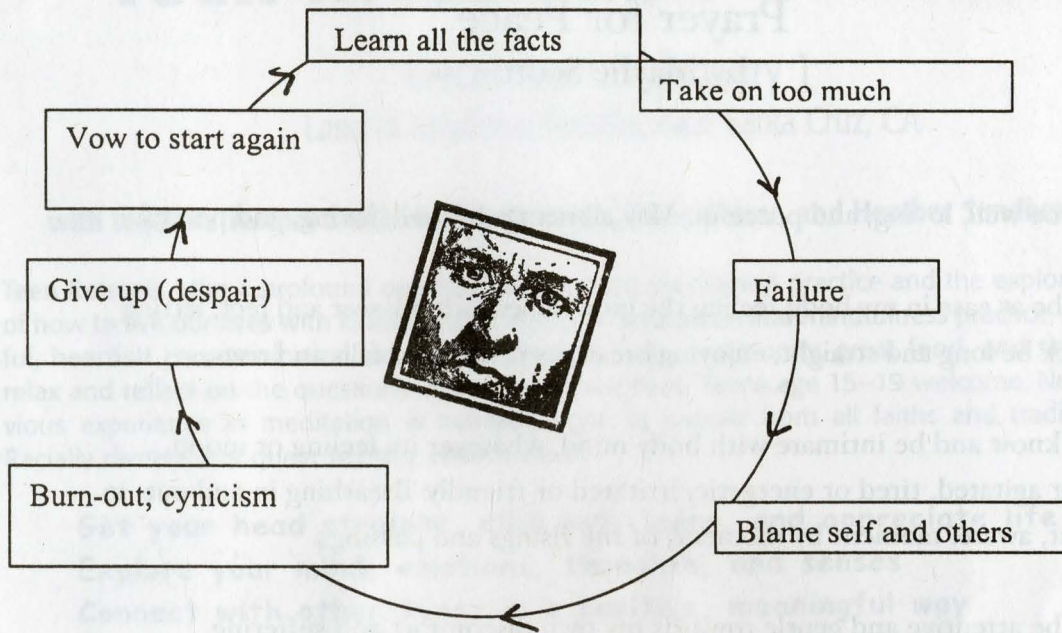
BPF also sends special thanks to Melody Ermachild Chavis, Mary Davis, John Hess, Heidi Enji Hoogstra, Kristi Markey, Alisha Musicant, John Simon, Viki Sonntag, James Stewart, and Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey.

reporting on the air waves
birds on tv antenna

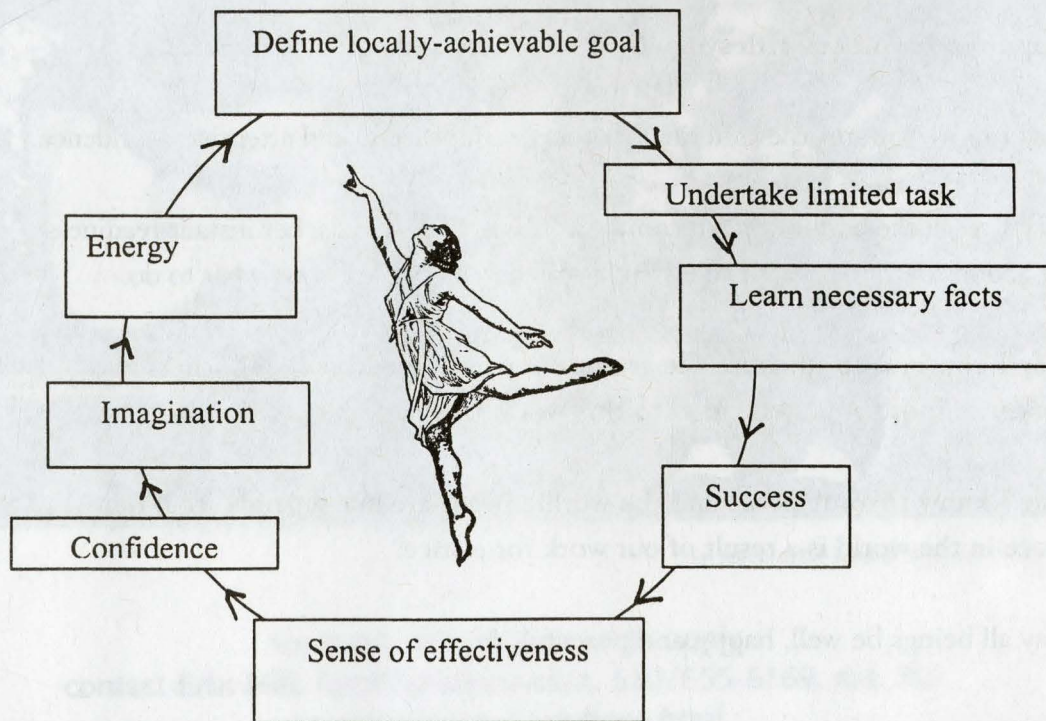
are you an aquarium
of moments, or clear white light

—Gary Gach
(poet's bio on page 13)

Cycle of Helplessness



Cycle of Empowerment



Based on a chart created by Women Against Military Madness, with their permission, and offered by Lyn Fine

Prayer for Peace

by Maylie Scott

May I be well, loving, and peaceful. May all beings be well, loving, and peaceful.

May I be at ease in my body, feeling the ground beneath my seat and feet, letting my back be long and straight, enjoying breath as it rises and falls and rises.

May I know and be intimate with body mind, whatever its feeling or mood, calm or agitated, tired or energetic, irritated or friendly. Breathing in and out, in and out, aware, moment by moment, of the risings and passings.

May I be attentive and gentle towards my own discomfort and suffering.

May I be attentive and grateful for my own joy and well-being.

May I move towards others freely and with openness.

May I receive others with sympathy and understanding.

May I move towards the suffering of others with peaceful and attentive confidence.

May I recall the bodhisattva of compassion; her 1,000 hands, her instant readiness for action. Each hand with an eye in it—the instinctive knowing what to do.

May I continually cultivate the ground of peace for myself and others and persist, mindful and dedicated to this work, independent of results.

May I know that my peace and the world's peace are not separate; that our peace in the world is a result of our work for justice.

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful. ❖

Maylie Scott (1935–2001) was an activist, a Zen priest and teacher, and an important leader and mentor for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship for many years. Her bodhisattva life of commitment to peace and social justice work was an encouragement to many.

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LAMA SURYA DAS is the author of the recently released *Natural Radiance: Awakening to Your Great Perfection (Sounds True)* and *Letting Go of the Person You Used to Be* (Broadway Books). 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.

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