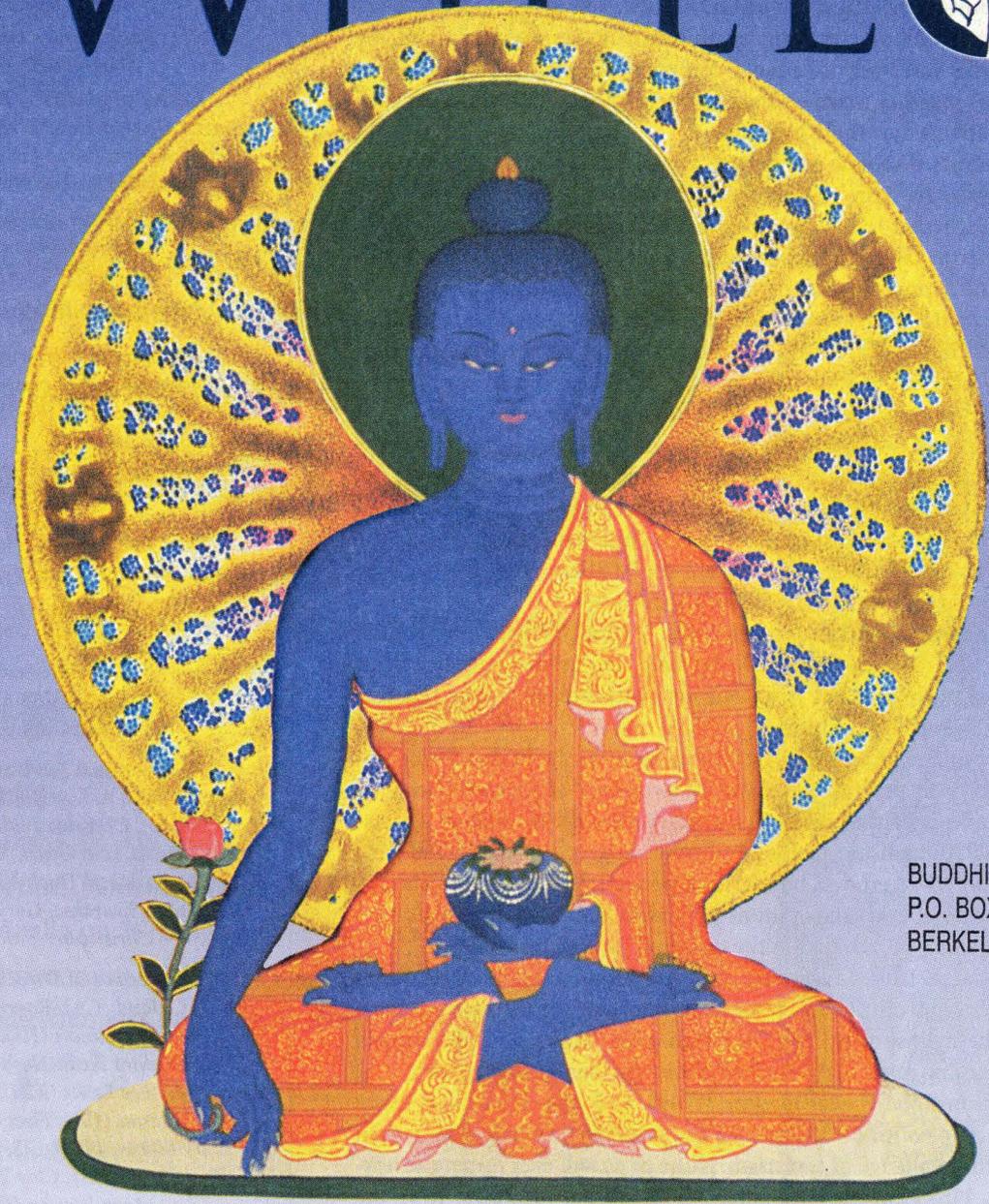


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TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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BUDDHISTS CONSIDER MEDICAL ETHICS:

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From the Editors

What does medical ethics have to do with socially engaged Buddhism?

We tend to think that our own medical care is our own private business. But I do not own my body. It belongs to the universe. I could give you my blood to run in your veins. You could give me your heart to beat in my chest. My genes are part of the gene pool. The cough germs that my co-workers and I share with each other so generously—these little buggers recognize no boundaries between our separate bodies. Around the planet, all of us human beings make up the habitat for the HIV virus. When doctors take care of me in the emergency room, the resources of my community are being given to me.

To the millions of creatures in residence in my eyelashes and my intestines, this vast body is home, a complex ecosystem, just as all of us living beings together make up the biosphere of planet Earth. What each of us does affects the whole balance.

As Buddhists who vow not to turn away from suffering, questions of medical ethics are very relevant. On the personal level, we may face choices like whether to have an abortion, how much pain medication to take, whether to take extreme measures to conceive a child, whether to withdraw life support from a dying parent.

On the social level we also participate in questions about medical ethics: what kind of health insurance to vote for, what kind of legislation to press for in terms of stem cell research, “fetal health care,” or cloning.

We share the responsibility for each other's bodies.

In this issue of *TW* we touch on some of the many issues under the heading of medical ethics. It's a big subject, and we only see the tip of the iceberg here. But we can encourage each other to keep asking the questions. When is it ethical and appropriate to intervene medically in “the natural course of events”? What would the Medicine Buddha do if he was pregnant with a fetus with Down's Syndrome?

It's our nature to be stuck on ourselves; it's our practice to try and let go of self-clinging. How can medicine help free us not only from our individual sore throats but from our very attachment to our separate self? Could I give away a kidney?

On other fronts... Over the past several months, the Bush administration has effectively presented the “war on terrorism” as a success. Now, the administration is getting ready to spread its strategy of military aggression beyond Afghanistan to Iraq and other countries. Within the U.S., civil rights are being eroded, hundreds of people of color sit in jails awaiting interrogation, and corporations cozy with the Bush administration stand to benefit—all justified in the name of “homeland security.”

At the same time, dissenting and questioning voices have been silenced—through outright censorship or more covertly through the complicity of the mainstream media. It seems many Americans have slipped into a frightening sense of “normalcy” about the idea of waging war.

Our commitment at *Turning Wheel* and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship is to continue to stand for the principle of nonviolence, even as we face the challenge of terrorism. None of us will ever forget the horror of Sept. 11; and at the same time, we vow to not turn away from the suffering brought about by war. With that in mind, we continue this important dialogue with a special section in this *Turning Wheel*. ❖

—Susan Moon and Maia Duerr

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Fall '02: **Youth and Buddhist Activism**. Deadline: June 3, '02.

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TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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Letters to the Editor

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Responding to September 11

☞ When the Buddha received the news that the Shakyas, his natal clan, had been massacred, he got a terrible headache and assigned the day's teaching to Shariputra. One can picture him doing the same on Sept. 11, watching the tragedy played over and over on TV. He did not blame the victims. As a matter of fact, I cannot think of any instance where the Buddha analyzed collective karma. In many stories, he described the past lives of an individual and how karma led that person into the present situation. But collective karma—for example, the karma that led the occupants of the World Trade Center or a hijacked airplane into a common disaster—is more complex than Dante's *Inferno*. Certainly, it does not lend itself to facile political or diplomatic explanations, usually offered by someone with an ax to grind.

I feel proud of how your contributors handled Sept. 11 in the Winter '02 issue. The issue is full of compassion, and there is very little "Why do they hate us (Americans)?" Perhaps in addition to compassion, engaged Buddhists have a little wisdom—not the deep "emptiness" doctrine but critical thinking abilities and knowledge of world affairs. We are aware of the massacres taking place almost daily in Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and other parts of the world. With an expanded notion of "us," the "why?" of hatred invites a very different answer.

—Mark Tatz, via e-mail

☞ David Loy (Winter '02) speaks about dualistic thinking being "attractive because it is a simple way of looking at the world. And most of us are quite familiar with it." We fall into dualistic thinking because it gives us a sense of feeling safe and secure—albeit a false sense. In times of great stress, our sense of who we are can be shattered or very shaky. When we can say, "This is good and that is evil," we shore up this crumbling sense of self. Understanding dualistic thinking in this way, we may be more likely to be compassionate toward ourselves and others in these difficult times.

—Maia Gay, Portland, Oregon

☞ I found a lot to agree with in the recent issue and its discussions about the events of Sept. 11. Sadly, I also found stark omissions and naïveté typical of many voices on the "spiritual" and political left. No voice called the Muslim world to task for teaching hate and violence in the *madrasahs*. How can we quote Gandhi in one breath and ignore the culpability of thousands of so-called religious teachers who teach hate? Why are we asked to follow the path of nonviolence without a reasonable *quid pro quo* from those who would harm us and other innocent civilians?

Yes, we as Americans bear the karmic fruit of unwise oil use and unfair economic policies in the Mideast and else-

where. But the Muslim world must bear its karma for not responding to the voices that distort the message of Islam. We cannot keep pointing the finger at ourselves and ignore the carnage done in the name of Allah. We must *all* bear witness to our wrongs.

Even the Dalai Lama has armed guards. Nowhere in the dharma are we advised to commit suicide by allowing others to do violence to us. We must act with the proper intention, knowing there is karmic fruit for everything we do. When I learned the precepts from my Zen teacher, the most important point communicated was that they are dependent on time, place, and circumstances. That's what makes each one a koan.

—Jeffrey D. Urbach, Highland Park, New Jersey

☞ I'm disappointed in your issue responding to the events of Sept. 11. Your editorial argued that things had "come full circle" because we've caused violence and terrorism overseas through a foreign policy "motivated by something as basic as getting gas to drive our cars." That's a childish hippie fantasy, as if we could solve this mess by riding bicycles or driving electric VWs. Subtract enough oil from our economy and we'll have a major worldwide depression. Those who weren't busy starving would freeze to death. Equally disappointing was the Dalai Lama's suggestion that we simply try to open a dialogue with bin Laden. Ditto the interview with the Muslims, during which you didn't ask a single tough question. If BPF is going to be useful in this difficult time, wishful thinking is not the way to do it.

—John H. Richardson, New York City

A Different Take on Homeland Defense

☞ Out of the tragic events of Sept. 11, the attention around homeland defense bears seeds of awakening and an opportunity for strengthening community. Homeland defense defers power to local levels—autonomous grassroots awareness would be appropriate too.

What if people put together neighborhood meetings to explore relevant topics? For instance, a series of five could focus on such primary areas of vulnerability as water, air, electricity, nuclear power, and chemical facilities.

Many people don't have much sense of where or how those things are placed in their environment. I'm not suggesting anything agenda-driven, like "No Nukes"—but just gathering together to work for common values. Needn't use the word *Buddhist*. Ideally, this could eventually include local media. This would be a good occasion for "public journalism" (a.k.a. "civic journalism"). Other civic participants could include businesses, libraries, public schools, etc.

Any takers? Don't be shy! You just might discover budhasangha in your own backyard.

—Gary Gach, San Francisco

Indra's Net

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels (Indra's Net), each reflecting all the others. The interdependence of all lives always strikes us when we compile this section.

A Peace Department in the U.S. Government?

Exactly two months before the September 11 attacks, Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich introduced a bill calling for a cabinet-level Department of Peace.

Within the United States, the department would focus on family and community violence, including violence attributable to the availability of guns, and on crime, punishment, and rehabilitation. The department would also create peace curricula for all educational levels, fund college and university peace studies programs, and establish a Peace Academy, modeled after the military academies, to offer training in all aspects of nonviolent conflict resolution.

Internationally, the department would work to develop a multinational nonviolent peace force. It would also advise the State and Defense Departments on ethics and the de-escalation of conflict. The bill requires the secretaries of state and defense to consult with the peace secretary to explore peaceful ways to resolve any imminent or actual conflict involving the United States.

In addition, the peace secretary would advise the president about reducing the nation's weapons stockpile and would write annual reports on the impact of U.S. arms sales to other

nations on U.S. security and the preservation of peace.

Kucinich's bill even considers, albeit in a gingerly way, the economic sources of conflict. The department would study nonviolent methods to prevent the depletion of natural resources and develop assistance programs for people affected by a scarcity of resources, whether as the result of natural disaster or human manipulation.

The budget of the Department of Peace would be fixed at one percent of the defense budget.

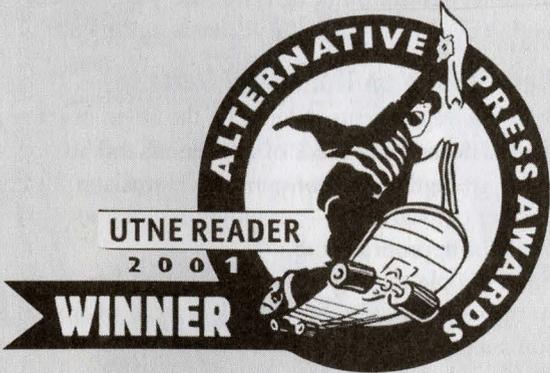
It is good to see the idea of peaceful conflict resolution finding its way into Congress. By mid-January, the bill had 43 co-sponsors. But it is a small step in light of the current infatuation with war. Only three of the sponsors joined after September 11, and Kucinich himself voted (with every member of Congress except Barbara Lee) to authorize President Bush to "use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks."

In casting his vote, Kucinich did say: "Our actions must pursue a path toward reducing violence, not escalating violence...Collateral attacks against innocent civilians would be no different than the terror we already have had brought upon us."

Kucinich's plea was not heard. According to a careful study of international media by economics professor Marc Herold, over 4,000 Afghan civilians were killed in 100 days of bombing—the direct result, he argues, of high-altitude bombing on heavily populated areas, a tactic deliberately chosen to avoid U.S. casualties at the cost of thousands of Afghan lives.

Polls showed 80 to 90 percent of Americans supporting the war. With practically no U.S. casualties, and the immense suffering visited on Afghan civilians essentially invisible, how can we help awaken knowledge and empathy in Americans beguiled by the war's "effectiveness"?

Action Alert: Write or call your representative, urging he/she to sponsor the bill (H.R. 2459).



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*Thanks to all of you for
turning the wheel with us!*

Palestinians and Israelis Join in Nonviolent Actions

Last April 5, shortly after the six children of the Palestinian Sharamwe family had left for school, the Israeli army bulldozed their home near Jerusalem. Less than a week later, a group of Israeli peace activists and Palestinians were working together to rebuild the house, which had been demolished and rebuilt twice before.

In the last year, as the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Territories has intensified, acts of peaceful resistance and civil disobedience involving both Palestinians and Israelis have multiplied:

- In June, about 100 people—half Palestinian villagers, half Israelis and international supporters—joined to protest the encroachment of Israeli settlers in the village of Dir Istya.

As they were marching toward five trailers that settlers had moved onto village land, the army tried to stop them. After some scuffling, the “ringleaders” were taken to the police station where the three Palestinians were booked on criminal charges and the others asked to sign release papers and leave. They refused to go without the Palestinians, despite police threats to eject them forcibly, and eventually all were released.

- In December, 350 Israelis and “internationals” drove in a convoy of 99 cars and trucks through several Israeli army checkpoints to bring two tons of food and clothing to the blockaded Palestinian city of Beit Umar.

- In January, 250 activists left Tel Aviv carrying blankets and tent coverings for the people of Mufakra, a Palestinian hamlet in the South Hebron mountains. In this region, the Israeli government, working with the settlers, is expropriating land, destroying houses, sealing wells, uprooting orchards, and preventing farmers from tending their flocks and fields. The activists negotiated their way through an army and police roadblock a few miles from Mufakra. But further along, settlers blocked the road with cars, and security forces announced a “closed military zone.” At that point, each activist took a blanket. They linked arms and started walking—as policemen and settlers shoved and kicked them, saving their harshest blows for Arabs—until they reached Mufakra. There 40 men, women, and children welcomed them with hot tea.

These actions receive almost no coverage in the U.S. press, which has also been silent about a peace march in Jerusalem on December 28, when some 5,000 people began a March of Mourning for all the victims—Israeli and Palestinian—behind a huge banner that read “The occupation is killing us all.”

The march, called by the Women’s Coalition for a Just Peace, ended in a plaza where the Hebrew and Arabic speakers included Israeli Nurit Peled, whose 13-year-old daughter was killed by a bomb in Jerusalem; and Zahira Kamal, speaking for Palestinian women in the Occupied Territories. A concert by Palestinians and Israelis followed, including a young Palestinian duo performing political raps in Arabic and Hebrew.

Will Peace Come to Sri Lanka?

The guns are silent in Sri Lanka, after 18 years of civil war and 65,000 lives lost, and the country resonates with hopes for peace. The government has reciprocated a truce declared unilaterally last December by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (“Eelam” is Sri Lanka’s ancient Tamil name).

The Sri Lankan army, 175,000-strong, failed to subdue the Tamil guerrillas, numbering around 10,000—whose tactics include suicide attacks. But their own losses, an exhausted Tamil population, and a Norwegian peace team persuaded the Tigers to abandon their call for an independent state and accept significant autonomy instead.

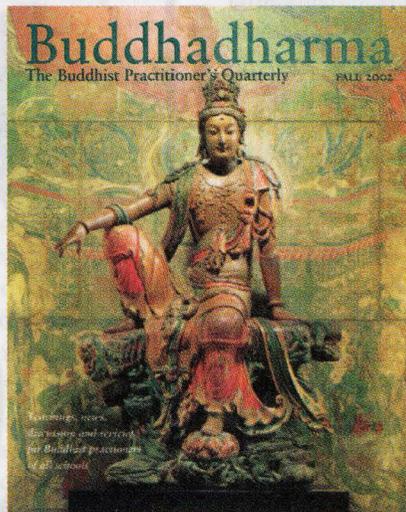


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FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF THE SHAMBHALA SUN.

Earlier bids for peace had stalled, mainly because Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga was intent on defeating the Tamil Tigers militarily. Then, in last December's parliamentary elections, Kumaratunga's People Alliance lost to the United National Party (UNP), which had promised to bring peace through negotiations with the Tigers.

Sri Lanka is 75 percent Buddhist Sinhalese, 20 percent Hindu Tamil, and five percent Muslim. After independence in 1948, Sinhalese-majority government implemented discriminatory policies: Sinhala was decreed the only official language, effectively barring Tamils from positions of power; quotas in education discriminated against Tamils; and "colonization" schemes brought Sinhalese farmers into Tamil areas.

Despite repeated Sinhalese attacks, the Tamils remained nonviolent until the mid-1970s, when the Tamil Tigers movement appeared.

A politicized, extremist sangha pressed the Sinhalese population and successive governments to oppose any accommodation with the Tamils. This chauvinistic, militant form of Buddhism arose in the late 1800s, in reaction to the contempt for Buddhism shown by British colonial rulers and Christian missionaries. It claimed a Sinhalese right to rule the island, citing the legend that the Buddha himself had visited Sri Lanka and appointed the Sinhalese custodians of the faith.

This "fundamentalism"—which disregards the compassion and nonviolence central to classical Buddhism—has permeated government and sangha since independence. It draws inspiration from a sixth-century Pali chronicle in which a Sinhalese king, "Ghamini, the enraged," kills "millions of beings" to defeat a Tamil kingdom and restore the sovereignty of Buddhism. Remorse torments him until monks reassure him he has killed only one-and-a-half human beings: one, an advanced Buddhist, and the half, a novice. All the others, non-Buddhists, did not count.

However, the true spirit of Buddhism in Sri Lanka shines in the Sarvodaya movement, started four decades ago by A. T. Ariyaratne (a member of BPF's international advisory board). Sarvodaya works to alleviate poverty and promote tolerance. Active in over 15,000 villages, in both Tamil and Sinhalese communities, it recently launched a peace initiative that will bring 500,000 Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim Sarvodaya members together for a day of meditation. Afterward, villagers from the mainly Sinhalese South will go the war-devastated Tamil North and East to work on rehabilitating houses, wells, schools, sanitary facilities, and places of worship.

Michigan Sangha Works to Free Muslim Detainee

Members of the Ann Arbor Zen Buddhist Temple sangha have been active in protests against the treatment of a prominent member of the town's Muslim community, Rabih Haddad. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents took Haddad from his apartment in mid-December,

while his wife and four children watched.

At this writing, in mid-January, Haddad has been held but not charged, denied bond, and forbidden to call his wife or an attorney for over a month.

The Muslim community is deeply shaken by these events. Haddad is considered a beloved mentor who has spoken out about the humanitarian needs of Afghanistan.

Sangha members have worked hard to bring to the community and elected officials the story of Haddad and the 1,200 other Muslim and Arab men currently detained in the U.S. Many signed a petition calling on the INS to release Haddad on bond. Working with the Ann Arbor Committee for Peace, Muslim community members, and the American Civil Liberties Union, sangha members helped organize a community vigil on behalf of Haddad and in defense of civil liberties.

Local peace activists are now building coalitions with Chicago activists awaiting Haddad's arrival in the INS detention center there. With the Bush administration declaring that curtailing civil liberties, ethnic profiling, and mass deportation are necessary to national security, we continue to spread the message that safety and justice are interdependent.

Mary Bejian, an Ann Arbor sangha member, is on the Ann Arbor Committee for Peace and is a local ACLU board member.

Indra's Net is researched and compiled by Annette Herskovits. ❖

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—funded by a special grant—

Welcome, Sibylle!

As of January 2, 2002, BPF has a new executive director. Sibylle Scholz introduces herself to you in her own column on page 50, and I want to welcome her here, on behalf of the BPF staff and board.

Sibylle comes to us with a wealth of experience in the nonprofit world. She left her native Germany at the age of 21, and since that time she has traveled widely. For the last 25 years she has worked for social change, mostly in the areas of human rights and environmental justice, in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the U.S. Before joining BPF, she worked for several years as the associate director of Habitat for Humanity. And before that, she was, among other things, a researcher for Greenpeace, development director for an Indian rights center in Oakland, consultant in Latin America for the European Union, and visiting professor of economics at universities in Guatemala and Peru.

Sibylle's academic credentials are also impressive. She has a Ph.D. in agricultural economics and resource man-



agement from the University of Illinois at Champagne/Urbana, and has published many scientific articles about environmental economics.

She has been practicing at San Francisco Zen Center for five years, and she had her *jukai* (lay ordination) ceremony there in June 2001. That's when this picture was taken.

Sibylle speaks more languages than I have room to list here. She is also rumored to be an excellent cook, and we look forward to finding out about some of her other skills and talents that are still unknown to us.

It's a cliché to say so, but BPF is like a family, so of course it's a really big change for us to get a new executive director. We haven't had much time to get to know Sibylle yet, but some things we can see already. We know she's a woman of great energy, warmth, and enthusiasm. She comes to us carrying baskets full of new ideas, and we have already been stimulated to think in new ways about our long-term goals—about how, together, we want to work for social and environmental justice. Welcome, Sibylle! ❖

—Susan Moon

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Family Practice

Original Face: Pregnancy, Choice, and Family Practice

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

Show me your original face before your parents were born.
—traditional Zen koan (meditation question)

In the beginning he had no name, no face, no breath except for mine. He had no brain to think with; no ears through which the sounds of my heart and, more faintly, music and voices, could travel; no worries about up and down, right and wrong, heat and cold. He had no words, no voice. His physical form changed rapidly as he grew daily, acknowledging with temporary gills and tail his kinship to the animal world. He was a busy creature, curled like a shrimp around his quickly beating heart. When he was very small, I could feel him flipping around inside me like a guppy in an aquarium. It struck me as almost unbelievable that this miniscule bit of life could eventually become a human being who could one day do parallel parking or read Shakespeare's sonnets or program computers.

After Joshua was born and had grown into a vigorous and grubby toddler, I one day noticed a young woman gazing at him with intense interest in the dining room of the Buddhist center where we lived. We struck up a conversation, and after dinner took a walk together up the mountain valley. Quickly, then, she told me her story: a brief and difficult love affair while traveling in a foreign land, an unplanned pregnancy, no money or father for the child, and the decision to terminate the pregnancy.

She had made the right decision for her situation, the young woman told me. But sadness shaded her face and filled her eyes. "Still, she was my baby and I loved her," she said. My eyes, also, filled with tears when she said that.

Her story could have been my own; there were many similarities. Where our stories differed was that, although abortion seemed to be the logical, "right" choice, best for everyone involved, I surprised myself by continuing what was to be the only pregnancy of my life. I remember standing by the telephone in my friend's apartment in San Francisco, the phone book open to the page listing the abortion clinic, trying to dial the clinic's number. I'll call just for information, not to make an actual appointment, I thought to myself. But my hand refused to move. I felt as though my body and mind were filled with wet concrete. And, even though I was dazed with stress, my meditator's mind was intrigued with the observation that my life seemed truly to have become something other than my own. Suddenly I was responsible for making life-and-death decisions, not only for myself, but for a potential person I hadn't yet met face to face. The first precept of Buddhism, not to kill, but to cherish all life, had never seemed more potent and mysterious than at this moment.

Politically, I have always been pro-choice, and although I feel quite clear about my own understanding of how women's reproductive freedom is essential to their health, happiness, and the health and happiness of their families, I also recognize, the older I get, that abortion is a serious matter. I've seen families go through difficult late-term abortions lovingly and mindfully. These are intensely personal decisions, and passionate emotions arise when we are faced with the complexity of issues around what can be called either "woman's choice" or "murder," depending on one's beliefs.

There is no-one-size-fits-all answer—of that I'm firmly convinced. There are many reasons why abortion may well be the right choice for a woman to make. She may realize that she doesn't have the health, economic, and community resources and emotional support needed to raise a child.

When I became pregnant, I was deeply committed to a path of intensive Buddhist meditation practice, and I was faced with the choice of continuing on the monastic path or departing from it to take up a householder path. I can even understand why Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, called his son "Rahula" or "fetter." After all, babies and very young children can be very self-centered and demanding. When my son was around three, I remember becoming hugely angry. As he was clawing at me one day, I found myself shouting: "Do you live in a totally egocentric universe? Mommy has feelings and needs too!" The look of astonishment and chagrin on his small round face made me laugh. I could almost see the gears whirling in his brain: "What?! My mother is a separate person from me!?"

Our relationship changed from that day forward. As spiritual practitioners, my husband Chris and I have to carve out time for our practice from a family schedule that always feels packed with necessary tasks.

I'm not fooled, however, into thinking that I would be more serene or more enlightened or make more "progress" in my practice if I hadn't given birth to and raised our son, who is now 13. Maybe this is true for some people, but not for me. I know this because I've now had the opportunity to grow a human being from blastula to video gamer. It's been the greatest journey of my life. I know my son's original face, and I know it as my own. ♦



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History

The Buddha Stops a War

by Diane Ames

Most Buddhists know the basic story of the life of the man who became known as the Buddha (born about 540 BCE). Buddhist art and folklore celebrate how he was born the crown prince of a small kingdom in what is now Nepal, renounced the world when he became aware of the problem of human suffering, and almost killed himself in trying to find the answer to that problem through the practice of austerities. Finally, convinced that starving and torturing himself was not the way, he accepted nourishment and vowed to sit under the nearest bodhi tree until he attained enlightenment. Some say it took him a week, some say a night, to achieve his goal. Then, after persuasion by others and some initial hesitation, he set out to preach about his new insights to anybody who would listen. Over the next several decades, he founded an order of mendicants, that has lasted from that day to this, and started a new world religion.

One could get the impression from some texts that during his later years the Buddha spent all his time teaching his sangha of monks and nuns. Indeed, this probably did take up most of his time and energy. However, a story from an ancient commentary on the Pali canon (the *Paramatthajotika*) reveals that he was also actively concerned about the world around him.

In what was apparently a period of drought, the Buddha's natal clan, the Sakyas, and their neighbors, the Koliyas, were building a dam on the Rohini River in order to divert more of its water for irrigation. As still happens when more than one country wants to dam up the same river, they could not agree about how to divide up the water. According to the text, the two dam-building teams began to quarrel, trading insults about the sex lives of the ancestors of each other's kings. Soon the Sakya and Koliya armies were facing each other on the banks of the Rohini.

Hearing of this, the Buddha became concerned and hastened to the site to intervene. Appearing between the two armies, he preached the *Atta-danda-sutta*, which traces anger, violence, and greed to attachment to the self. Chinese texts add that he asked the two kings which was more important: irrigation water or human life. Unlike numerous heads of state before or since, they opted for human life. In any case, it is clear that the Buddha's meditation stopped what we would call a resource war. The two sides threw down their weapons and agreed to divide up the water in a more rational fashion.

The Buddha ruled that trading in weapons is a form of wrong livelihood, so he obviously did not approve of war. As this story shows, his disapproval was not just abstract. He was, in more ways than one, a man of peace. ♦

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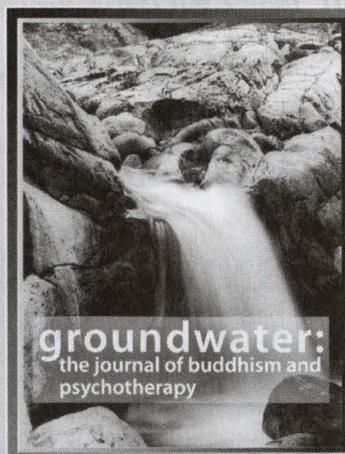
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History



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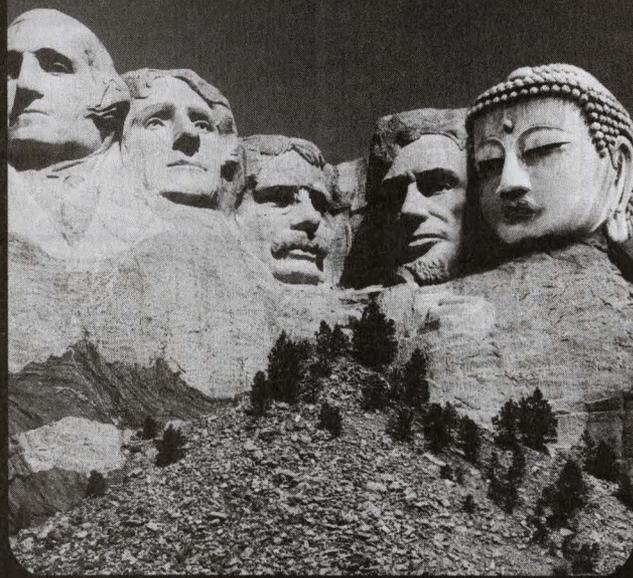
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Human Rights

A Kurdish Woman Speaks Up

by Judith Stronach

I dedicate this column to all the women in mideastern countries suffering human rights abuses. Layla Zana, 38, is one such woman. She grew up as a Kurd in a peasant village in Turkey where she rebelled against wearing a head covering. At 14 she rebelled again when her father arranged for her to marry a man 20 years her senior. But the marriage went through, and it turned out to be for the good. Her husband, a Kurdish activist who would eventually be tortured and jailed for 11 years, encouraged her development. Zana learned Turkish and studied on her own, becoming the first woman in Turkey to get a high school diploma without attending school. At that point she was on her own, as her husband was in jail, and she embarked on a career as a journalist, writing frequently about the regular detention, torture, execution, and disappearance of those who express concern about the situation of the 12 million Kurds in Turkey. She founded women's groups as well as a movement for women with husbands in prison.

Then in 1991 Zana became the first Kurdish woman elected to Turkey's Parliament. Her current troubles began at her inauguration, when she wore a headband with the Kurdish colors and referred in Kurdish to the brotherhood of Turkish and Kurdish peoples. This was considered sedition. Her comments to the U.S. Congress about the treatment of

Kurds was branded treason. Various attacks were made on her life. She continued to raise the Kurdish issue, making speeches about the destruction of 3,000 villages, the burning of crops and forests, and the plight of three million refugees. Her parliamentary immunity was lifted and she and five other Kurdish deputies were charged with separatism under the Anti-Terror Law. In 1994, in a trial that was glaring in its unfairness, she was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

In 1995, while she was in jail, the European Parliament awarded Zana the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which Nelson Mandela has received as well. She was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian Parliament and various members of the U.S. Congress.

In 1998 Zana was charged with two additional years for writing about such human rights issues as the "Saturday women"—mothers of the "disappeared" who gathered every Saturday in Istanbul until they were forced off the streets.

Zana has never used or advocated the use of violence, and Amnesty International has adopted her as a "prisoner of conscience." ♦

Please send letters urging that Layla Zana be freed immediately and unconditionally to:

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Everybody Makes Mistakes, Even Doctors

An Interview with Dr. Rick Levine and Dr. Andrea Thach

In January 2002, I interviewed Rick Levine and Andrea Thach, both doctors and both Buddhist practitioners, at Rick's home in Oakland, California, while we drank delicious green tea.

Rick is a senior physician practicing internal medicine at Kaiser Oakland, with a special interest in home care. He has been a Zen practitioner since 1968, when he began studying with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi at San Francisco Zen Center. (Rick was interviewed by Tensho David Schneider in the Summer 1989 *Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter* about his work with homeless people.)

Andrea has been doing community-based medical care in Alameda County for 16 years. She has also been to Guatemala several times on human rights and public health delegations. (See her article on Guatemala in *Turning Wheel*, Spring 2001.) Andrea came to Buddhist practice through BASE and the teaching of Maylie Scott, and she now practices at Berkeley Zen Center. —Susan Moon

Susan: You're both Buddhist practitioners, and you're both doctors. How do questions of ethical conduct come up for you within the context of your medical practice?

Andrea: A question that comes up for me is: How do you talk to patients and their families when you feel you've made a mistake?

Right before *Rohatsu sesshin* [weeklong Zen retreat held in December] last year, I was caring for a difficult patient at a county hospital. He'd had a complicated illness, and I made a delay in diagnosis that caused a great deal of suffering and may even have resulted in the loss of his leg. I was caring for this person right before Rohatsu, and it wasn't until I was sitting in sesshin that it occurred to me that my judgment had been bad.

This man lived in a single-room apartment, had very, very bad heart disease and was on dangerous medication, a blood-thinning medication. His ability

to follow through, to come for his appointments and his blood draws, was dubious, and in fact, when he came into the hospital, his heart condition was not under control, and his blood was dangerously thin. He had big, swollen legs and was in a lot of discomfort. He wasn't being a good patient, he hadn't been taking his medications, and he was very difficult for everyone on the staff to talk with.

Over the course of several days, it became clear that he was having pain in the leg because of poor circulation, but the appropriate things weren't done in a timely manner and he suffered enormously, and went on to amputation. He might have needed the amputation anyway, but from the standpoint of ethics, it doesn't really matter, because in any case, the right things weren't done for him. And he certainly suffered longer, and maybe lost more of his leg than he would have otherwise.

After Rohatsu, I was working at the hospital on Christmas Eve, and I went to see how he was. He was a very different person, even though he was still having a lot of problems with his heart condition; he was pleasant and direct because he wasn't in pain. And I just sat down next to him and asked him how he was.

I had given some thought to what I might say to him. I'm a white, upper-middle-class, educated person, and he's a poor African American man who has to use this hospital for his medical care. He does have terrible conditions, and so maintaining his trust in the facility that he needs to come to is of prime importance. How do I acknowledge what happened in a way that supports his healing and the building of trust? That's the question.

Rick: And in a way that isn't, at the same time, self-serving. That doesn't mask the fact that mistakes had occurred.



Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632

Andrea: Right. We really had a very lovely conversation. I told him that I knew I had been slow to see the problem with his leg, because he had been so difficult for me to communicate with, and I had made assumptions about him and his condition because of that, and that was part of why the diagnosis was missed, not just my lack of medical skills in this case. I apologized to him. And he just held me in his gaze and he said, "You're right." And there was a dissolution of the difference between us.

I think he understood I was saying that we had missed part of his suffering as a human being. He knew he was being seen now in a way that he hadn't been before.

Susan: And then how did you feel?

Andrea: Like a little wafting of grace had passed over.

Rick: From what frame of reference do you identify something as a mistake? One frame is legal, one is your own personal standard of integrity as a practitioner, and one is simply from the standpoint of the patient. Perhaps the bottom-line way of looking at it is with a so-called standard-of-care tape measure, and this is the legal point of view. That is to say, would a capable, well-trained person in a similar setting have done it significantly differently? And from what I'm hearing, this man suffered, but I'm certainly not ready, as a peer reviewer, to criticize your practice based on anything I've heard here.

What do we expect of ourselves? What does one expect of a doctor? And that's very different in different circumstances.

I'm sure that I make mistakes every day. If you looked at the 20 patients I cared for yesterday, one of them for a heart problem, one for a stomach problem, one for this, one for that, and if you asked the gastroenterologist, and the cardiologist, if you went down the hall and around the block—well, for every one of those patients, I could have done something better. I know it.

Andrea: It's really the intentionality of what we do, not just the acts themselves, that matters. That's why I presented this case at Morbidity and Mortality Rounds [a peer review meeting] in front of the hospital staff, as a learning, because I wanted other people to understand the things that I hadn't paid attention to. Everyone discounted it as a serious mistake, but I wanted to examine my assumptions about the man as a human being and my ability to really connect with him. As a Buddhist practitioner I think that the missing piece was that I was not really with him in his suffering, and that's what led to the mistake.

Rick: You were taking care of Buddha and you didn't realize it.

Susan: This makes me think that cultural differences must come up a lot in your care of patients. You're treating a person not just with a certain condition but you're treating a person who brings with him a whole set of belief systems about the way the world works, and you have a set of them, too. I guess if you're not aware of those things, they can really get in the way.

Rick: I had a mentor doctor who was outstanding in many respects. One time he saw a patient who had a little problem with his vision, and this elder doctor gave him the appropriate medicine, but he didn't give him a sufficient dose. The guy went blind—and it was a preventable blindness. The doctor asked his rheumatologist colleague, "Did I mess up here?" And the rheumatologist said, "Well, actually, the appropriate dose would have been thus and such." The rheumatologist, who is a colleague of mine, told me that the doctor then took the progress notes he'd been writing on, and he opened the bottom drawer of his desk and put the paper in there and said to the rheumatologist, "That's where I put my mistakes." And he said, "There are no repeats in there—there are no two of the same mistake."

This man would not have brought his mistake up before Morbidity and Mortality Rounds. He was of an older school of thought, where you just deal with it. You don't need to air your laundry in public. Also, there's the sense that the medical profession is unfairly assaulted by legal and other forces, and therefore, you don't go out of your way to open the door to outside criticism.

On the one hand, you may have a very low threshold for calling something a mistake, and so you expose your heart and you acknowledge that you do make mistakes that have terrible consequences for people, and you feel terrible about it, and you really examine yourself as to how it happened.

And on the other hand, I know people who have 30 or 40 years of oncology experience, where all day, every day, they are dealing with people who not only are often dying of their disease but who think their diagnosis was delayed. It's rare that somebody with cancer doesn't think it should have been diagnosed two weeks earlier or two months earlier. So you're constantly dealing with that.

It's very common for an oncologist, as a way of surviving and moving on, to take the attitude: "Fuck it. I can't deal with the allegation that I did something wrong." And I can accept that approach. There's a lot of relativism around mistakes: A mistake according to whom? What kind of mistake? What are the actual damages from my mistake?

I knew you were going to ask us about "mistakes" today, and I found a quote from Suzuki Roshi in an

It's rare that somebody with cancer doesn't think it should have been diagnosed two weeks earlier or two months earlier. You're constantly dealing with that.

old notebook. This is from a lecture he gave in 1970: "If you make a mistake you should faithfully make repentance. When you make a mistake, if you think, 'Everyone makes a mistake, so it is okay'—if you say so, that is not your inner voice. That you say so already means that you have some pain in your heart. If it is okay there is no need to say it is okay."

Susan: There's something else about mistakes that I think is particular to the medical profession. Everybody makes mistakes; I make mistakes in my work all the time, and it's unfortunate, and I have to recognize it, and apologize to people—"Oh dear, I lost your manuscript"—but it's not a life-and-death matter.

Rick: You lost the manuscript of my novel and it's not a life-and-death matter?!

Susan: Not the only copy! I haven't done that yet. Anyway, I think patients feel that doctors have life-and-death power over them, and it seems more important for doctors not to make a mistake than for editors, for example. And maybe doctors feel this, too. We patients think you doctors are going to make everything okay, and so every time you fail to make life all right again, it's as if that must be your mistake. There's this false elevation of doctors, as if they aren't quite as human as the rest of us. I don't know if that's a problem for doctors, if you have to remind yourselves: "I'm not a special kind of a person with magical powers. I'm just a regular kind of person." But patients have all this transference going, and we do have to remind ourselves of that.

Rick: As a doctor, how I receive that projection from somebody and how I deal with it is a challenge.

Andrea: For me, it's not so much physicians who are assumed to have magic powers, it's technology. People expect that there's a perfect solution if they just find the right tests, the best technician. The human side of medical healing has taken a secondary position.

Rick: It's rare for me that I face a really difficult ethical dilemma. I find that if I sit down with somebody and keep my mouth shut for a little while, the situation evolves, and I don't have to tackle it as an ethical dilemma. "Should we intubate Mom or not?" The more closely I listen to all the people concerned, the more the question tends to kind of work itself out.

Andrea: The question that comes to my mind as you're talking is: How much does your ability to sit still and really listen come from your Buddhist practice? In my experience it's unusual for people in the medical profession to be able to sit quietly, listen, and hold a container in which people can come together in the middle of turmoil—their own emotional tur-

moil, the turmoil of the family members, and the turmoil of patient.

Rick: I would say that that *is* a way that Buddhist practice is very, very useful.

Susan: I'm going to push you on this a little bit. You say it's rare that you actually have the experience of having to make a choice. But can you think of a time when it *has* happened?

Rick: The assisted suicide question comes up from time to time.

Susan: How do you feel about that?

Rick: I feel very flexible about it. I remember once walking down the hall of the hospital and I saw an old, old lady I knew, who was almost 90, sitting in a chair. She and I had mutual friends, and I used to see her at their house on Thanksgiving, and Christmas, and Hanukkah. When I saw her I said, "Oh, Esther, how nice to see you." She recognized me, and she said, "Rick, please, please kill me, please end it for me!" She was a marvelous, very intelligent, lively woman. She was suffering a lot, both physically and emotionally—over family problems.

I remember being seized by humor, and I said, "Esther, nothing would give me more pleasure, but my job just doesn't allow me to do that for you." She started laughing, and I think it bought her another six months.

I could have sat down and considered it. I could have asked myself, "Should I give her some Seconal and combine it with such-and-such and send her home with it?" But I sensed that that's not really what it was about.

And most of the time, I think the ethical dilemma isn't really an ethical dilemma, it's something else. Maybe you just haven't gotten close enough to see it yet.

Dogen says, "All things advance and confirm the self." And I use that a lot in situations like this. What it means to me is, "Shut up, be quiet, let the situation ripen and develop."

I have a resistance to framing a lot of this stuff as ethics per se, but the danger is that you start getting really relativistic and situational about how you deal with everything, and that's not the way to go, either. There *are* fundamental ethical truths in medicine, just as we have the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism.

Susan: I'm seeing how elusive this topic of ethics really is in your work. As long as you have good intentions, as long as you're doing the best you can, you're always being ethical, aren't you? What else can a person do?

Rick: But isn't the path to hell lined with good intentions? When I look at what I did yesterday, gee, my

I find that if I sit down with somebody and keep my mouth shut for a little while, the situation evolves, and I don't have to tackle it as an ethical dilemma.

intentions were great, but I sure screwed up. I still have to be accountable for the screw-ups.

Susan: It's complicated, isn't it? Your work is about alleviating suffering. But what helps people isn't so clear. Suffering takes so many forms. Is it alleviating suffering to give somebody pain medication that zonks them out? What about the suffering of the family members? Do you sometimes have a situation where it's really the spouse or the child or the parent who needs the help, and so you treat the patient in a certain way that might not be so good for her but it's better for somebody in her family?

Andrea: Yes. Years ago I worked at a program for the very frail elderly, doing end-of-life care. There was a woman there who had had many strokes and was in a nursing home and was very fragile. Every time she swallowed a little bit of her secretion, she got pneumonia. And her level of functioning was so poor that treating those pneumonias didn't return her to any quality of life. She had very little awareness of her surroundings.

Her husband was extremely devoted to her and he couldn't let go of her. And every time she got pneumonia, even with minimal treatment, she recovered. I was sure that she was recovering for him. And so it was really only when he could finally let go that we decided to stop treating her. But for her own well-being, had she not had him in her life, the quality of her life wouldn't have warranted continuing treatment.

We really work with the whole family as a unit, not just the individual.

Rick: How about the case of the elderly Alzheimer's man who is sundowning?

Susan: What's "sundowning"?

Rick: Getting confused, agitated, and perhaps even menacing, often at twilight and thereafter. The family is going to sleep and he's walking around naked, and he wants to promenade down the street. So you give him a nice prescription for Haldol, and a week later, his wife calls up and says, "Thank you so much! Our family is feeling great." But maybe Grandpa is sitting with his tongue hanging out, drooling. Have you done Grandpa a favor? I don't know.

On the one hand, the family is a more functional and beneficent unit with respect to him. But on the other hand, one could argue that you have committed a psychiatric assault against this man. You have dulled his edge, his imagination.

Susan: The same question must come up with children who have behavior problems.

Rick: That's right. A kid's having terrible difficulty in school so you give him Ritalin and he's doing better, he's making friends and so forth. But some extraordinary percentage of kids in elementary schools are now taking that medicine, and something feels wrong about that.

Susan: It seems to me that the Buddhist idea of being willing to look at your suffering and be present with it has a connection with medical practice, and especially with medication. When do you medicate for depression, for example?

Rick: Yes, for my cohort of friends and peers, that is one of the big issues that you could describe as an ethical question: whether to use antidepressants or not. Many of the people in my social group are taking antidepressants, or are grappling with the question of whether to start.

Andrea: What makes this an ethical issue for you?

Rick: The patient comes in asking: "Am I medicating away my pain and therefore getting a free ride that isn't appropriate? Isn't it my Buddhist practice, for example, to deal with my situation with my own native volition and action? Am I changing myself into somebody that I'm not? Am I artificially altering my state of mind when my fundamental responsibility as a Buddhist practitioner is to stay with my state of mind?" Questions like that come up.

Andrea: That kind of personal inquiry is so different when I'm the doctor, sitting across the desk from someone, and the person is really depressed, her functioning is impaired, her quality of life is impaired. I see it as my role, in part, to be a mirror to help a person see clearly at a time when a person can't see clearly by themselves, because that's part of the disease. And I say this having sat on the other side of the desk, too—the patient's side.

Susan: Can you imagine a time when you might say to somebody, "No, I don't want to prescribe antidepressants for you at this juncture"?

Andrea: I *have* said that. And whether I prescribe antidepressants or not, some of the folks I work with haven't had an opportunity to do much in the way of counseling. I almost always encourage them to try some kind of counseling.

Rick: Sometimes a person presents a lot of conflict and concern about whether to take medication. He has a long list of why he shouldn't, but he's miserable and certainly fits the community standard of being depressed. It's that person in particular who I'm concerned is

(continued on page 21)



A Clear Mind Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be: Intention and Expectations at the End of (This) Life

By Steve Heilig

Not many people seem to know it, but for all practical purposes, the debate over “assisted suicide” should have been pretty much settled for some years now. In 1997, the United States Supreme Court, while denying that there is any right to die by physician-hastened dying, endorsed the concept and practice of “terminal sedation.” Even the American Medical Association, no friend to Jack Kevorkian or other assisted-dying advocates, also weighed in reluctantly in favor of terminal sedation, albeit only if appropriately practiced as a last resort.

Terminal sedation entails the use of legal medications, usually opiates, to relieve pain and other distresses that commonly appear when death is near, but which, in increasing doses, can hasten death by causing the cessation of breathing or heart function. The legal “catch” is that the hastening of dying cannot be intentional but must come about as a side effect of the treatment of pain and suffering. In other words, as long as death is not intentional, it’s okay to help someone die.

Thus, legally and ethically, intention is everything. A physician could use exactly the same doses of the same medication with two dying patients, bringing about a quicker (and less painful) death for each. But

if with one patient the physician did this to relieve pain or some other distressing symptoms and with the other to intentionally bring about an earlier death, in the first case he or she is a compassionate physician and in the second a murderer. In both cases the physician knows what is unfolding, and the end result is the same, but what the physician admits to makes all the difference between compassion and criminality. This “Hippocratic Hypocrisy” forces some physicians to fudge their recordkeeping and to tell truths in private that they would never disclose publicly. Surveys of physicians indicate that many of them—in some studies, half—have intentionally hastened death. Even more

feel that this can be an appropriate, if tragic, last resort in a small minority of cases. Secrecy is a price many willingly pay for living in a culture that denies the fact of death.

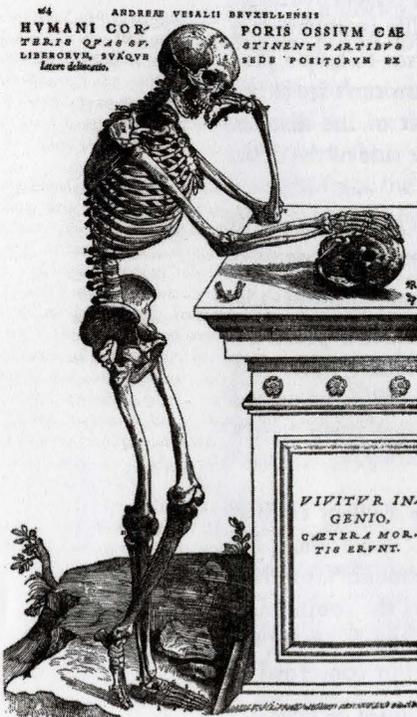
Opiates may be one of the greatest gifts to humanity, but we are still not very good at ensuring that pain at the end of life is sufficiently medicated, as many studies have shamefully shown. One widely reported 1995 study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* indicated that half of all American patients die with some level of undertreated pain. Yet pain specialists hold that at least 90 percent of all pain can be treated. Outdated training, overblown fears of “addicting” patients (irrelevant in this context anyway) or of patients who fake pain to get drugs to abuse or sell, and the spectre of being accused of “assisted suicide” contribute to the failure to adequately treat pain.

On the other hand, in addition to relieving pain, such drugs can also cloud the mind, sometimes to the point of oblivion. For many Buddhists and others who believe that the state of consciousness at the time of death is a major determinant of our next incarnation, terminal sedation presents another dilemma: the tension between clouded awareness and a good rebirth. How does one maintain a clear mind for the journey out of this temporal body and through the *bardo* or whatever intermediary place we navigate on the way to our next life?

Perhaps intention is everything here as well. Pain itself can cloud the mind or even obliterate it in ways that no amount of diligent practice and forbearance can withstand. Serious, lasting pain can be dehumanizing. Using drugs to alleviate suffering, even if it renders us seemingly unaware of what is happening, may be a blessing greater than the unknown merits of staying awake, aware, and in agony at the end.

Many traditions, including Buddhism, condemn suicide as a negative act in terms of karma or sin. But in most cases of physician-assisted dying, the hastening of death comes only a matter of hours or days before it would otherwise arrive. The net amount of suffering, however, is much less. I cannot believe that either deity or dharma would begrudge a being that escape from pain in the final stages of dying.

Some notable Buddhist teachers, not to mention the Buddha himself, have held out ideal standards for our dying. Near the end of his own life, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi said, “If when I die, the moment I’m



dying, if I suffer, that is all right, you know; that is suffering Buddha. No confusion in it...that is all right, that is not a problem."

To which I reply: *Yikes*. Suzuki Roshi sets an awfully lofty standard (and not for the first time!). That level of equanimity is something to strive for, but I wonder how many mere mortals can and do measure up to it. I've seen longtime practitioners fall apart in misery in their final days due to physical pain, mental confusion, or dementia. To deny them succor, even at the cost of their supposed enlightenment and advancement, seems to me to be the opposite of compassion.

None of us knows how we will feel when our own time comes. We can prepare ourselves to the best of our ability with the tradition and teachers that best suit us. But even with excellent preparation, there are no guarantees. That is why issues of choice and control are so important for each of our futures. We can take action now, while we're still able. Legal documents known generically as advance directives, such as a Living Will or a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, outline your values and specific instructions for when you are no longer able to take care of yourself or voice your wishes. These documents are widely available from healthcare organizations and hospitals and empower you and your designated "surrogate" to say, "If I am in such a condition, I want this" or "enough is enough." Even without such forms, letting your family and friends know what you would or would not want in terms of life-support technology can be valuable.

For those who wish to be activists beyond preparing

for their own impermanence, there are real needs and opportunities. Groups like Partnership for Caring and Compassion in Dying are fighting against overly restrictive regulation of pain medications and stingy insurance reimbursement policies, while providing much educational material for patients. Others are advocating controversial but promising research into the potential pain-relieving and psychological benefits of illegal drugs such as marijuana and MDMA (Ecstasy).

Expectations are dangerous in any form, but maybe nowhere more so than with the growing desire for "a good death." Roshi Philip Kapleau describes this as "one in which there is no railing or struggling against imminent death... it is dying freely, naturally, like falling asleep." But noted Yale University surgeon and medical historian Sherwin Nuland, in his best-selling 1994 book *How We Die*, warned that the well-intended aim for a "beautiful" and transcendent experience—or at least a painless one—can itself become a burdensome expectation. Many will fail to achieve it, adding to the other less avoidable stresses and disappointments of dying.

But again, and perhaps paradoxically, the good death is something to strive for, whatever might come after. As Suzuki Roshi went on to conclude: "We should be grateful to have a limited body... If you had a limitless life it would be a real problem for you." That idea is hard to argue with. ❖

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Mistakes, continued from page 19

cheating himself out of the opportunity to feel better and move on.

There's a line from the movie *Desperately Seeking Susan* where Rosanna Arquette is sitting with her sister-in-law in a lovely upper-class New York kitchen, drinking coffee, and Rosanna is saying, "My life is a mess!" The sister-in-law looks at her and says, "Oh, for God's sake, why don't you take a Valium like a normal person!" Sometimes I feel that way, too: Cut it already! Take some Prozac like a normal person, would you, so that you can move on with your Buddhist practice and your life, and think about whatever you need to be thinking about. And we're not burning a bridge. We can go back on the same bridge if we have to.

Andrea: So much of our training as physicians is based on the idea that you make a diagnosis, you come up with a treatment, and you cure a person and move on. But in the case of antidepressants I think,

"So we'll try it. We'll work with it." And as we go along I ask myself: "Is this a mistake. Is this helpful? What do you learn from it?"

I tell the patient: "I'm here with you." I *don't* say, "Here, take this piece of paper and I'll see you in another life."

I want to go back to ethics and relativism. I'm thinking about the precepts. Let's take the oncologist. How does he work with the fact that every day he makes mistakes? How do I work with the fact that when I go back over a chart after a patient has left, I might find myself saying, "Goddamn, I missed that! I didn't pay attention to that." How do I continue to work with that and stay whole and take good care of people?

The Buddhist precepts are guidelines. They're not meant to be followed to the letter all the time—we know that's impossible for us as human beings—but they're meant to be strong guideposts to touch base with and to inform how we act in the world. ❖

Susan Moon is the editor of Turning Wheel.

Resources related to this article

Compassion in Dying:

www.compassionindying.org
503/221-9556 (Portland, OR)
Client services, legal advocacy, and public education.

Partnership for Caring:

www.partnershipforcaring.org
800/989-9455 (New York City)
Living will and medical power of attorney documents available on Web site.

Zen Hospice Center

www.zenhospice.org
415/863-2910 (San Francisco)
Hospice services and training programs.

Impossible Choices

By Maia Duerr

I used to live in a state mental hospital, the kind you see in the movies: red brick buildings sitting on a lone hill, screams emanating from the barred windows, people wandering around the well-manicured grounds talking to themselves.

I wasn't there as a patient—I doubt that I would feel comfortable disclosing this honestly to you right now if I had been. My job as a music therapist brought me inside those walls every day, and for a while, I lived in the hospital dormitory with other staff. My first day there, I was petrified and wondered if I would be hacked to death by someone in a psychotic rage—a fear no doubt greatly influenced by headlines like one that actually appeared in the *New York Daily News*: “Get the Violent Crazies off Our Streets” (11/19/99). My fears gradually dissipated as I came to know the patients as people rather than diagnoses. After three years of working at the hospital, I felt safer there than on many city streets. But it always pulled at my conscience that I locked up patients in the wards behind me as I went home each day.

Over the next 10 years, I worked in a number of other positions in the mental health system. Eventually, I became burned out, but not for the reasons you might think. It wasn't the people I worked with who frustrated me—it was the system within which we all had to navigate. I witnessed the revolving door of patients going out of the hospital and into the community only to be readmitted a short time later. It seemed to me that we were missing an essential piece. My work required me to come up with treatment plans for the “rehabilitation” of my clients, but I kept wondering how being avoided, feared, pitied, locked up, and medicated to the point of oblivion affects a person's mental health, beyond any psychiatric challenge they face.

I reached a low point one day when I was working as an outreach counselor in Oregon. I was scheduled to see my favorite client, Joe. Joe and I couldn't have been more different—he was a large man in his 40s, with a nose ring, homemade tattoos, and a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. I was in my early 30s, try-

ing to be an upwardly mobile professional. He'd spent most of his life in the Oregon mental health system, a good part of it hospitalized for psychotic episodes that were worsened by his use of marijuana and harder street drugs. I had lived a fairly conventional, privileged life, and my knowledge of drugs was limited to a few puffs on a joint (I did inhale). And yet, after three years of working together and getting to know each other, Joe and I had developed a strong bond. I knew the things he loved best—going fishing and drinking coffee—and I was lucky enough to work for an agency that realized the therapeutic value of developing genuine, trusting relationships with our clients. So Joe and I did plenty of fishing and coffee-drinking in between more mundane tasks like finding him a safe place to live and straightening out his Social Security benefits.

On this bright spring day, I drove to his house in the ancient, rattling agency car and caught a glimpse of snow on the McKenzie Mountains in the distance. I wondered what I would encounter when I saw him: reports from co-workers were that he had been acting “crazy” lately.

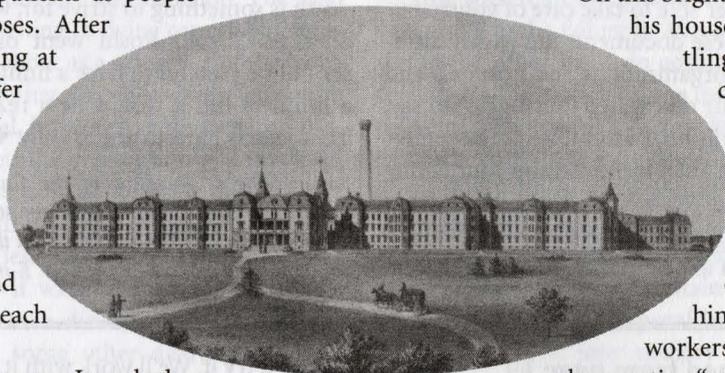
When I got to the house, I noticed that the hallway light bulb had been painted red, giving the room an eerie glow. I found Joe in the backyard burning a pile of magazines. In the friendliest voice I could muster, I told him that he needed to stop because the city fire code prohibited burning and the neighbors might call the fire department. Though he usually gave me a warm greeting, this time he glared at me and growled, “I have to do this. And don't call me Joe. That's not me. That's some other sorry son-of-a-bitch who was locked up in the hospital. Why are you calling me that?”

I got a glimpse of his hands; the skin was peeling off and it looked like he had burned or poured some chemical on them. I sighed heavily. “Here we go again,” I thought to myself. I walked around to the side of the yard and saw a can of gasoline.

“Joe, have you been sniffing gas?” (This was something he did when he began to, in the professional jargon, “decompensate.”)

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Boston Hospital for the Insane, circa 1865.



Healing and Empowerment

by Sally Clay

I don't think I will ever recover from mental illness. The last time I got manic five years ago, I holed up in my apartment, turned up my stereo as loud as it would go, and embarked on a psychedelic trip to nowhere. This was the same trip I have taken countless times, for nearly 40 years. Although I have never used street drugs, my manic episodes are remarkably like LSD trips. They always start with intense visions of spiritual power and worldwide enlightenment. They always end in disaster.

During that last episode, I was enjoying the first part of the mania, listening to my favorite rock artists and gathering all of their messages about saving the world. Unfortunately, my stereo was directly below the bedroom of a young professional couple. When I get manic I do not sleep, and my loud rock music continued well into the night. Shortly after midnight my unfortunate neighbors began calling, begging me to turn down the music. I said "yes," and turned it down a little. But within 10 minutes the urgent prophecies and visceral rhythms captured me again, and I turned the music up. Within the mania I could not permit anything or anyone to interrupt the imperatives of my delusions—not my neighbors, not my friends, not anybody.

Somewhere in the middle of the night of the second day, after several fruitless phone calls to me, my neighbors called the police. The police came to the door and warned me about the loud music, and I promised to turn it down. But soon I turned it right back up.

On the third night, the police were not so patient. They arrested me, turned off the stereo, and took me to jail. I spent the rest of the night on a hard metal cot in a cell. In the morning I went home again to my stereo. I was dragged off to jail three times, each time returning to my apartment and my fantastic mental journey, which became progressively wilder. One night, I decided to get drunk and became even crazier than I already was. This time an ambulance came to get me, probably summoned by my desperate neighbors. I was taken to the local hospital where I slept off the alcohol in the emergency room. In the morning, I was assured that I was in the hospital on a voluntary basis. All I had to do was to have a brief interview with a psychologist and then I could leave.

If only I could have kept my mouth shut! I managed to have a fairly rational conversation with the psychologist until I blurted out, "Where is Dr. Kevorkian when you need him!" I meant this as a joke, but the psychol-

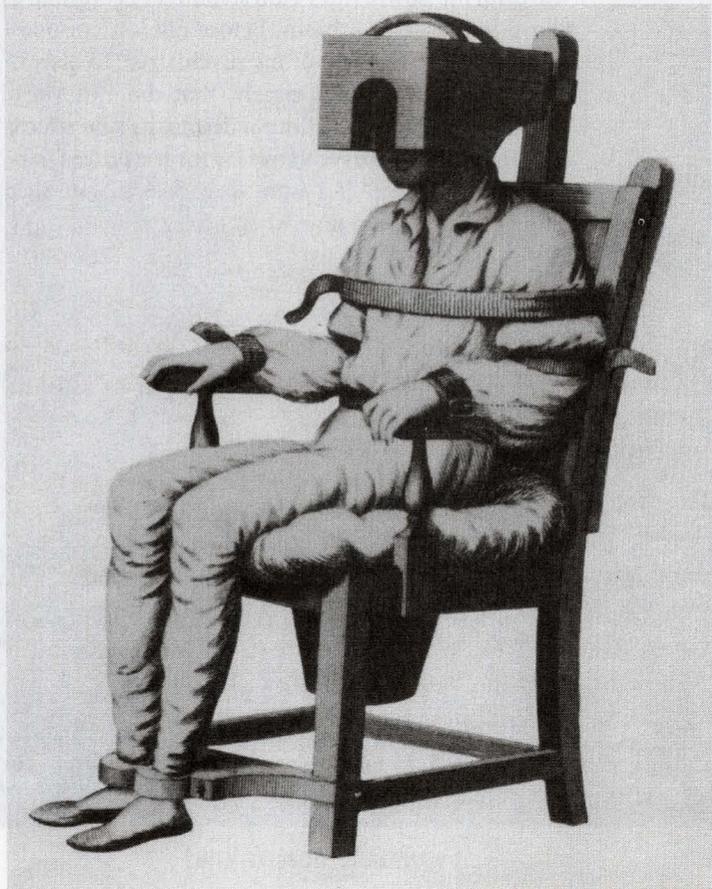
ogist did not laugh. She decided that because of that statement I was suicidal—and in two shakes of a shrink's tale, I was whisked away to the psychiatric ward on the top floor and involuntarily committed.

I spent a miserable week on the psych unit, forced to swallow medicine that I tried to refuse. When I was finally released, I found that I had lost my job, had been evicted from my apartment, and faced a stiff fine, possibly even a jail sentence, for disturbing the peace.

That is how I wound up moving from Massachusetts to Florida. As with past manic episodes, I had to pick up the pieces of my life and start again from scratch. It was not so easy this time because I was not as young and resilient as I once had been. After that brief time of mania, I had to cope with weeks of depression and despair. Nevertheless, within a few months I settled down in my new home and again resumed my career.

There are plenty of people who do recover from mental illness. Tipper Gore has recovered, and so has Mike Wallace. Yet most of us who identify as mental

The Tranquilizing Chair, a 19th-century treatment for the mentally ill.



For me, recovering from mental illness would be like recovering from being human.

health consumers have not really recovered. A “final” state of recovery is no longer my goal, for I have learned that someone with serious mental illness does not have to recover to be successful. For the last 20 years I have worked as a peer advocate for people with psychiatric disabilities, started two drop-in centers, and helped to form a third one. I have been hired as a consultant by a number of organizations and I am on the steering committee of a major federal research project. This work has changed my life forever. I have not recovered, but I have healed from the wounds of stigma and shame. I have friends and a successful career. I have found my place in the world.

* * *

Becoming stabilized is not the same thing as recovering, but it is essential to gain some control over our own minds and not to live at the mercy of our delusions or hallucinations or depression. For some consumers, the medications taken while in crisis are sufficient, and once the emergency is over they can get off the meds and maintain stability. For others, it is necessary to find the right dose and continue taking it to maintain stability. For still others, meds and other forms of psychiatric treatment are not the answer, and tools for stable living are found in a spiritual context.

In my case, all of these tools apply. When I am in the midst of a manic episode, only psychotropic drugs will calm me down. After I am stabilized, I continue to take a low dose of lithium. Before my last episode I had tried, with the help of my psychiatrist, to discontinue the lithium—but clearly, that did not work. Now I am back on the lithium, despite its side effects.

But the greatest preventative for me has proved to be a spiritual practice. If I were to choose a watershed moment in my life, a time when I finally gained confi-

dence that I was worthy to live alongside other people without the shame of being mentally ill, it would be when I first visited Karma Triyana Dharmachakra (KTD), the Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Woodstock, New York. In an interview with Khenpo Rinpoche, the abbot, I fervently described the fantastic journeys I had taken in my mind—all the times that I had visualized scenarios for changing the world and saving other people. As I described these psychotic episodes, I hung my head in embarrassment but admitted that I could not get it out of my head that there was truth in these visions and that was why I kept coming back to them. I begged him to give me a spiritual discipline that would protect me from these painful episodes and that would cure me from mental illness.

To my great surprise, Rinpoche smiled at me and said without hesitation that if I felt that I had learned something from my experiences, then I should take what I had learned back to the community and use it to help others. It was as simple as that. He did not even give me instructions in the esoteric spiritual practices that I had gone to him hoping to receive.

That was in the late 1970s. After my interview with Rinpoche, I returned to my home in Portland, Maine, and continued trying to hold down a job and live my life. I did not know what to do with the advice my teacher had given me. It was not until 1981, and another involuntary hospitalization, that I finally figured out what I had to do. I joined the Alliance for the Mentally Ill and later organized one of the first consumer-operated programs in the country, the Portland Coalition for the Psychiatrically Labeled. I spent several years working for the coalition, all the while continuing to experience yearly manic episodes and hospitalizations.

In 1987, I finally returned to KTD for serious study and took up residence in Woodstock. Rinpoche gave me instructions in the Green Tara meditation, which I began to practice daily. By regularly following these spiritual disciplines, I trained my mind and finally found mental stability. The manic episode that I described earlier is the only one I have experienced since I started the spiritual discipline, now nearly 15 years ago. As a result, I no longer have to live under the constant threat of psychosis and I am no longer helplessly dependent on the mental health system.

* * *

The currently fashionable view of mental illness is that we have a “broken brain.” Under this view, the very defectiveness of our brains means that we cannot decide for ourselves. Especially it means that we cannot be trusted to choose our own treatment or our own way of life.

Under the medical model, the definition of recovery is usually limited to the idea of stability. Adherents

A set of “Core Recommendations” published by the National Council on Disability outlines 10 points that highlight the human and civil rights of people who have experienced the mental health system.

One of the points:

“Mental health treatment should be about healing, not punishment. Accordingly, the use of aversive treatments, including physical and chemical restraints, seclusion, and similar techniques that restrict freedom of movement, should be banned. Also, public policy should move toward the elimination of electro-convulsive therapy and psychosurgery as unproven and inherently inhumane procedures. Effective human alternatives to these techniques exist now and should be promoted.”

The complete document can be viewed at www.connix.com/~narpa/ncd.report.htm.

of the medical model usually believe that recovery means symptom management—that if mental patients would only take their meds, everything would be fine. But as consumers, we know that although medications can manage our symptoms, they cannot give us quality of life.

I, for one, reject the medical model. I am not simply a brain, an object that can be broken. My life is much richer and more complex than that. If I am not allowed to choose my own way of life and to work for my own empowerment, my mental stability will remain fragile and I will always regard myself as defective and hopeless.

Although recovery would be nice, the important thing is not whether we are “normal” but whether our lives are satisfying and meaningful. For me, recovering from mental illness would be like recovering from being human. The manic highs and depressive lows I have experienced for all these years are, for better or worse, part of who I am. If I were given a magic pill that would clear up my depression, I would not recognize my own mind. If I were given another magic pill that would put the reins on my flights of manic fantasies, I might be a lot more sensible than I am now, but I would no longer be “me.”

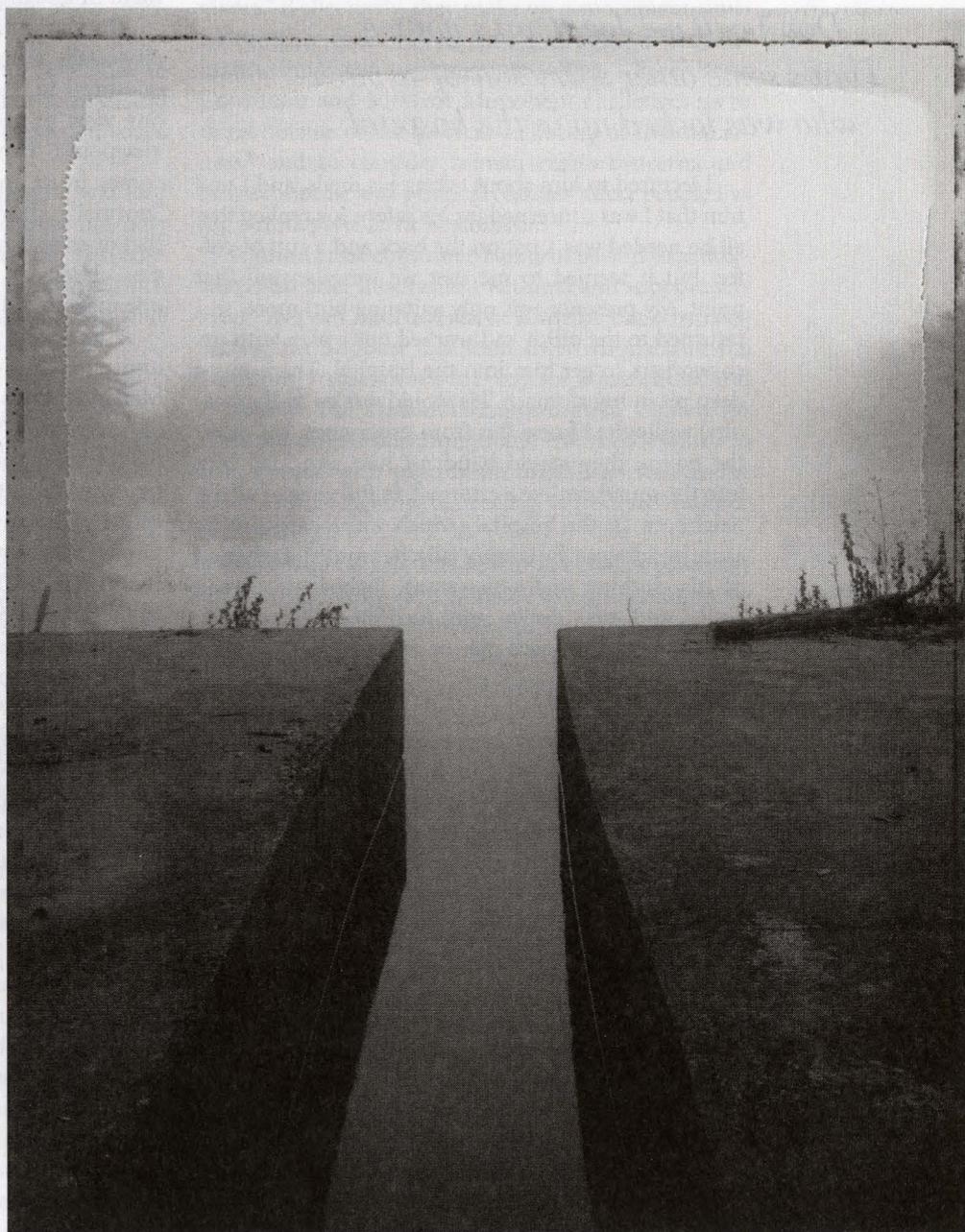
My definition of recovery is the same as what I believe it means to be fully human: to treat oneself and others with lovingkindness and respect, and to recognize the buddhanature that is in everyone since birth. If I do not regard myself as a human being with buddhanature, then I will be forever defined by my illness.

If I can live every day in my community alongside other people who have needs, desires, and problems just as I do, then it really is not so important whether I still occasionally cope with my particular symptoms or foibles—whether they be called mental illness or not. I have learned several tools for maintaining my equilibrium, not the least of which is my daily *sadhana* practice. Still, I will always be vulnerable to the extreme highs and lows of bipolar disorder, and there is always the possibility that I will suffer another

manic episode. I have to live with that, knowing that at least now I have the ability to get through such an episode and get back on my feet.

I know, too, that buddhanature can never be lost or taken away. My own identity—who I am as a human being—is who I have been all along, and that is something good. That has never been broken. ❖

Sally Clay has been a leader in the mental health consumer/survivor movement for over 20 years. She has worked as a therapist for Windhorse Associates in Massachusetts. She is a copyeditor and writer who makes her home in central Florida. Her poems and essays are posted at her Web site, Zangmo Blue Thundercloud: <http://home.earthlink.net/~sallyclay/>.



Larry Watson, *Sluiceway*

Choices, continued from page 22

He became angrier. "I told you not to call me that! Why do you accuse me of doing these things? Why can't I get any peace around here?"

His voice was hoarse. It was obvious that he had been yelling at other people besides me. His housemates, who looked like they'd had just about enough of Joe, moved around discreetly behind us and left the house. I found out from them that he had been up all night flushing large objects down the toilet and keeping his housemates awake. He told me there was nothing wrong, then he told me that he was Johnny Cash.

*Don't call me Joe. That's not me.
That's some other sorry son-of-a-bitch
who was locked up in the hospital.*

I lectured to him about taking his meds, and I told him that I was concerned for his safety. Joe replied that all he needed was a pat on the back and a cup of coffee, but it seemed to me that we were beyond that point. My presence was only agitating him more, so I returned to the office and worked out a plan with my co-workers to get him into the hospital. There was a deep pit in my stomach. He would not go to the hospital willingly; I knew this from experience. If I called the police, they would handcuff him and load him into the squad car like a criminal, in full view of all the neighbors. In the hospital (which was located in the same building as the county jail), he would be stripped of his clothing and possessions, locked in a small "cell," and tied down and forcibly injected with Haldol, an antipsychotic drug notorious for its wretched side effects. I knew this routine from experience, too. If I didn't call the police, he might end up, as he had in the past, standing in the middle of a highway and daring people to run him over. (Though he looked intimidating, Joe never hurt anyone; his angst was always turned on himself.) What could I do?

I ended up calling the police, and the scenario played out much as I expected. But after a week of hospitalization, Joe was discharged and back to his friendly self. He was even grateful to me for getting him there, though he retained horrible memories of the "incarceration" itself. He had a few more "good" months before the same cycle repeated itself, as it had many previous times in his life.

I no longer work in the mental health system, and it's been a long time since I've had to choose between calling the police to commit someone to the hospital or letting them self-destruct. Still, as I walk through downtown San Francisco and pass a young man talking to himself in tortured tones, I know that some other men-

tal health worker is faced with these same impossible choices. The questions and moral choices I faced during those years continued to haunt me. Eventually, I found that subsequent training as a cultural anthropologist and my Buddhist practice helped me to understand those experiences from another point of view.

The issue of how to treat people with mental illness brings up many ethical questions: What do we do when a person clearly needs some kind of psychiatric help yet refuses it? To what extent do we let self-determination rule over societal safety? At what point does freedom of expression cross the line into harassment or endangerment?

But maybe there is another way to look at things. As socially engaged Buddhists, we can reframe these questions to encompass a larger perspective. How is our view of mental illness grounded in a dualistic viewpoint? How can we heal the separation that comes from dividing people into "mentally ill" and "normal"? How can we create treatment approaches that operate from an assumption of healing, not coercion? How can we cultivate a society that has more openness to different ways of being in the world?

A Buddhist perspective calls for us to apply our understanding of interconnectedness to this issue. Mental illness is no longer an individual matter, a case of one person's psyche gone awry, but rather it sits in the context of our society and culture. Emotional suffering and mental distress may be a universal experience, but the ways they manifest are unique from place to place. By way of illustration, a 1980 study by the World Health Organization found that the incidence of the bundle of symptoms known as schizophrenia was about the same in nine different countries, but people in developing countries without formal mental health services recovered more quickly than people in areas that had hospitals and medications.

In working with Joe, I noticed that there was a distinct difference between his "normal" craziness and the kind that got him into trouble. He could often keep a handle on things until faced with a Kafka-esque maze of social service systems that he had to navigate to get his disability benefits. I also saw him go into spirals of psychosis when he felt socially isolated and not seen by others. In contrast, I saw him blossom when someone thanked him for his efforts to clean up the town. (He saw it as his job to keep the streets clean and spent hours picking up trash in the most squalid neighborhoods.) It was a gift to see his face light up in a coffee shop when a waitress was kind to him rather than dismissive because of his admittedly strange appearance, and several "good," lucid days would usually follow. It was clear to me that it wasn't simply the whims of his psychiatric condition that dictated his mental state.

The biomedical system, the predominant approach to illness in the West, has done an excellent job of making us believe that the most effective (and often the only) way to treat mental illness is with medications. But you don't often hear about the horrific side effects of these medications, sometimes worse than the symptoms they are intended to treat, and the fact that drug prescribing is still essentially a guessing game. You don't hear about the conflict of interest in having psychotropic drug research funded by pharmaceutical companies with a huge financial incentive to generate certain findings. The biomedical model, with its focus on biological causes, also tends to cut off dialogue on other conditions that can affect mental health. A number of ex-patients whom I interviewed found that medications were beneficial to them at some points in their life, but that there should be awareness that it may obscure the deeper, social dimensions of the problem.

A socially engaged Buddhist perspective will lead us to inquire about our obligation to treat not only the person but also the environment that has contributed to the conditions that create suffering. Thich Nhat Hanh wrote about this eloquently in *The Path of Compassion* (1995):

Restoring mental health does not mean simply adjusting individuals to the modern world of rapid economic growth. The world is ill, and adapting to an ill environment cannot bring real mental health...Psychiatric treatment requires environmental change and psychiatrists must participate in efforts to change the environment, but that is only half the task. The other half is to help individuals be themselves, not by helping them adapt to an ill environment, but by providing them with the strength to change it. To tranquilize them is not the Way. The explosion of bombs, the burning of napalm, the violent death of our neighbors and relatives, the pressure of time, noise, and pollution, the lonely crowds—these have all been created by the disruptive course of our economic growth. They are all sources of mental illness, and they must be ended.

Wonderful words—but still, what do you do when you see someone in immense mental suffering and on the verge of either harming themselves or someone else, and they refuse help? Maybe we need to rethink our definition of “help.”

It may seem that the choices are limited, as I experienced during my time working in the field. Since then, I have learned about other kinds of treatment approaches, some of them even rooted in Buddhist practice. Windhorse, for example, is a treatment community in Northampton, Massachusetts, that places the cultivation of attention to body, mind, and environment and the development of compassion at the center of its philosophy of healing. The first

Windhorse center was established in 1981 through the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, by Jeff and Molly Fortuna and Dr. Edward Podvoll, who drew on their background in East/West psychology to develop a holistic treatment approach. Medication may or may not be a part of treatment, but when used, it is within the context of other health-enhancing practices such as nutrition, stress reduction, rest, and exercise.

Another key to deepening our understanding is to listen to the people who are really the experts on this subject: those who have received services from the mental health system. A growing number of these people identify themselves as “consumers” and “survivors.” Collectively, they make up a movement similar to other social movements that address issues of institutionalized oppression. The Psychiatric Consumer and Survivor Movement challenges us to think outside of the medical definition of “mental illness,” and to consider human rights concerns and how economic and political realities affect people living with a psychiatric disability.

A number of consumer-run groups and organizations also offer innovative treatment and support services. You can find out about some of these by contacting the Support Coalition International and the National Association for Rights Protection and Advocacy. The National Empowerment Center, for example, offers an audiotape and training designed to help people with psychiatric disabilities handle the experience of hearing distressing voices (see resource box below).

There are no easy answers to the ethical dilemmas inherent in taking care of those who are emotionally troubled or who operate outside the social norms. At one time or another we will all be in those categories. It's easy to get tangled up in debates about the “myth” of mental illness, to use Thomas Szasz's phrase. But this is more than a philosophical debate—it's about the level of compassion we have for those of us in dire straits. Perhaps the best contribution we can make as Buddhists is to ask the questions differently and to offer our understanding of the endless web of conditions, biological and otherwise, that are part of the joy and suffering in each of our lives. ♦

Maia Duerr is Turning Wheel's Associate Editor, as well as a research associate at the University of California San Francisco's medical anthropology program. She practices at the San Francisco Zen Center.

Resources related to this article

Windhorse Associates:

www.windhorseassociates.org

877/844-8181 (Northampton, MA)

Support Coalition: www.mindfreedom.org

541/345-9106 (Eugene, OR)

National Association for Rights Protection and Advocacy: www.narpa.org

P.O. Box 1712, Port Washington, NY 11050

The National Empowerment Center:

www.power2u.org

800-POWER2U or 800/769-3728

The Four Noble Truths of Public Health

by José Antonio Vergara

Early in the 1980s, as a young medical student during the right-wing dictatorship in Chile, I was shocked to learn that some military physicians had been involved in torture against political prisoners in our country. I couldn't imagine anything more opposite to what we were supposed to be committed to as medical students: caring for the sick and relieving pain. After all these years, as I try now to follow the dhamma path, I still feel that any discussion of medical ethics must include the awareness that doctors have violated the precepts, and may still be doing so, in our world of violence, oppression, and injustice.

Medical ethics is usually understood as being concerned with moral dilemmas and decisions that arise in clinical practice and research, such as the use of life-sustaining medical treatment in patients with terminal illness, organ donation and transplants, euthanasia, abortion, or the testing of new drugs on persons affected by life-threatening diseases. The traditional Buddhist teachings and morality practices such as discipline, virtue, and altruism provide a good foundation for the assessment of the ethical problems that may emerge in the individual patient-health worker relationship. Buddhist morality supports the principles of medical ethics, which include beneficence, non-harming, justice, and respect for patient autonomy. For instance, the Buddhist principle of Right Speech affirms the medical duties of truth telling, disclosure, and informed consent.

As a socially engaged Buddhist and a doctor, I believe the clinically oriented analysis of medical ethics should be expanded to include a consideration of collective health problems. Recent socially responsible interpretations of Buddhist teachings provide inspiration, such as the five precepts of Thich Nhat Hanh and the four noble truths of Santikaro Bhikkhu.

There are many ways of defining health. For the capitalist medical industry, "health" is a commodity that can be bought by those who can afford the growing price. Another definition of health is the one adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) when it was founded in 1946: "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Although it has the merit of being comprehensive and positive, this definition has been criticized for its unattainable and

static character. This criticism is compatible with a Buddhist view, which sees that health is a process, and which recognizes its impermanence. A Buddhist view sees the mutual dependency of the personal and social dimensions of health (the social being the stronger).

Health is affected by the social conditions experienced over the course of a life. Individuals and communities have certain basic requirements in order to achieve their maximum potential, such as adequate food, safe water, shelter, safety, education, access to information, and a sense of community. Furthermore, we must take human diversity into account: certain individuals and social groups may have their own particular health needs. It's possible for people to consider themselves healthy and happy even though they may be diseased or physically weakened, as could be the case for a beloved and respected sick grandfather who still fulfills his role in the community.

I find it useful to understand that just as the source of human dignity is the universally shared potential for enlightenment, so the source of human health is the shared potential to live, grow, learn, create, feel, be happy, and so on.

◆ The First Noble Truth of Public Health: ◆ There is the social suffering of ill health.

The term "public health" includes collective efforts to prevent disease, premature death, and disability, and to promote the health of the whole population. It is concerned with healthcare services and the study of the determinants and distribution of health and disease. Poor population health is a form of social suffering and is, at the same time, the result of other forms of social suffering, like inequality, poverty, and alienation.

The global health picture reveals dramatic inequality in the distribution and outcome of infectious, mental, traumatic, and noncommunicable chronic diseases between the affluent North and the poor South. A similar gap is seen inside each country between the rich-and-powerful and poor, marginalized groups (women, migrants, ethnic minorities, etc.). There are huge differences in health indicators such as infant mortality rate and life expectancy. For example, 58.6 percent of the world's poorest 20 percent die of preventable diseases compared with only 7.7 percent among the world's richest 20 percent. Currently, the pandemics of AIDS and the reemergence of infectious diseases, the

**"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
—Charter of the World Health Organization**

growing burden of mental health problems such as depression and substance abuse, the health issues of aging, the health consequences of environmental degradation and pollution, and the inequality in access to basic health services are sources of suffering for hundreds of millions of people.

◆ **The Second Noble Truth of Public Health:** ◆

The causes of the social dukkha of ill health are complex and can be described in terms of dependent co-origination (*paticcasamuppada*).

The ecological and psychosocial destructiveness of contemporary civilization, its structural violence of domination, exploitation, and inequality, and its deleterious effects on social cohesion constitute the basis of global, regional, and local ill health. These social forces come to be embodied as biological events, and at the same time they perpetuate unequal access to health services. It is social inequality that causes newborns to die from totally preventable problems during the first year of life in many developing countries, and that causes women to die young because of reproductive health problems and physical violence in poor regions; that exposes workers to dangerous occupational/environmental conditions and overexploitation for corporations' profit; and that prevents AIDS/HIV victims in Africa from getting access to antiretroviral drug treatment.

Various *kilesas*, or defilements, are embedded in the social structure of poor population health.

◆ The greed (*lobha*) of capitalism-productivism destroys ecosystems and community solidarity in the name of profit. Poverty, environmental degradation, and lack of basic healthcare services cause the emergence of new infectious diseases like the Ebola virus and the reemergence of old ones like TB. Healthcare is becoming increasingly commodified for the profit of the medical-industrial complex, and even the so-called alternative therapies are becoming corrupted and alienated as they are completely cut off from their traditional contexts.

◆ The anger (*kodha*) of militarism gives rise to a scandalous waste of resources on weapons and wars, which of course has serious health consequences. The anger of antisocial aggressiveness and violent crime causes loss of life and destroys mental health.

◆ The hatred (*dosa*) of racism, classism, and sexism causes severe inequities in public health. For instance, in the U.S., African Americans have a cancer rate twice that of whites, and a rate of cardiovascular disease six times that of whites. The situation is even worst concerning homicide rates. Hatred is also expressed in the homophobic discrimination and lack of response to the spread of AIDS/HIV.

◆ The lust (*raga*) of the entertainment industry has

health consequences such as eating disorders, abuse of alcohol and psychostimulating drugs, an elevated risk of sexually transmitted diseases and nonplanned pregnancies among young women, and general stultification due to the nature of TV programming.

◆ The delusion (*moha*) of the dominant approach to public health sees only individual, isolated behavioral risk factors and ignores the social and economic determinants of health. This attitude leads to victim blaming, as in the case of tobacco users, whose behavior has been stimulated by the marketing tyranny of the tobacco companies over the poor and less informed, and is more than just a matter of healthy or unhealthy "lifestyles."

◆ The fear (*bhaya*) of natural life processes such as growing old and dying leads to the market-oriented medicalization of all aspects of life.

◆ **The Third Noble Truth of Public Health:** ◆

The end of the social dukkha of ill health is possible in a caring dhammic social structure in which inequalities and unnecessary suffering are removed.

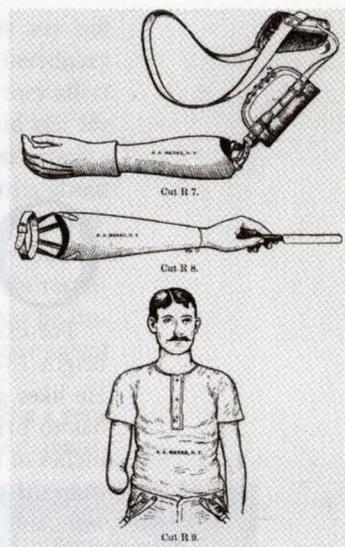
In a dhammic society, there will be compassion for the sick and the elderly, and a rational use of both diagnosis and treatment technology for the sake of all. In a dhammic society, health won't be threatened by war, and in the atmosphere of social cohesion, cooperation, and mutual support, mental and physical health will benefit. Respect and appreciation for differences of age, gender, ethnicity, cultural context, and ability will replace the current structure of discrimination. When environmental degradation and pollution come to an end, many kinds of human-caused cancers, infections, and other diseases will be eradicated.

◆ **The Fourth Noble Truth of Public Health:** ◆

The path to the end of the social dukkha of ill health is a Buddhist practice of personal transformation and social action oriented to health promotion, human development, human rights, and social justice.

A Buddhist social ethics of health should emphasize the engagement with the liberation of everyone from suffering, misery, and oppression. If Right Livelihood has been understood by socially engaged Buddhists to mean working for a society liberated from structural violence, maybe it is time to talk about Right Public Health as a fundamental element of that society. Let us recall the public health services of Emperor Asoka. We have both a personal and collective responsibility to protect life and promote health. ❖

José Antonio Vergara is an epidemiologist and lay Theravadin working in his native Chile.



Patents on Human Genes

by Diane Ames

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has issued thousands of patents on human genes—yes, your genes and mine.

Our dependence on nature can be humbling, and our dependence on our own bodies can be especially so. One need not be a Buddhist to grasp that point, though it helps.

For example: I know a boy I'll call Robin, a very bright 13-year-old who is already studying calculus. He likes golf and reads voraciously, even though he has to bring his Harry Potter book to within a few inches of his face. He had a retinal detachment at the unheard-of age of five, but fortunately the surgeons were able to sew the retina back on. He has trouble getting out of bed because his knee joints are already wearing away like an old man's, but right now his main concern is, can he avoid going blind? He has been told that he probably can, provided he never lives very far away from a good eye surgeon. Robin's problem is that one—just one—of the estimated 30,000 genes in each of his cells does not work properly, causing him to have a hereditary disorder called Stickler syndrome.

There are many thousands of known genetic diseases and syndromes, and they affect more people than we think. The artist Toulouse-Lautrec owed his stunted, malformed legs to pycnodysostosis, a rare hereditary bone disease. The songwriter Woody Guthrie died of a genetic neurological disorder called Huntington's chorea. And at least one medical historian has concluded that Abraham Lincoln had Stickler syndrome.

A whole family of genetic diseases, including Stickler syndrome, affect the collagen (connective tissue), but Sticklers is particularly notable for the wild variability of its symptoms. Elizabeth, a 12-year-old girl who has it, was born with a cleft palate without harelip (a hallmark symptom of the syndrome) and a very small jaw. For these reasons, her mother's milk fell out of her mouth, and she had speech problems for years. She has fairly bad myopia. Her knee joints are already so worn away that she has to wear knee braces, and she can't run without pain. (Osteoarthritis before age 40, if not caused by injuries, is another hallmark symptom.) Despite everything, she loves Barbie dolls and is learning to bake cakes from scratch.

Dromio, a Stickler sufferer in his forties, has no serious joint problems but is functionally deaf without his hearing aids. His hearing problems began with constant ear infections in infancy, which are typical of the syndrome. He also needed orthopedic surgery in his teens because his spine was bending itself side-

ways, and he has lost the sight of one eye because of a retinal detachment. Despite all this, he is rising in his company and has a life-of-the-party personality. All of these people have soft, beautiful skin.

They also all belong to Stickler Involved People, as do I. The syndrome runs in my family. My medical geneticist thinks I escaped it, but if I were young enough to be contemplating children, I would definitely be tested to make sure. There is evidence that it may be possible to have a very mild case and yet have severely affected offspring; I know families who may be cases in point. But since I am too old for children, it would be hard to justify the very high cost of genetic testing in my case.

Evidence is mounting that everybody has, if not a hereditary disease, a hereditary susceptibility to at least one disease. Doctors suspect that Vice President Cheney was born with some gene or genes that make him highly susceptible to heart disease, for example. In any case, everybody's genes guarantee that they will die in a mere hundred years or less, depending on which genes they have and what happens to their bodies after conception. Basically we all have a genetic disease called life.

Of course, even if pain, sickness, old age, and death are all inevitable in the long run, you can always hope that your doctor can stave them off for a while. Buddhism, with its emphasis on relieving human suffering, respects that concern and so has always been closely associated with medicine. Lately we are assured that breakthroughs in genetics presage new medical miracles. Robin, the 13-year-old boy with Stickler syndrome, is very interested in the idea of gene therapy for his condition, saying, "The very first experiment that they do, I'll volunteer." However, whether such research gets done any time soon may depend, to an uncomfortable degree, on corporate policies and the courts.

Since the 1980s, a U.S. Patent and Trademark Office apparently bent on privatizing the universe has issued thousands of patents on human genes—yes, your genes and mine. There are thousands more of such patent applications pending. These are not just patents on specific drugs, tests, etc., that have been developed on the basis of research on a given gene; they are patents on the genes themselves. Anticipating untold profits from drugs and other medical treatments based on gene research, some biotech companies have staked out claims on genes by the hundreds

in what the business pages frankly describe as a “modern gold rush.” Amid this stampede, Thomas Jefferson University patented gene COL2A1, mutations on which cause about 70 percent of cases of Stickler syndrome as well as several other serious hereditary disorders. The patent specifically states that the gene was discovered with the aid of a government grant, but that apparently does not make any difference. I am reliably informed that the rights to this patent have since been passed on to a biotech company, probably by sale. They may very well be passed on again, in the course of a corporate merger, takeover, or bankruptcy, before the patent expires.

The patent office explains that patent law allows the patenting of useful chemicals found in nature if they are isolated and purified by human effort, and that genes are “useful” chemicals. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 22, 2001), a gene patent, which can only be issued to applicants who can prove they have at least one “credible and substantial” use for the gene, grants the patentee “the right to exclude others from using the compound [i.e., the purified gene] for a limited time”—from 17 to 20 years, depending on legal vagaries.

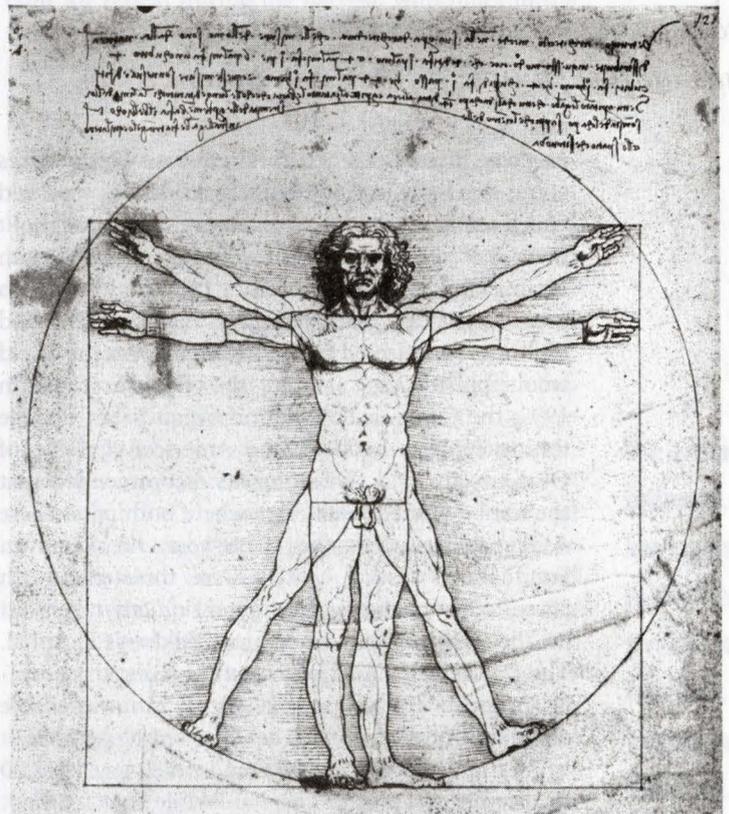
Given the importance of genes to modern medical research, the implications for the sick are not good. Already medical researchers complain that some of their colleagues have become secretive about their findings until such time as they can patent them, hampering the sharing of information that is vital to scientific progress. Gene patents can also discourage research on new drugs and treatments. For instance, Searle Pharmaceuticals, which developed the super-profitable pain-killing drug Celebrex on the basis of research on the Cox-2 gene, is being sued for billions by the University of Rochester, which claims a patent on that gene. That kind of thing can frighten other companies. Indeed, Ronald Pepin, a former executive of the pharmaceutical giant Bristol-Myers Squibb, says he saw that company abandon one promising line of cancer research after another because patents on genes got in the way (this according to the December 2001 issue of *Mother Jones*).

So who can afford to work on gene-based drugs or treatments for conditions that mainly afflict the world’s poor, or that are not common enough to yield huge profits?

It is believed that about three people in 10,000, probably of all races, have Stickler syndrome. That means that it affects about 800,000 people worldwide, less than a quarter of whom are potential paying customers in the First World. In other words, it will never be any biotech corporation’s gold mine, and so is not likely to be deemed worth horrendously expensive legal battles over a gene patent. Neither will Kniest dysplasia,

Klippel-Feil syndrome, Hartnup disease, or any but maybe five or six of the thousands of known hereditary diseases and syndromes, though collectively they affect millions of people. Rational priorities would call for extensive research on them anyway, as investigating a malfunctioning gene generally reveals volumes about how that gene functions normally. But rational priorities, already threatened by the increasing privatization and corporatization of medical research and the resulting exclusive focus on short-term profits, may be disappearing altogether into a legal tarpit of gene patent disputes.

One immediate financial benefit of holding a gene patent is that it gives you exclusive rights to diagnos-



Leonardo da Vinci, *Figure of a man inscribed in a circle and a square*

tic testing involving that gene. This can cause real problems, as doctors are likely to use gene testing more and more often in the future. Already patients are being tested not only for obscure genetic disorders but also for things like exceptional genetic susceptibility to breast cancer. It may one day be possible to run a battery of genetic tests on a newborn baby to see whether it will be exceptionally vulnerable to lung disease or bipolar depression or osteoporosis, and to start taking preventive measures right then. But this vision, and less ambitious batteries of genetic tests already on the drawing boards, may face legal hurdles. According to the Web site of the American College of

Medical Genetics, the enforcement of gene patents has repeatedly complicated gene testing by “monopolistic licensing that limits a given genetic test to a single laboratory, royalty-based licensing agreements with exorbitant up-front fees and per-test fees, and licensing agreements that seek proportions of reimbursement from testing services.” Indeed, in a 1997 survey, about half of all genetics labs said that they have stopped performing or developing certain genetic tests because of patent restrictions and the royalties that some gene patent holders demand.

To give one example: parents of children with

Medical researchers complain that some of their colleagues have become secretive about their findings until such time as they can patent them.

Canavan disease, a genetic brain disease which strikes about one baby in 6,500 born to Ashkenazi Jews and which sends victims into a vegetative state throughout their short lives, talked a researcher affiliated with Miami Children’s Hospital into trying to develop a prenatal test for Canavan disease. When, with the aid of numerous affected families from all over the world who supplied tissue samples, the effort succeeded in 1993, the Canavan Foundation began to set up free testing centers. In 1998, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommended that the test be offered in all cases where both parents are Ashkenazi Jews. In the same year, the Canavan Foundation’s testing centers were threatened with lawsuits for infringing on a patent quietly taken out on the Canavan gene by Miami Children’s Hospital. The Canavan Foundation is in turn suing the hospital. In the meantime, prenatal testing is now available only at 20-odd labs which are licensed to perform it by Miami Children’s Hospital and which pay a \$12.50 royalty per test to the hospital. While that may not add much to the cost of the test (\$60 to \$300), the elimination of free testing probably tempts—or forces—some low-income families in this country to forgo the test. Worse, Miami Children’s Hospital’s licensing system in effect prevents Jewish charities from offering testing to the numerous Ashkenazi Jews in the former Soviet Union, few of whom could raise enough hard currency to pay for it. So far, not even one lab in Eastern Europe has been licensed to perform the test (this according to the Web site of the Canavan Foundation, www.canavanfoundation.org).

The impact of gene patents is being felt in clinics everywhere. Already, the diagnostic laboratories of Britain’s National Health Service (NHS) are being forced to pay royalties to the Hospital for Sick

Children in Toronto, which owns the gene that causes cystic fibrosis. Some of the British clinical geneticists with whom I have corresponded express concern that the restriction of certain genetic tests to a few licensed labs may inhibit the normal process by which many labs gradually make improvements in a test.

How much that patent on gene COL2A1 is affecting people with Stickler syndrome right now is not clear. Royalties do add something to the cost of diagnostic and prenatal testing for the condition, which is already quite high. The multiple tests necessary for a prenatal diagnosis (which I for one would want if I thought I might bear a child who could suffer, among other things, serious daily pain) can run to \$3,989. However, independent genetics researchers agree that the cost mainly reflects the cutting-edge complexity of the tests. The current gene patent holder charges five percent of whatever the price of the test is, which is probably not enough to affect the test’s accessibility one way or the other. But corporate policies change over time, and patents change hands in mysterious ways. We may never know whether the existence of the patent stops some research project on Stickler syndrome somewhere. And the patent will be there until 2016 at the earliest.

Biotech and pharmaceutical companies tell critics of human gene patents that their investors will not invest in new drugs and treatments without patent protection. But patenting a new drug or treatment is one thing, and patenting a human gene is quite another. Why does anybody need to own a human gene, and to own it for 17 years, causing unknowable complications for medical research long after today’s new drugs and treatments are obsolete?

Buddhism teaches us a sense of interconnectedness with humankind, with nature, with the universe. The ancient Greeks taught their children a concept called *hubris*, which can be summed up as: if mortal men forget they’re not gods, their madness will bring them to ruin. And it seems to me that we had better ponder these teachings before we take out patents on our own genes.

At the moment, it looks as if patents on human genes are mainly going to generate not fortunes but lawsuits. There is a lot at stake for the biotech companies—and for kids like Robin. ❖

For information about Stickler syndrome, see www.sticklers.org or call Stickler Involved People at 310/775-2993. For information about patents on human genes, see www.gene-watch.org or call the Council for Responsible Genetics at 617/868-0870.

Diane Ames, writer and editor, has been a member of the Buddhist Churches of America, a Shin Buddhist organization, since 1978. She lives in El Cerrito, California.

As the "war on terrorism" takes new forms, we refuse to conduct business as usual. In the following section, we carry on the discussion of war and peace from the last issue of Turning Wheel. Our struggle to find a nonviolent response to our shared difficulties continues . . .

Terrorist Within

by Jennifer Hagar

Since September I've had trouble sleeping. When I awaken, there's a feeling of emergency, as if I'm caught in a vehicle hurtling down a dangerous mountain road and the driver, my mind, is hell bent, obsessed, steering crazily towards the ravine. The rhythm of my thoughts is like the echo from the mallet hitting the wooden *han* as it announces the morning meditation: *Tap. Tap. Tap tap tap tap*. Burned into the wood of the *han* is this fragment: *Awake Awake each one! Don't waste this life.*

I'm awake! But not at my convenience. It's 2 AM. Everyone's still sleeping and I'm up. I walk down the main stairs from my third-floor room into the dim kitchen in the bowels of the building and make tea. I've lived at the San Francisco Zen Center for a year, and it's an oasis of quiet, the commotion of the city flowing all around. I troop back up the steps feeling the blood in my legs, my breath. I'm alive. I can move. I sit on my bed, rest a palm on my solar plexus and a palm on my heart, as my teacher suggested. I try to calm myself. Sometimes I fall asleep again just before the wake-up bell.

My father calls from Wisconsin. I say I'm having trouble with insomnia. He volunteers, a bit surprisingly, this scrap of information about himself: he says he suffered from sleeplessness before each of his two breakdowns. He says, "I couldn't find a resting place from the critical voices..." This is my legacy, my family karma: the relentless self-criticism.

I came to Zen Center, to the practice, seeking refuge from desolation and disconnection, but I wonder where is my home, east or west? Where is my place?

* * *

Yvonne Rand, a Buddhist teacher, spoke at Zen Center a week after the World Trade Center was demolished. I had just returned from a visit to the East Coast. She said it's in our interest to be curious about our enemies, those who hate us. We can't afford to make them "other." We are already intimate. We have gone down in the fiery wreckage together. We are not innocent.

Though we may build our towers of cement and steel, she said, our elaborate defense systems, in truth

we all live in a *sukkah*. *Sukkah* is Hebrew. It's a dwelling built for retreat during the harvest, with holes in the roof to let in the rain and the wind, and so that you can see the stars. We are all human and vulnerable.

I think of my childhood as a tent with a rip in the roof. The rip is my father's breakdown. The story is decades old now: the story of being caught in a container, not an American Airlines passenger jet traveling from east to west, glutted with fuel. But a Ford station wagon on a switchback road heading down the mountains in northern California in February 1958. My mother was driving, but my father, who was hallucinating, kept trying to grab the steering wheel. My mother was driving to Eureka to get help with two small children in the back seat. I still carry the story in my biology. The one who was supposed to protect me, my father, was a threat to my life.

If only I don't become too fascinated by the shape of the old wound, the rip in the tent, I will be able to see beyond into the night sky—vast, mysterious, and full of jewels. This is why I am here, to step into a Big Mind, beyond this sense of homelessness.

I am reminded: Buddhism has a long tradition of homelessness, renunciation, taking refuge. The Buddha left his safe home and went out into the world to rely on the kindness of strangers.

The schedule of the Zen Center, the temple, is a shelter punctuated by bells and claps on wood. *Wake up!* When I ring the *umpan* (the metal disc hit with a hammer before each meal) for lunch, the pigeons are lying on the pavement. At first I think they are sick, poisoned perhaps, but then I realize they are clustered on a piece of the courtyard warming themselves in the sun. They have an instinct for what nourishes them. They seem to stagger when they get up, and their feathers are wet. There has been rain in the night. They revive, shake themselves, and pick aggressively at the white weedy flowers ringing the fountain. I stall a moment watching the pigeons, realizing I'm in the moment I'm in. There is no other. The pigeons are just on the periphery of my vision, carrying some message I might need to pay attention to.

We are already intimate. We have gone down in the fiery wreckage together. We are not innocent.

* * *

My teacher is sitting in the dim *dokusan* (interview) room with the window overlooking the courtyard. The year has turned full circle since I've been here in San Francisco, and it's dark again at 6 AM. Her face is shadowed and the candlelight flickers across it. I am sitting very close in the style of our tradition. We are inches apart. Her face is serious, concerned. She is sitting in

*I think of my childhood as a tent
with a rip in the roof.*

the formal lotus position; she seems very solid on the earth. My body is alert in the psychic force field between us. I feel love. I feel hesitation. It's hard to talk. I feel her full attention. It's a quality of attention I'm not used to and is hard to take. I feel quite certain that my father never received such full attention from another human being. That thought makes me feel like crying. That thought is a tear in the roof.

I have only one contact lens in and cannot see my teacher's features clearly. I know what to expect, yet it's as hard to begin as the very first time. The formal stance, the silence, the dark robes are intimidating. There is a kind of power that goes beyond the two of us. I breathe into this wide space, as vast as the universe.

I say I'm having problems with re-entry, waking up in the night, not settling back into the routine. She asks how I'm practicing with it. I say writing and talking to people.

Before I can say that's not enough, she says, "That's not enough." She says, "You need an antidote, an actual practice." She suggests chanting when I wake up poisoned with negativity in the middle of the night. She says, "You are fortunate to be surrounded by the riches of practice, and the way things are going in the world they may not be available tomorrow."

I'm still not grateful. I simply want her to dissolve my misery. I'm looking for the parent I never had. What old useless story is that? My thoughts are small and desperate. *What good is practice if I wake up in hell night after night?* an inner voice insists. *In the hell realm?*

She says, "Turn the question around. What request is your practice making of you?" I forget that the hell realm also includes Buddhas. That Buddhas are present and accounted for in every realm.

I know there is something close trying to get my attention that just eludes me. The answer is in the core of my discomfort. There is mystery and shadow in my teacher's face. The face of interconnectedness, the face of the whole world—I will just say this: the face of love is painful to receive. The terrorist's face is in shadow, unknown. The fear that grips me is an ancient one, perhaps no longer relevant. The fear is a

childhood story that nevertheless resides in my biology to this day. My body is my teacher. The terrorist and the teacher are one. My enemy is my teacher. My terrorist is inside. The terrorists within in and without cannot be ignored. They are coming out of the shadows into the light of day.

* * *

I am flying from coast to coast not a week after September 11, from Boston to San Francisco, gazing at the landscape from above. Cotton-ball clouds throw acres of shadow over the western plains. I think: what a strange intimacy, for the terrorist—so young, so foreign—and the "innocent" passenger, who could have been me, to go down together in a hurtling of fire, like a flash of madness. I think: what a strange embrace. The silent outsider within rises up, the zealot, who has been living in the heartland, quietly, among the citizenry—the neglected one, the holy one. Now it seems inevitable that this would happen. What has been ignored rises to the surface enraged. What my teacher says lingers, a puzzle, a koan, on the edge of my consciousness. *Take refuge in the practice. You may be called upon to help someone.*

* * *

I wake up at 2 AM. Towards dawn instead of falling back asleep I go out into the morning. It's still dark but the sky is luminous navy blue with faint streaks of salmon light to the east. Half a moon hangs like a lantern over the bay, and in the middle view a large white neon cross burns into the lightening sky. My thoughts come in pieces. *Action. Right effort.* I say a little chant in my mind of what I'm grateful for: The roof over my head. I'm fed. The roof-top garden on the Zen Center where I can see over the city I now live in. Meditation. Sangha. The roof of my childhood—through the gash I can see the stars. The stars themselves. The pattern of the Milky Way. How from the roof of the Zen Center at night the lights of the jets ignite the darkness like embers falling on a bathrobe...

I think of what my teacher says and I do not have the answer. *What is the request your practice is asking of you?* But at least I have the question. And the question gets me out of my small self and launched into relationship with the larger tangle.

Meditation is surrender, being open to the question. Meditation is dwelling in grace. I come back again to what I know: the moment. The moon is aloft, both supporting and supported by the sky. If I can be at home in myself I can be available to the world. My only shelter is within. Meditation is my dwelling within the larger tangle of things—my place. ❖

Jennifer Hagar is a writer who recently moved from Provincetown, Massachusetts, to San Francisco, where she lives and practices at the San Francisco Zen Center.

You Too Can Be a Bodhisattva

by Diana Winston

These days, more than ever, we need to put on our bodhisattva shoes. But what does it mean to embody the bodhisattva ideal in these times? What is the history of this ideal? What are the tools a bodhisattva needs along the path? What are the obstacles a bodhisattva meets along the way? And what is the fruition of stepping onto the bodhisattva path?

History

In early Buddhism the term *bodhisattva* was applied to the Buddha's previous lives. The Jataka Tales tell of the Buddha's lives as a tiger or a parrot, for example, when he was a bodhisattva, or Buddha-to-be. It took him thousands of lifetimes of making merit to become the one we call the Buddha, the Awakened One.

Theravadin Buddhism emphasizes the *arhat* path, the ideal of attaining complete liberation in this lifetime. Some people say this is selfish. What about all the suffering beings? But I think it's a misunderstanding to view arhats as selfish; in fact they have extraordinary wisdom and compassion. It's just that a different aspect of the path is being emphasized.

The term *bodhisattva*, on the other hand, came to mean, over time, a being who is becoming liberated for the sake of all beings. The bodhisattva practices to end suffering for everyone. The bodhisattva never turns away. Until modern times, the suffering was assumed to be personal suffering; social and political suffering wasn't necessarily what the Buddha was talking about.

In some Mahayana traditions, the bodhisattva is one who actually postpones his or her enlightenment and continues to be reborn in the realm of samsara, in order to help all other beings reach enlightenment.

Shantideva, the seventh-century author of *The Bodhisattva's Guide to Life*, mentions this vow of the bodhisattva: "For as long as space exists, and sentient beings endure, may I stay to dispel the misery of the world." Or in a more poetic translation: "May I be the living ground of love for all beings." I love that!

We can each make a decision to step onto the bodhisattva path. It doesn't matter whether we identify as Theravadin or Mahayanin. Anyone can do it.

In some traditions of Buddhism, like Zen, people automatically take the bodhisattva vow. In some zendos the vow is chanted daily:

Beings are numberless, I vow to save them.

Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.

Dharma gates are boundless, I vow to enter them.

Buddha's way is unsurpassable, I vow to become it.

In the Tibetan tradition, practitioners consciously decide to take the bodhisattva vows. They say, "Now I'm ready. I'm going to do it," and they commit to enlightenment for the sake of all beings. And this speeds up their practice, because once they do this, it means that they're serious. It lights a fire under their practice, and then they can get enlightened super fast!

The bodhisattva is a wonderful and useful archetype for our work as socially engaged Buddhists, although in traditional Buddhist circles the bodhisattva is often viewed as an exalted being, like Kuan Yin, or Avalokitesvara, or Samantabhadra—godlike deities of the Buddhist pantheon. So, ordinary people say "I can't be a bodhisattva. That's grandiose. That's ridiculous." But the bodhisattva is an archetype that makes sense for these times. It's not about grandiosity or trying to be great. It's just that there's so much suffering these days and we want to do what we can to liberate beings and to liberate the world.

What would be the socially engaged version of the bodhisattva path? It means taking our power. It means choosing to act with as much wisdom and compassion as we possibly can. And it means settling for nothing less than full liberation of the personal, relational, social, and political realms of existence. That's not the classical Buddhist understanding, but I think it's the understanding that our times require.

The Tool Kit

We have several tools to work with, as budding bodhisattvas.

Intention

The first thing in our tool kit is our intention. This is connected with the concept of *bodhicitta*, familiar to Tibetan practitioners. "Bodhi" means awakened, and "citta" means heart, or mind. So, *bodhicitta* is the aspiration for an awakened heart and mind.

Having true *bodhicitta* is enormously difficult. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that he thinks that maybe once or twice he has experienced *bodhicitta*! His Holiness is quite modest, but what he says indicates that *bodhicitta* is really a big deal. He says that if you've had it even for one second, it's an amazingly profound experience. But we *can* have it, the intention to develop *bodhicitta*, even if it's only a glimmer.

We can set our motivation. We can say prayers like the one in the Tibetan tradition: "May the precious *bodhicitta* arise where it has not arisen. And where it has arisen, may it not decrease, but increase, further and further." I try to say that prayer every morning. I

Sometimes when we're cooking at a soup kitchen or planning a protest, we think: "It's not me doing this!" It's as though something is coming through us.

forget a lot, but I try to say it as much as possible. “May the aspiration for the awakened heart and mind grow and grow and grow.”

Spiritual Practice

The next thing the bodhisattva has in her tool kit is her spiritual practice. For many of us, this is a meditation practice. For others it might be chanting, visualization, or other devotional practices. Whatever helps us to know ourselves more clearly is a useful tool. For myself I can say that because of my meditation practice I can see things more clearly and I can see myself more clearly. It’s really simple. Because of my meditation practice, wisdom grows, compassion grows.

We also learn from our practice that it’s not really “me” trying to help the world. When we sit in meditation, we see phenomena rise and pass away. We watch ourselves with this thought or that feeling—“Oh yeah! I’m angry! I’m fearful!”—and then we see that these are just movements of the mind. And as we do this, day after day, the mind relaxes some, and lets go.

Then what happens is we begin to be less identified with our sense of self when we are *off* the meditation cushion. Sometimes this happens when we’re in a service or social-change situation like cooking at a soup kitchen or planning a protest, and we think: “It’s not *me* doing this!” It’s as though something is coming through us.

Putting our spiritual practice into our tool kit also means, at times, taking time out to practice or go on a retreat. Bodhisattvas can be greatly nourished by going on a retreat and not doing anything for a little while. We must learn to respect our cycles of being in and out of the world of activity.

Non-attachment

The tool kit is stocked with lots of non-attachment. Because of my meditation practice, because I am doing the work every moment of letting go, or of *trying* to let go, I’m less attached to the results of my actions. A bodhisattva has got to be non-attached! But keep in mind that we’re talking about an ideal here. So of course we’re attached, as long as we’re human. Still, this is our vision, and we can take steps towards it.

I encourage bodhisattvas to think in terms of geological time. There’s so much work to do, and if we get impatient about results, we are only going to suffer. I often feel kind of hopeless. The misery of the world seems so profound these days, set into stark relief by recent events. But from the long-term perspective, patience is what’s called for. We don’t have to change things overnight. But this doesn’t mean that there’s so much time that we can be lazy. It means acting with simultaneous passion and non-attachment.

Action

The fourth tool in the bodhisattva’s tool kit is action itself. Even when she feels exhausted or like nothing is

worth doing, the bodhisattva still acts, but not in a blind way. She knows how to respect her limits. But her action is a flowering of her practice; she comes into her buddha nature through each act of making change.

One way to think about this is that when we act, we develop what are called the *Paramitas*, or the Perfections, of Virtue: generosity, ethics, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom. Generosity is developed through service, through social-change work. So are the others. Day after day, we show up at the clinic or the march, or create new institutions, or protest even though we think people are laughing at us. Through these actions we develop perseverance and generosity of heart, which is a deepening of our spiritual practice. In traditional social-change circles, acting may not be considered particularly spiritual, but for the bodhisattva, working for change is a profoundly spiritual act.

History and Analysis

The fifth thing in the bodhisattva’s tool kit is analysis. The bodhisattva’s work is grounded in what people have done before us. It’s grounded in knowing Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the history of nonviolence teachings. The bodhisattva is very happy to study feminism, labor movements, liberation theology, and all of the work that’s been done on issues of racism, for instance. And of course the bodhisattva is well versed in dharma teachings. All of this study gives the bodhisattva a practical background for making decisions and creating strategy.

Community

The sixth tool in the bodhisattva’s tool kit is community. The bodhisattva doesn’t like to act alone. The bodhisattva gets very lonely! Therefore we create community around the work that we’re doing, so that we all can be bodhisattvas together. I have a dear friend who told me that when he took on the bodhisattva vows, he felt very heavy, as though he had taken on the weight of the whole world. But after a time he realized, “Hey, wait a minute! I took the bodhisattva vow—but so did a whole lot of other people! Wait a minute! A lot of us are carrying the weight of the world! It’s not that hard!”

If we can create community around us, then we’ll be in good shape. Then we’ll have mirrors to reflect back our mistakes when we screw up. And when we’re doing great we can celebrate together, and play!

Obstacles on the Path

There are countless obstacles we will encounter when we embark on the bodhisattva path. A major one is doubt. “Who, me? A bodhisattva? You gotta be kidding! That’s super grandiose. I’m just an ordinary person.” Well yes, we are ordinary people. And, we can have extraordinary motivation. What’s wrong with that?

A relevant and useful book about the history of the bodhisattva archetypes and about contemporary exemplars is Taigen Dan Leighton’s *Bodhisattva Archetypes: Classic Buddhist Guides to Awakening and Their Modern Expression* (Penguin, \$14.95)

Self-judgment may also arise: "Oh, I'm the worst bodhisattva in the history of the entire world!" It's probably not true. If we're really filled with self-judgment we can talk to ourselves and say, "Well, you know, I'm not doing too bad, for a bodhisattva in training."

Another difficulty that we often have is that we don't know where to act. The world is a mess. How can we find the place where we can best contribute? We can get paralyzed by this feeling. Best here is to follow our hearts. Go to the place we feel drawn to, whether it is helping kids read or overthrowing global capitalism. If our hearts are there, that's where we will do the best work.

Another obstacle is the feeling "Oh no! This is too soon! I'm not ready!" I think the events of 9/11 gave us a really big message about being ready. What I felt inside myself was that it's time to step into our power now, regardless of how ready we think we are. The world situation is so critical that if we're going to embody peace and work for change, now is the time.

Fruition

Ultimately, the fruit of the bodhisattva path is a meaningful life. It's a life where our highest spiritual and social ideals are completely merged. It's a life where we can look into our hearts and say, "Yes, this is a life well-lived." The bodhisattva path is a commitment, it's a huge deal. At the same time, when we give ourselves this challenge, we find ourselves rising to the occasion, and we say, "Yeah, I can do this! Why not?!" Because deep inside us, we're noticing that it feels right, and we're willing to take it on. Actually, we have no choice. It's a commitment to our own healing, and to the healing of the world. A Hopi Elder said:

You have been telling the people that this is the eleventh hour. Now you must go back and tell the people that *this* is the hour, and there are things to be considered. Where are you living? What are you doing? What are your relationships? Are you in right relationship? Where is your water? Know your garden. It's time to speak your truth, to create your communities, to be good to each other, and not look outside yourself for a leader...

At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do that, our spiritual growth comes to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves. Banish the word "struggle" from your attitude and vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred way, and in celebration. We are the ones we've been waiting for. ❖

[This article is based on a talk given at Southern Dharma Retreat Center, Hot Springs, North Carolina, on October 7, 2001, the day the U.S. began bombing Afghanistan.]

Diana Winston is Associate Director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness,
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to mail letters and
purchase bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

—Naomi Shihab Nye

[Reprinted by permission of the author, from *Words Under the Words*, Far Corner Books, Oregon.]

Naomi Shihab Nye is a Palestinian American poet living in Texas. Her latest book is *Mint Snowball* (Anhinga Press). Forthcoming is *19 Varieties of Gazelle* (Greenwillow).

Now I Truly Know Shame

A Dutch Zen Student and Three Japanese Roshis Correspond
about the Zen Establishment's Role in World War II

In the last century of the first millennium of this era, a monk asked the Chinese Zen master Yun Men, "What are the teachings of a whole lifetime?" Yun Men replied, "An appropriate statement." At the close of the second millennium, a Zen student in the Netherlands named Ina Buitendijk made Yun Men's teaching manifest.

Not long after Yun Men lived, Zen began to take hold in Japan. Of the two major sects that thrived there, the Soto sect gained more of a following in the larger populace, but Rinzai Zen arguably became more influential, being embraced by the nobility and the warrior class. The extent of interdependence between Zen teachers and the Japanese military establishment remained hazy

Originally Zen viewed the sword not as an instrument for killing but as a symbol of the act of cutting off self-centered desire.

for most Western Zen students, however, until Brian Victoria published his book *Zen at War*, which detailed the complicity and active support of Zen leaders in Japan's racist and imperialist adventures culminating in World War II. The Rinzai sect has been particularly susceptible to criticism on that score.

Shocked by the revelations in *Zen at War*, Ina Buitendijk decided to send a letter—first to the principal person in her lineage, and then to other Zen masters—stating her feelings about what she had learned, and proposing that an apology be made. Several Zen teachers responded to her letter with their own statements, three of which are set out (slightly abridged) below. These letters helped fuel a difficult and vitally important discussion of the subject that is taking place within the Rinzai schools.

Ina Buitendijk explains what led her to act:

In October 1999, Brian Victoria's book was mentioned to me by my Zen master in Germany. Until then I had never realized that Zen Buddhism had been involved in the atrocious wars that Japan waged in Asia during the first half of the 20th century. I was deeply affected. I am not only a dedicated Zen student, I am also married to a victim of the Pacific War.

From 1942 till 1945 my husband (then six to nine years old) and his family were interned by the Japanese army in what was then the Dutch East Indies. The circumstances in the camps were abominable. About 13 percent of the internees died, mainly through malnu-

trition and lack of medical care. Later in life many "camp children" appeared to have been traumatized by their experiences and they needed long-term treatment. Like the Jewish part of the population, they receive special benefits from the Dutch government.

Reading *Zen at War*, I felt betrayed by what highly esteemed Zen Buddhist priests and masters had said and done during and after the war in Asia. One of those singled out for criticism was Yasutani Roshi, the founder of my own lineage, *Sanbō-kyōdan*. I told my teacher that I wanted to write to a Japanese Zen master and tell him about the suffering of people like my husband, for which I held the Zen Buddhist authorities co-responsible; he suggested that I write to the current head of *Sanbō-kyōdan*, Jiun Kubota Roshi.

I wrote to Kubota Roshi and told him how I felt. I described the misery in the camps and the effects it had on the lives of many people and their families. I said how disappointed I had been when I read Victoria's book. I mentioned the hatred and resentment of the victims, and said that there will never be peace if the failures of the past are not looked into. I asked him respectfully if it might be possible for his organization to take responsibility for past mistakes and issue an official statement, and in that way relieve the hearts and minds of people both in the Netherlands and in Japan.

Kubota Roshi replied and announced a forthcoming article in the *Sanbō-kyōdan's* magazine. His apology stimulated me to go on writing letters to other masters and monasteries. (I got the addresses on the Internet—I bought a computer just to be able to do this.) Many of them did not answer. Some did, however: Hirata Seiko Roshi was the first Rinzai Zen teacher to officially apologize. Shodo Harada Roshi and Kono Taitsu Roshi also sent letters of apology. On his own initiative, Kono Roshi forwarded my letter on to other Zen masters, and he sent me copies of dharma talks he has published calling for atonement and apology for Rinzai's role in the war.

An avowal of past mistakes and recognition of the suffering that was inflicted may be an important step towards greater understanding between victims and victimizers. Admission of the failures that were made in the name of religion makes us all reflect on the universal inadequacy of human beings to do the right thing. It may create a greater willingness to forgive and contribute to peace among people of good will.

—Ina Buitendijk

Following are sections of three of the letters that Ina Buitendijk received in reply.

From Hirata Seiko Roshi

Chief Abbot of Tenryu-ji, Kyoto, Japan

It was with a deep sense of sorrow and remorse that I read your recent letter. [I can still recall when] I became aware of the atrocities committed by Japanese troops [during the war], and of the cruelty with which those in the internment camps had been treated. I was profoundly shocked when I learned of this, and even now I cannot forget the deep sense of shame I felt over the inhuman behavior of my own countrymen.

It is a fact that during the war many of my superiors in the Rinzai Zen school violated the fundamental spirit of the most important precept of Buddhism, the precept against the taking of life, by lending their support to the militarist regime. Let me offer my heartfelt apologies for their transgressions, which were, more than anything else, a fundamental departure from the original vow of Buddhism to bring peace and salvation to all living beings.

Zen was introduced to Japan from China during the 13th century, and soon exerted a decisive influence on the traditional culture and thought of the Japanese people. Through its influence on a wide range of arts such as Noh drama, garden design, architecture, ink painting, calligraphy, and the tea ceremony, Zen stimulated the development of a life-affirming culture imbued with a spirit of peace and compassion, a culture that has enriched not only Japan but the rest of the world. During the 15th to 19th centuries, when the country was ruled by the military class, the concept of "sword-and-Zen-are-one" (*kenzen itchi*) came into existence. Originally *kenzen itchi* viewed the sword not as an instrument for killing, but as a symbol of the act of cutting off attachment and self-centered desire in order to attain true understanding and compassion. The sword, in other words, was not a sword of death (*satsujin ken*) but a sword of life (*katsujin ken*). The Rinzai priest Takuan was representative of the Zen masters who taught this way of thinking to the warrior rulers of the nation.

However, with the opening of Japan to the world at the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 there began



Larry Watson, *Sluiceway*, flipped

a gradual deviation from the original spirit of Zen. Influenced by the tide of militarist and nationalistic sentiment that accompanied Japan's efforts to survive and develop in a world dominated by the great European powers, all too many Rinzaï priests began to actively support the "sword-of-death" mentality of the militarists. This deviation from the true Zen teachings was the result of ignorance and apathy on the part of Rinzaï priests toward our own religious tradition and philosophy, toward history, and toward the global situation at the time.

We have now entered a new millennium. It is a time when the Roman Catholic Church has renounced the policy of aggressive proselytization that it conducted for centuries, when the Vatican has adopted a position of coexistence with the other religions of the world, and when Pope John Paul II has journeyed to the Mideast to apologize for the Church's crimes there in centuries past. We in the Rinzaï Zen organizations of Japan should follow suit, sincerely acknowledging the errors resulting from our

It was always with a feeling of repentance that we visited the South Pacific. The atrocities committed by the Japanese troops were quite evident.

sword-of-death leanings of the past, reaffirming our commitment to training and awakening, and standing firm in the true spirit of Zen Buddhism as we work to attain world peace and genuine compassion toward all beings.

In the lineage of Rinzaï Zen Buddhism, I am the dharma grandchild of Seki Seisetsu, a Zen master singled out for criticism by Brian Victoria. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere apologies for those words and actions of Seisetsu Roshi that lent support to the Japanese militarists. Furthermore, I would like on behalf of the entire Tenryu-ji branch of Rinzaï Zen Buddhism to express my heartfelt remorse for the crimes committed by the Japanese military during the Pacific War, and for the support given to the militarist regime by members of the Rinzaï Zen clergy. It is my earnest prayer that this letter of mine may in some way ease the inner pain of those who have suffered for so long as a result.



From Shodo Harada Roshi

Sogen-ji Monastery, Okayama, Japan

Your recent letter caused me to reflect deeply upon myself, as a Japanese, as a human being, and as one who is doing what he can to guide others in the prac-

tice of Zen Buddhism. You will, no doubt, receive responses from many of the Rinzaï Zen teachers to whom you have written; I too would like to take this opportunity to consider the very important questions that you have raised.

I would like to begin by offering, as a Japanese, my deepest apologies to your husband and to all others who suffered, and continue to suffer, as a result of my country's actions during World War II.

I myself was born in the year 1940, so my own direct memories of the war years are vague and few. My deepest impressions of what went on in the war were formed by my teacher, Yamada Mumon Roshi, under whom I began my Zen training in the early 1960s. I know that Mumon Roshi has been especially criticized in *Zen at War*, and I offer my sincere apologies on his behalf for anything he may have done to support the Japanese war effort.

However, I would like here to relate my own experiences with him. From 1967 on, he would travel once, twice, or sometimes three times a year to the sites of World War II battles in the South Pacific, apologizing to the people of the area, erecting memorial shrines, and conducting commemorative ceremonies for those—Japanese and non-Japanese alike—who had fallen in combat.

It was always with a feeling of repentance that we visited the South Pacific. When we were there, the atrocities committed by the Japanese troops were quite evident, and I was left with a deep sense of pain and humiliation. For many, many people, I realized, the war has not yet ended. I have sought to redress this on a personal level, expressing repentance for Japan's wartime actions whenever appropriate during my teaching trips to the United States, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, and Switzerland. But, as you so correctly point out, there has yet to be any public statement of apology from the various branches of Rinzaï Zen Buddhism on an official level, nor from many Zen masters on an individual level.

Particularly reprehensible is the lack of any official statement of remorse from the Rinzaï Zen organizations. This is a serious problem for which we Zen priests must bear the blame. Over half a century has passed now since Japan's surrender, but it must be said that our institutions have yet to take a clear stance of responsibility for their role in the war. I will do whatever I can to see that such a public, official admission of complicity and expression of remorse is made.

Implied in your letter is a penetrating question: if the life of Zen Buddhism does indeed flow from the very wellsprings of universal love, how could masters of that tradition not only fail to do what they could to stop the conflict but actually lend their support to the militarists? This question I could not help but direct toward

myself. Examining my 30 years of training in the Way and the understanding it has brought me, I wondered, "How well would my own Zen practice have served me in such a situation? To what extent would I have been able to stand up against all the forces of governmental authority? How far would I have been able to maintain Shakyamuni's admonition to "avoid all conflict"—the "golden rule" of the true spirit of Buddhism—in righting the errors of my own government? Is my training that deep in content and function?"

It has been 2,000 to 2,500 years since the original messengers of universal human love—Christ, Shakyamuni, Confucius, Socrates—expounded their teachings. Yet even now we continue to fight and kill each other in one war after another. We can only conclude that religion has lost not only its capacity to guide suffering people but also its very powers of self-purification.

Why, indeed, were Japanese Zen masters so unable to mount any resistance to government authority? Why were they so unable to oppose the war? It is important for the future that we attempt to understand these questions. I myself see the roots of such failings as lying in the past several centuries of the nation's history. During the feudal Tokugawa period (1600–1868) the temples became, in effect, government organs, used for the registry and control of the citizens. Soon after the Meiji Restoration (1868), when Japan abandoned its isolationist policy and opened its doors to the world, Buddhism was actively suppressed in favor of State Shinto, which the government promoted as a means of creating a unified national consciousness. In some areas of Japan, Buddhism was almost completely destroyed. With the growth of militarism, religion was strictly controlled and close watch was kept on all forms of ideology. Cast as a "foreign religion," Buddhism was placed in the position of having to prove its loyalty to the state. The result of all these forces was a Buddhism largely bereft of content as it moved into the modern age.

Japan is now a nation that has lost its spiritual grounding. With the coming of the Meiji period, Buddhism was largely denatured as an effective force for religious leadership. How to recover its spirituality and what form this spirituality is to take are two of the most important problems facing contemporary Japan.

Whether Zen in Japan can help resolve these problems is questionable. Although there are a few genuine seekers in Zen monasteries today, the majority of monks are there only in order to obtain their qualification for priesthood. It is now people in the West who are most serious in seeking the teachings and the spirit of Zen.

The path to awakening realized by Shakyamuni in India moved east to China even as it declined in India,

What We Can Do: Peace Resource Box

Action

Sign the Peace Pledge to Stop the Spread of the War to Iraq

Join others in pledging opposition to waging war against Iraq by signing the following Peace Pledge, written by the American Friends Service Committee. You can copy the text below and send to AFSC, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, fax: 215/241-7177; or submit the pledge online at:

www.peaceresponse.org/pledge/pledgetext.html

"I support peace for Iraq. I grant permission to use my name and city publicly as an opponent of the ongoing economic and bombing war on Iraq, and of any escalation of that war. I will communicate my support for peace to my elected officials and consider other actions to work for peace with Iraq and other nations."

Events

January 15 – May 12, 2002: Cross-country Dharma Walk

The Hiroshima Flame Interfaith Pilgrimage is walking for peace from Seattle to New York City, carrying a flame made from the embers of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. The walk brings together Japanese Buddhists, Native Americans, and people of all faiths. For more information, see www.dharmawalk.org.

April 20, 2002: March on Washington, D.C.

Join the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition, and other sponsoring organizations to demand:

- A U.S. foreign policy based on social and economic justice, not military and corporate oppression
- An end to racial profiling and military recruitment that targets youth of color and working-class youth
- Government funding for programs to benefit the economic victims of the 9/11 attacks and the recession
- An end to the degrading and secret imprisonment of immigrants

For more information, call 212/228-0450, 212/598-0967, or e-mail aprilmobilization@riseup.net.

June 15–20, 2002, New York City: The Power of Nonviolence: Exploring Alternatives

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation's annual conference. Speakers include Mairead McGuire, founder of the Northern Ireland Peace Movement, and the Rev. James Lawson, colleague of Martin Luther King, Jr. To register, call conference coordinator Susheilla Mehta, 845/358-4601. You can also register online at www.forusa.org/events/NatlConf_Application.html.

Reading

War Prevention Works: 50 Stories of People Resolving Conflict. Oxford Research Group, 2001. Dylan Mathews, editor. Available from:

www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

This anthology of 50 case studies of peacemaking efforts in Nigeria, India, Serbia, Somalia, and other countries is an invaluable resource for activists, mediators, and researchers. From the foreword by Scilla Elworthy: "The report shows that there are a multitude of effective ways to prevent and to resolve conflicts without the use of violence."

and east to Japan even as it declined in China; now, even as it declines in Japan, it is moving east across the oceans to North America and Europe. Zen transcends national borders; indeed, it is precisely where Zen has identified with nationality that it has forfeited its true spirit and vigor.

Zen has no nationality, and its truth—the very Awakening of Shakyamuni Buddha—is equally valid for all. This truth is much more likely to be sustained where Zen is practiced with ardor and devotion than where it is practiced mainly in form. At my temple, Sogen-ji, there are presently about 40 people in training, representing 15 nations from around the world, but, I am sad to say, not a single one of these trainees is Japanese.

In this manner, through the efforts of many practitioners in America and Europe, a Way is being opened, a new dynamic for human salvation is being born. I have full trust in these practitioners, and have decided to dedicate my remaining years to guiding them in the experience I have lived and trained in.

This, too, is my attempt to atone in some small way for the great errors committed by Japan in the past, and to offer some form of redress for the anguish experienced by so many people, like your husband. Their sufferings must not be in vain. I pray that in this way I may demonstrate that the Awakening of Zen, the Awakening of Shakyamuni Buddha, has not betrayed humanity.

This, my answer to your letter, is at best an imperfect one, but I pray that you may understand the intention behind it. And I pray from my heart that you will continue in your own practice and reach full realization of the Way.

With my deepest thanks, I remain
Yours sincerely,
Shodo Harada



From Kono Taitso Roshi

Master of Shofuku-ji Monastery, Kobe, Japan

I read your letter attentively, and, as Yamada Mumon Roshi's successor at Shofuku-ji Zen Monastery, I was glad for the chance to respond to the very important issues you have raised.

We Japanese Buddhists committed many mistakes both before and during World War II. This is an issue that has been of deep concern to me from even before the publication of *Zen at War*. On many occasions I have called attention to these past failures, and have urged the authorities of the Myoshin-ji school to issue an official apology and [I have pressed for an apology] from the Rinzai sect as a whole.

I believe that you are acquainted with Mumon Roshi's postwar visits to battlefield areas, to hold memorial services for the war dead and offer prayers of penitence and condolence for the war victims of both sides, soldiers and civilians. I accompanied the Roshi on almost all of these journeys.

Nevertheless, even after 1945 Mumon Roshi's actions were sometimes controversial, as when he called the Pacific War a "holy war" of independence for Asia, lauded the "heroic spirits" of the dead soldiers, and called for government support of Yasukuni Shrine (the shrine dedicated to the veneration of the military war dead). Although his motivation was to console the bereaved families [of fallen soldiers], nevertheless he failed to acknowledge the atrocities of the Japanese troops, the betrayal of the Buddha's teachings by the Japanese Buddhist sects, and the active cooperation of the Rinzai sect authorities in promoting the war—behavior for which they have yet to repent. Thus his statements had the effect of affirming and idealizing the war. I offer my sincere apologies for what he said.

Zen master Wu-tsu Fa-yen once said, "I have practiced for 20 years, and now I truly know shame." Hearing this, the master Ling-yuan, Wu-tsu's cousin in the dharma, declared, "How marvelous these two words, 'know shame'!"

*The shame of which Wu-tsu speaks is not, of course, the shame of failing to understand the dharma. It is the shame of realizing the dharma and yet not being able to freely manifest it in the activities of one's everyday life. Wu-tsu had come to awakening and attained peace of mind, yet had not fully integrated his experience into the everyday practice of the Buddha Way.**

The actions of the Japanese Zen masters during the war bring home to us the great difficulty of actualizing, without mistake, the buddhadharma in one's daily life. Though these masters were deeply awakened, still they were human and thus capable of error. It is for this very reason that Wu-tsu stressed the importance of always maintaining a spirit of repentance and shame.

Thus it is that unless we repent our past betrayal of the teachings of the Buddha and the Patriarchs, we Rinzai sect priests have no future as true Buddhists. Already more than 50 years have passed since the war ended. I am deeply ashamed that the Rinzai sect has still to make an official apology. I will patiently continue to work on this problem.

Your letter has been having a very positive effect on this issue. I pray that you to continue the practice of the Buddha's true teaching. ❖

*From Kono Taitso Roshi's talk, "Now Is the Time to Truly Know Shame," delivered at the memorial ceremony for Emperor Hanazono and Nippo Soshun Zenji, in 1995.

A Subtle Change?

by Melody Ermachild Chavis

On the night of January 28–29, for the 10th time this decade, many of us from BPF sat in silent vigil at San Quentin's gates, as the state carried out an execution. Stephen Wayne Anderson was killed at 12:32 AM.

It was a cold night, with a light dusting of snow on the tops of the hills around the bay. Before midnight, the sky cleared and a full moon emerged from between towering storm clouds. The air was so clear that the stars seemed to have been scrubbed clean.

This was the coldest San Quentin vigil ever, but I sensed something else different about it. There was a softness in the air.

Maybe that was because of Stephen himself, a man who had become a poet and playwright, and a winner of the PEN Prison Writing Award. His work was published in Bell Chevigny's collection *Doing Time*. He had confessed his crimes and fully expressed remorse for many years, so much so that the families of his victims had asked that he not be executed. He did not expect any last-minute reprieve, and he was calm, his friends said. Perhaps his calm extended to us, and to the guards outside at the gate.

This was the first vigil where there were no hecklers, no counterdemonstrators calling out for vengeance. We could be peaceful together, singing, meditating, listening to speakers. Maybe it was Stephen.

Or maybe it was because we have learned so well to gently contain the hecklers that they no longer bother to come. In the early years, people would argue with them. Then we learned to listen. I remember how last time a man with a bullhorn, who had ranted over the heads of the meditators for hours, subsided once the religious services began. It was as if his madness was simply absorbed by the respect offered to all by the rabbi, the priests, the ministers, and the Native American drummer.

This time, the warden did not send out a phalanx of officers in bulletproof vests and face shields to stand at attention in two rows at the entrance, as if we were going to try to scale the prison walls. Maybe it was Stephen.

Or maybe it was that we had succeeded, 10 times, in maintaining our peaceful presence and had finally convinced the authorities, even in this time of nationwide heightened alert, that we are nonviolent.

This time, there were no bombastic speeches from our makeshift wooden-box podium. No one's sarcasm burned our ears. No ugly voice called out

against particular politicians. Maybe it was Stephen.

Or maybe it was because from the beginning there have been voices at the prison gate naming ignorance as our enemy, not people. At first those voices were a minority. But each time, more and more speakers have called on us to include the murdered victims and their families, the governor, the members of the board of prison terms, the warden, and the guards in our circle of compassion, until together all of us have come to understand that our moral strength lies in doing that.

And as the executions go on, the arguments of death penalty proponents are knocked out from under them one by one.

When the remorseful Manny Babbitt, a traumatized, mentally ill Vietnam veteran was executed, the governor said it was done because the family members of his victim, Leah Schindel, "had waited too long for justice." But the family of the woman Stephen murdered, Elizabeth Lyman, did not want him executed. So why was it done this time?

The most amazing words were spoken by Joe-Joe's father. Joe-Joe was a young man senselessly shot to death in San Francisco six years ago. He was a young poet who wrote of peace and helped young people cope with violence. He was doing that work when he was killed. His father has taken up his work, and he came to the prison gate to oppose capital punishment. When we began to hold these vigils, we did not know there were such people as the members of Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation. Over these years we have found each other and forged connections that cannot easily be broken.

I arrived at the vigil worried that our antideath penalty movement might have vanished in the smoke of the World Trade Center. But our numbers have not diminished at all. There were hundreds of us, even on the coldest night of the year, speaking and singing, with great clouds of steam pouring out of our mouths.

Slowly, we are learning together how to oppose the death penalty. Our own peacefulness has grown. As ineffectual anger has drained out of us, our resolve has solidified. On the night of an execution, it's hard to feel the good that is happening—it's like trying to feel warmth from the light of the full moon. But we are now a maturing movement, growing stronger. ❖

Melody Ermachild Chavis is a private investigator and writer who practices at the Berkeley Zen Center.

This was the coldest San Quentin vigil ever, but I sensed something else different about it. There was a softness in the air.

Book Reviews

Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet: A Buddhist-Christian Conversation

by Rita M. Gross and Rosemary Radford Ruether

Continuum, 2001, 229 pp., \$22.95, paperback

Because this book is a particularly good example of Buddhist-Christian dialogue, Turning Wheel asked feminist writers from both Buddhist and Christian traditions to review it. —Ed.

Reviewed by Karma Lekshe Tsomo

Interreligious dialogue has become the medium for some of the richest cultural and intellectual exchanges of our time. This book documents an unusually fine series of encounters between Rita Gross and Rosemary Radford Ruether, two feminist theologians who care deeply about the state of our world. In their dialogue, the authors strike a fine balance between informed appreciation and critical analysis of their own and each other's traditions, creatively exploring Buddhist and Christian thought. The dominant theme of discussion is the role religions can play in correcting injustices in the world and how well, historically, Buddhism and Christianity have lived up to their potential. The writers focus primarily on women and the environment.

Early in the conversation, the authors share their personal narratives. Gross describes her spiritual journey from an intellectually restrictive Lutheran childhood, through Judaism, to Vajrayana Buddhism. Ruether describes a very

different journey, from an intellectually stimulating childhood, through social activism, to unintended involvement in interreligious dialogue from a Christian perspective. The authors' voices, as feminists and as university professors, are at once intimate and academically grounded.

The conversation revolves around what is most problematic in Buddhism and Christianity, as well as what is most spiritually enriching. The authors first take issue with the patriarchal legacies and explore the liberative potential of both traditions, then discuss Buddhist and Christian resources for environmental sustainability. In the process, Ruether contributes concise, informative histories of Christian feminist theology and of "ecological theology and spirituality." She rejects the justification of "religiously sanctioned patriarchy as a legitimate diversity between religions" and identifies the refusal to ordain women as "the intolerable central keystone in the arch of ecclesiastical patriarchy." Nuanced examinations of religion's relation to sexism, racism, poverty, militarism, and other social-justice issues recur throughout the book. Despite the flaws and inequities of religious institutions, both theologians appear convinced that human beings can work it out and that religious ideas and practices are relevant, helpful ways of doing so. Both maintain their idealism and commitment to social change, trusting that individuals can transcend their particularities to affirm their shared humanity.

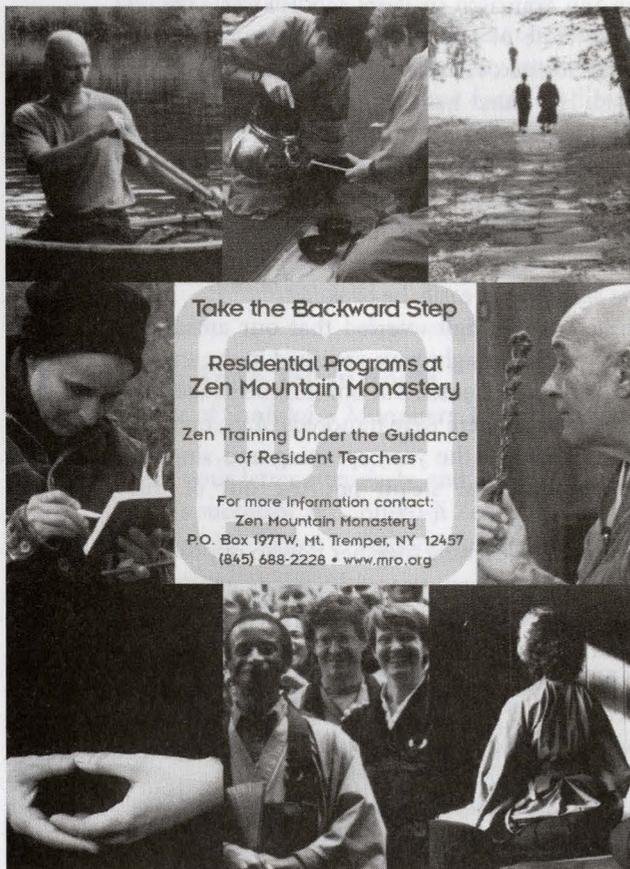
Religious Feminism is both a major contribution to peace, justice, and interreligious understanding, and an enjoyable and thought-provoking read. By the end of the book, I had become convinced that religious feminism, well conceived and skillfully implemented, can save the planet. ❖

Karma Lekshe Tsomo is an assistant professor of religious studies at the University of San Diego, secretary of Sakyadhita: International Association of Buddhist Women, and director of Jamyang Foundation, an education initiative for Buddhist women.

Reviewed by Donna M. McKenzie

I read this book as a feminist Catholic theologian, wanting to understand how to engage in interreligious dialogue and hoping to learn from Buddhist insights and feminist ecological ideas. This book met my hopes and more. Given the inability of many religious traditions, including my own, to come to terms with pluralism, the dialogue in this book—which is centered on the well-being of the planet—is extremely important. The book is based on a workshop that Gross and Ruether co-presented in 1999 at Grailville, a spiritual community in Loveland, Ohio. They have included a helpful introductory chapter on the nature of dialogue, in which Gross warns that the success of any interchange means "all participants accept the premise that religious diversity is a fact and a resource, not a theological mistake." Ruether stresses that one must accept equal truth in the other faith.

Both Gross and Ruether share a commitment to femi-



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nism, fueling their critiques of their respective traditions. Gross focuses on the need for more Buddhist women gurus and teachers, and on meditation as a liberating practice. In keeping with Christian liberation theology and the Jewish prophetic tradition of critiquing social injustice, Ruether stresses the need to address systemic forms of oppression. Gross, on the other hand, emphasizes that all change begins with personal change, yet she helpfully illuminates the ways in which a social ethic is present in Buddhist practices.

Their approach to dialogue is provocative and begins with heartfelt accounts of their own religious life stories. They use each other's comments to throw themselves more deeply into the riches of their respective traditions, and they manage to avoid defensiveness. Yet Gross honestly indicates her problems with a Christianity that emphasizes a fallen creation, and Ruether criticizes meditation practices that are narcissistic and disconnected from the needs of the world. As the reader, you see the ways in which Gross and Ruether learn from each other. I appreciated especially Gross's attention to compassion and the ways in which compassion may be heightened through the discipline of meditation.

The dialogue on contemplation is one of the most interesting parts of the book, especially the reflections on anger and violence, and the attention to the question of how to change society. This section alone makes *Religious Feminism and the Future of the Planet* a must-read. ♦

Donna M. McKenzie teaches ethics at Fordham University, where she is an assistant professor in the theology department.

Writing and the Spiritual Life **Finding Your Voice by Looking Within** by Patrice Vecchione

Contemporary Books, 2001, 240 pp., \$14.95, paperback

Reviewed by Julia Chiapella

If the pen can be to Buddhist practice what the breath is to meditation, author Patrice Vecchione has clearly illuminated a path of mindfulness for writers. *Writing and the Spiritual Life* is a concise handbook for clearing away obstacles that can get in the way of speaking clearly and simply in one's own words. In these pages, Vecchione shows the way to an inspired and unadulterated clarity that has little to do with external pressures and everything to do with one's own heart and mind.

With exercises that frequently entail awareness of the body, Vecchione recognizes that spiritual writing isn't merely an act of the intellect but one that requires attention to the body, the emotional realms, and one's relationship to the world. Prescriptive without being didactic, *Writing and the Spiritual Life* lays bare a foundation for writing that is grounded in self-discovery. In 10 neat chapters graced with quotes from established writers, she has created not only a guide but a reverent bow to the numi-

nous that can be found in the act of writing.

Each chapter concludes with exercises designed to further the discipline of writing. Many of these are drawn from her years of teaching poetry in both schools and workshops for adults.

Her exhortations to seek inspiration in nature's contours and to pay attention to the still, small voice within are both lyrical and convincing: "For writing to be a spiritual practice," she says, "you must make manifest the life of the soul, give voice to the place where you live." Each chapter's exercises begin with a meditative process called "Where do you live?" which supports readers in identifying the places where their own creativity dwells.

Encounters with friends and family are frequently means of finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. Blending stories from her own life fluidly with the words and experiences of well-known writers, Vecchione has managed to create a guide not only for writing but for living a more fully realized spiritual life. She demonstrates how writing can be not only a way to look more deeply but also a way to move mindful awareness into an active practice in the world. As Thich Nhat Hanh has said, "Once there is seeing, there must be acting. Otherwise, what is the use of seeing?"

Vecchione has edited several collections of essays and published a book of poems, but this is her first work of non-fiction. It is stunning in its simple grace and humility. ♦

Julia Chiapella is a freelance writer covering the arts and spirituality in the San Francisco Bay region.

Buddhism with an Attitude **The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind-Training** by B. Alan Wallace

Snow Lion Publications, 2001, 288 pp., \$21.95, hardcover

Reviewed by Grace Schireson

In *Buddhism with an Attitude*, B. Alan Wallace answers a question frequently asked by Buddhist meditators: "I know what my practice is on the meditation cushion, but how do I practice when I leave the meditation hall and enter the world?" Wallace's answer both transcends the question and addresses it in step-by-step fashion. This book places the questioner into a new domain where the world actually becomes the meditation hall and practice is clearly and lovingly guided by the aphorisms of a traditional Tibetan "root text," Atisha's Seven-Point Mind-Training. When we ask the question about continuing meditation "off the cushion," we are hoping that we will find a meaningful way to interact with a world that does not always make sense. Wallace not only explains how to do that but goes further and proposes that following the mind-training practice in your worldly life will actually transform your consciousness and therefore deepen your meditative experience.

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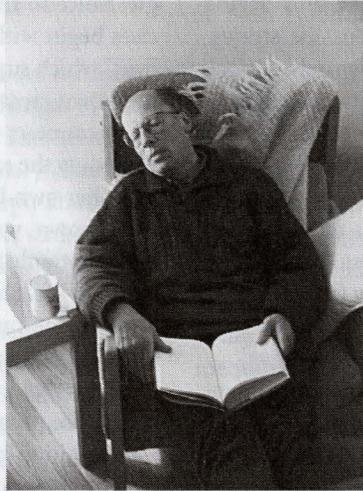
Reading for a Good Cause

by Barbara Hirshkowitz

Eight members of my reading group spent the MLK holiday weekend at a friend's home on the Chesapeake Bay having a read-a-thon as a fundraiser for Books Through Bars (BTB). BTB sends reading material—500 book packages a month—to prisoners. (Information about BTB is available on their Web site at www.booksthroughbars.org.) Each of us asked friends and family members to sponsor us by pledging to give a certain amount for each page we read over the weekend. Pledges ranged from one cent per page to 12 cents per page. Some people, worried about just how much we might read, donated a specific amount instead.

From Friday evening to Monday afternoon we hung out together and read, but the cooking and eating were also important. We had second breakfast, elevenses, tea, and midnight snack as the occasion demanded. We had enough food and drink for twice the number of people, so we had to eat heartily. Chocolate left over from our evening fondue went into the bread pudding for elevenses.

We also brought enough books for a month, and we put a good dent in those, too. Each of us read more than 800 pages. Although the house had many good reading rooms,



most of the time we chose to be together in the living room, with its magnificent view of the bay. Several people were caught napping with a book in their hands. Long hours would go by with only the sound of pages turning, punctuated by boisterous mealtime discussion. By prior agreement, we all read *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.*, which we discussed on several occasions, and we also listened to a tape recording of him preaching. We found his words inspiring, and, unfortunately, as relevant in our time as they were 50 years ago.

The weather also cooperated. It snowed all day Saturday, and two snow beings appeared at the end of the driveway.

The combined sum of all pages read was over 7,500, with the highest individual count at 1,449 pages. Reading material was eclectic; for example, here is my list: *A Knock at Midnight* (MLK, Jr.), *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Jules Verne), *Almanac of the Dead* (Leslie Marmon Silko), and *New Jack: Guarding Sing Sing* (Ted Conover). Almost \$2,000 was raised, and a most excellent time was had by all.

We hope this inspires others to have read-a-thons, too. Relax in a comfy armchair, get educated, and eat fondue, all for a good cause of your own choosing! ❖

Barbara Hirshkowitz is publications coordinator for the Friends General Conference in Philadelphia. She has the distinction of having been Turning Wheel's first book review editor.

Seven-Point Mind-Training, continued

rience. We get much more than we bargained for when we originally asked the question. Wallace offers this “quintessential advice” from a 20-century Tibetan master:

In order not to prevent all unfavorable circumstances and adversity from afflicting your mind, but to cause them to elicit a sense of good cheer, you should put a stop to experiences of aversion toward both inner and outer obstacles—illness as well as enemies, spirits, vicious gossip, etc. Practice seeing everything solely in an agreeable way. For that to happen, you should stop seeing those harmful situations as something wrong, but give all your effort to seeing them as something valuable. For it is the way our minds apprehend situations that makes them agreeable or disagreeable. By training in this way, you will become gentle-minded, easy-going, and courageous; there will be no obstacles to your spiritual practice; all unfavorable circumstances will arise as splendid and auspicious; and your mind will continually be content with the joy of serenity (p. 189).

This advice is not just some new-age “go with the flow” cliché; it is advice thoroughly supported by Atisha's Mind-Training aphorisms. The aphorisms come in the form of bite-size practices that skillfully and subtly deconstruct the

egocentric and self-serving behaviors that habitually insert themselves into our actions when we arise from our meditation cushion. For example, I particularly liked “Avoid poisonous food.” Wallace explains this aphorism as the Tibetan injunction to avoid thinking the thought “I'm special.” For the practitioner of Buddhism, this particular thought and the actions and emotions that follow from it are indeed poisonous to spiritual practice. Seeing the desire to be special as a tempting, but indeed poisonous, food is an aid to catching the trouble before it gets away with us.

The book is well organized, well written, and thoroughly explained. The chapters begin with the preliminaries, go through all Seven Points of the Mind-Training, and end with basic meditation instruction and a concise list of the aphorisms. It is a book to guide both beginners and seasoned meditators, a book to be read, reread, and studied. It is a book worth owning. My one criticism: the book's title does not do it justice; it's much more interesting and important than it sounds. ❖

Grace Schireson is a priest ordained at the Berkeley Zen Center, a psychologist, and a proud grandmother. She teaches at Empty Nest Zendo in North Fork, California, and at the Almond Blossom Sangha in Modesto, California.

Beginning with this issue, we include news of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and our programs in a separate section at the back of the magazine. And once a year, we'll bring you our annual report. Here's the first one!

Buddhist Peace Fellowship

2001 Annual Report

We have left behind a year of sorrow, loss, transition, and challenge for BPF and for the world. In May we lost our old friend, teacher, and board member Maylie Scott, after a stunningly short struggle with cancer. September brought unprecedented terrorist attacks in the United States, and retaliation and bombing in Afghanistan. The violence and human tragedy of these actions are still impossible for any one of us to encompass. At the end of December, I stepped down as Executive Director after nearly 11 years at BPF, passing leadership on to Sibylle Scholz, our new E.D. We all welcome Sibylle, with confidence that she will help BPF stay on course for the benefit of all.

In the midst of these difficulties, your encouragement and support have enabled us to grow, to deepen our dharma work, and to meet our ambitious development goals. We breathe a sigh of relief and offer a bow of gratitude. There is little we could do without friends like you.

So the board and staff (and even former directors like myself) are happy to bring you BPF's first annual report. The pages that follow present a brief overview of our activities and programs for 2001, our accomplishments and challenges, and a graphic rendering of BPF income and expenses.

Because we are a grassroots organization, much of what we do is not always visible to the large membership of BPF. We feel that our practice, activism, and outlook fit together into a unified vision of socially engaged Buddhism. But in order to understand and refine this vision our members need to know what BPF is doing. Many of our activities are covered in *Turning Wheel's* articles and columns, but up to now there has been no one place where we talk about BASE groups, the Prison Project, international work, the Education and Training Program, and more. I believe we owe it to you to share our work so you will be able to find new ways to share your vision. In mutual interdependence we learn from each other and make a New World.

In peace & dharma,

Alan Senauke

Former Executive Director of BPF

2001 was a busy and productive year for BPF. Our role in the Buddhist community has continued to grow as we work to abolish the death penalty; provide relief to refugees in Thailand, Burma, and India; train Buddhist activists of all ages and backgrounds; address racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression; and help launch social action and community service groups throughout the world.

9/11 AND THE AFTERMATH

The planet is still reverberating from the tragic events of 9/11 and the ongoing war. BPF has provided leadership in the Buddhist community in numerous ways:

- * BPF's Web site (www.bpf.org) serves as a clearinghouse for Buddhist and other faith-based responses to the war.
- * BPF's Statement on the events of 9/11 reached thousands through e-mail and our Web site.
- * Four hundred people attended our town meeting in Berkeley on September 16, with people crowded into every doorway and window to hear Buddhist and Muslim speakers and musicians. Guests donated over \$2,300 to support relief efforts in NYC and the Middle East.
- * Members of the BPF staff have participated in numerous interfaith gatherings, vigils, and demonstrations in northern California and Nevada. Other BPF members have been similarly active all around the country.
- * BPF formed a 9/11 action committee of local Buddhist activists and sangha leaders to develop strategies for continuing activities. The group has produced several events including a "despair and empowerment workshop," a letter-writing party, weekly vigils, and listening booths, where Buddhist volunteers sit at public transit stations and lend an ear to passers-by who want to talk about the war.
- * BPF co-sponsored a benefit concert in Berkeley on October 30, raising \$4,700 for NYC relief.

TURNING WHEEL

Turning Wheel's audience continues to grow, with thousands of loyal readers and dozens of Buddhist teachers and writers contributing articles on cutting-edge issues in socially engaged Buddhism. Under the editorship of Susan Moon and Maia Duerr, *Turning Wheel* now sports a new format and full-color cover and has matured into one of



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the most challenging and deeply respected journals in both the Buddhist and peace-activist communities. *Turning Wheel* won the 2001 *Utne Reader* Alternative Press Award for the best spiritual magazine. Themes of the past year include:

- * Buddhism in Las Américas
- * Karma
- * Reconciliation
- * A Buddhist Response to 9/11

PRISON PROJECT

Today, three years after its inception, the Prison Project serves over 950 prisoner members. The number is rising rapidly through word-of-mouth among prisoners. The project has been working on many fronts: prison ministry, advocacy, correspondence, and education, with allies in the dharma, activist, and faith-based world. People from all corners of this country as well as Canada, Italy, England, and Argentina have sought our advice, resources, and assistance.

Prison Project Highlights of the Year:

- * Co-Director Joi Morton-Wiley joined Diana Lion on the staff of the Prison Project last April. Joi focuses on correspondence, education, and volunteer training. Founding Director Diana Lion now focuses primarily on prison ministry and advocacy.
- * Prisoner membership in BPF rose 27 percent, to 950 prisoners in 2001. Prison correspondence rose 60 percent. Membership continues to grow rapidly through word-of-mouth.
- * In the last 18 months, the Prison Project created a brochure with artwork donated by prisoners, a set of mentoring guidelines for prison meditation teachers, and a 20-page resource guide for prisoners and advocates.

Ministry:

- * The Prison Project and the San Francisco Zen Center Outreach Department co-sponsor the Prison Meditation Network (PMN). Our member instructors conduct meditation and yoga classes for about 150 prisoners each week in nine Bay Area jails and prisons.
- * PMN conducts regular classes at the Drug Court Treatment Center, a one-to-two-year alternative to incarceration for substance abusers.

Advocacy:

- Our main focus continues to be ending the death penalty.
- * We coordinated a vigil at the gates of San Quentin Prison protesting the execution of Robert Massie, as well as two early-morning vigils in Oakland at the time of the federal executions of Timothy McVeigh and Juan Raul Garza in Indiana.
- * We serve on the board of California People of Faith Working Against the Death Penalty, and we are active members of Californians for a Moratorium on Executions.

Correspondence:

- * We receive dozens of letters from prisoners all over the United States each week and currently facilitate correspondence between approximately 200 dharma pen pals and prisoners.
- * We send hundreds of donated dharma books to prisoners upon request.
- * At the last mailing party, seven volunteers sent copies of *Turning Wheel* to 950 prisoners free of charge.

BUDDHIST ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

BASE is the nation's first urban Buddhist volunteer corps. BASE creates small grassroots training and practice communities for socially engaged Buddhists. One hundred and fifty people have graduated from BASE since it began in 1995 under the direction of Diana Winston.

BASE Highlights of the Year:

- * In April, nine people, ages 18 to 25, completed the first-ever Youth BASE program, focusing on activism in an urban setting. Two young women were given stipends and free housing to participate. This highly successful program inspired and empowered the young people, many of whom have gone on to more Buddhist practice and social-change organizations.
- * Two other new BASE programs, with a total of 20 participants, started up in the Bay Area in 2001. BASE participants gave hundreds of hours of service to hospices, soup kitchens, environmental justice groups, crisis units, and youth at risk.
- * BASE has gone international! BPF friends in Vancouver, Canada, are organizing a BASE group to begin early in 2002.
- * Diversity BASE, focusing on issues of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class oppression, begins in February 2002.
- * This year we have had hundreds of requests for more information about BASE. Many people want to start BASE groups in their own community. There have also been requests for a BASE methodology and for publications, experienced speakers, and insight into how the principles can be replicated.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM (ETP)

BPF is developing a new program: Education and Training. We spent this year planning a modest pilot program with activities in different education areas, including activism as practice, nonviolence, diversity, and leadership in groups. We will be holding retreats, lectures, workshops, and events nationwide to fulfill our mission of providing socially engaged Buddhist training and practice. Highlights of our 2001 pilot program included:

- * "Socially Engaged Buddhism: The Bodhisattva Here and Now," a weekend retreat with Diana Winston and Donald Rothberg in North Carolina;
- * "Compassionate Transformation: Working with Racism" with Vanissar Tarakali in Oakland;
- * "Nonviolence in Practice," a weekly film and discussion series in Berkeley;
- * "Spiritual Economics," a film, lecture, and workshop series in New Mexico, with Sarah Laeng-Gilliat.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

* Since 1990 BPF has worked with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), linking Buddhist activists across Asia and Europe. The Think Sangha, a kind of Buddhist think tank that grew out of INEB, became a BPF affiliate this year.

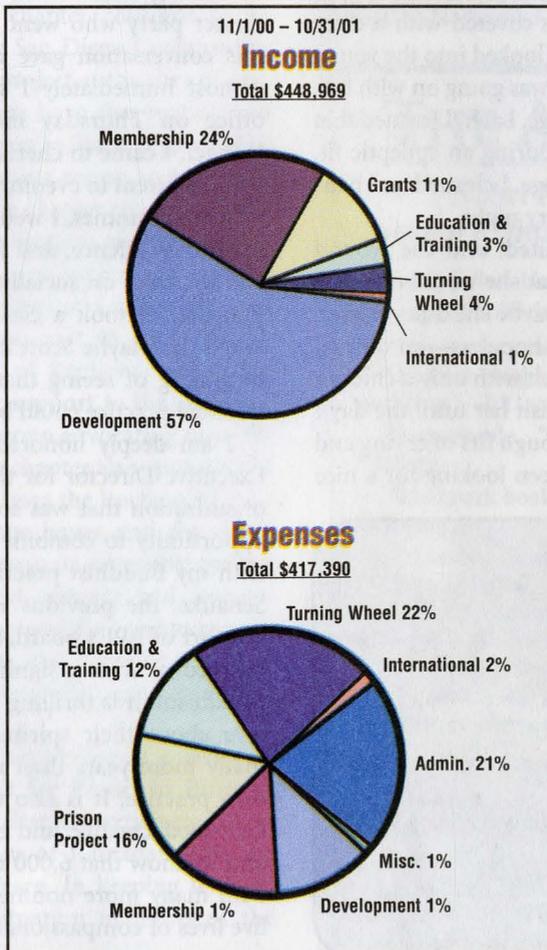
* The East Bay Chapter of BPF has provided more than \$200,000 in direct aid to children and old people in Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal.

* Our Tibetan Revolving Loan Fund has provided more than \$150,000 in low-interest loans to labor-intensive projects in the settlements.

* We directed many interested people to long-term volunteer service in Asia with socially engaged Buddhist groups, including Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka and the Universal Education School in India.

CHAPTERS

BPF now has 17 chapters and numerous contacts and affiliates nationwide. Since September 11, there has been an upsurge of energy in the chapters. Many have been responding to the crisis and joining forces with other local peace organizations. Hundreds of people participate monthly in chapter activities and experience a sense of community with like-minded friends. ❖



Executive Director's Report

Here is the first report from our new executive director! You can learn more about her on page 10.

After a lifelong pilgrimage in search of the perfect beach, I found a round cushion in the San Francisco Zen Center *zendo*, where I learned to watch the sun rise and set within myself.

My desire to travel was kindled early. As a young child in Germany, I found out that my great-grandfather was a ship's doctor, which sent my imagination wild. My grandfather, who was also a doctor, gave me a book about Albert Schweitzer's life as a doctor in Africa, and when I was about 10 years old, my father gave me *Seven Years in Tibet*. My brother and sister and I often played a game to see who could name the most capitals in the world.

Every summer the whole family would go on a four-week vacation somewhere in Europe. I was impressed by three-foot-long spaghetti, French brie, foreign currencies, and the Oceanographic Museum in Monte Carlo. Everything was wonderful in its unfamiliarity. So, as a young woman, I set out to travel around the world, because I wanted to see it all.

During my five-year trip, I visited a very remote village in Indonesia. The chief took me to a chicken coop where a young woman was squatting in the corner. She had a large festering wound on her leg that was covered with a dirty rag. I felt nauseous at the sight of it. I looked into the young woman's eyes, trying to discern what was going on with her, for she could not speak in any language. Later, I learned that she had fallen into the cooking fire during an epileptic fit. In the four weeks I stayed in that village, I cleaned and bandaged her leg every morning and every night.

She started to smile when I visited, and the wound began to heal, but it was so severe that she would never be able to straighten out her leg, and maybe she'd never even walk at all. Her situation seemed so hopeless—an outcast because of her limited mental abilities, with only a chicken coop for home. But I continued to visit her until the day I had to leave. That evening I went through fits of crying and self-doubt. I felt shame that I had been looking for a nice

beach when there was so much suffering going on.

I then went on to work as an economist around the world. I protested Uranium Mining in Australia with Friends of the Earth, helped introduce sheep into rubber plantations as biological weed control in Sumatra, researched small ruminant production in the Bolivian Altiplano as part of a multidisciplinary team, worked for Greenpeace, and taught at the Universidad de Los Andes in Puno, Peru (a Shining Path stronghold). And still, I came to realize that I didn't have the faintest idea what suffering really meant, and my work around the world felt shallow and meaningless.

It happened one day in 1994, when I was having tea with Rinpoche Namyal at my friend Nan Cuz's house in Guatemala, where we used to gather to meditate. Rinpoche Namyal said: "There is so much suffering going on." Anger welled up in me, and I burst out: "I don't see it like that at all. I feel very optimistic and I have a lot of hope that our work can help others." He let my words hang there in the cozy room without any comment. It was then that I felt my own suffering.

Soon after, I moved to San Francisco and looked for a place to meditate. When I saw San Francisco Zen Center, it was such an imposing building, with all those monks walking in and out, and I was intimidated. I was looking for something smaller. But one evening I met someone at a dinner party who went regularly to the Zen Center, and this conversation gave me the courage to check it out. Almost immediately I started to volunteer in the front office on Thursday mornings, working with Michael Wenger. I came to cherish this time of silent working side by side. I went to evening *zazen* and I did a one-day sitting.

In the summer, I went to Tassajara for a week. Again, I sought the silence, and I also discovered the library there and the shelf on socially engaged Buddhism. Back in San Francisco, I took a class on socially engaged Buddhism taught by Maylie Scott and Barbara Wenger. This was the beginning of seeing that my work in the world and my spiritual practice could be one.

I am deeply honored to now be serving as the new Executive Director for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, an organization that was so dear to Maylie, and to have the opportunity to combine almost 30 years of activist work with my Buddhist practice. Under the leadership of Alan Senauke, the previous Executive Director, and with the support of BPF's board, staff, friends, and volunteers, BPF has grown into a significant agent for socially engaged Buddhism. It is thrilling to work with people who are sincere about their spiritual practice, who have practiced many more years than myself and can thus support my own practice. It is also thrilling to work with the smart, dedicated, creative, and experienced staff here in the office and to know that 6,000 members stand behind our work, with many more nonmembers appreciating our effort to live lives of compassionate involvement. ❖

—Sibylle Scholz

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May 10 – May 18 (8 nights)

Information call 415-488-0164 x375

for a complete schedule visit us at www.spiritrock.org

Chapter News

Buddhist Peace Fellowship chapters have been hard at work in the months following September 11. At times this work has centered on maintaining a dedicated schedule of peace vigils; in other instances, the necessary work has been fully processing the events of the past few months. Perhaps the most important, and the most common, of all BPF chapter activities since September has been the effort to get to know local Muslim communities and to learn more about Islamic culture and history. The words of the San Diego chapter in a letter to the mosques and masjids of that city encapsulate the goals of many BPF chapters: "Our hope is that we can gain awareness of your needs during this crisis. We wish to offer our connection, reassurance, and compassion."

Joining other abolitionist groups in protest of capital punishment, the **Texas Hill Country** chapter has been sitting in silent meditation across from the Governor's Mansion in Austin on the eve of every state execution. In keeping with their fostering of the principle of nonviolence, the chapter is currently studying Michael Nagler's book *Is There No Other Way? The Search for a Non-Violent Future* in their group meetings and is considering a work group on Right Livelihood for the future. In October, the chapter also had a guest from the Austin Muslim community for a question-and-answer session and further conversation.

Members of the **San Diego** chapter continue to be involved, in conjunction with the San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice, in a leafletting project at the sites of specific hate crimes. Chapter members have also participated in a monthly silent vigil with Women in Black, organized by San Diego women "in response to war, terror, and torture." In addition to their peace work, the chapter recently viewed a documentary film on Islamic civilization and culture.

The **Rochester** chapter has been striking a balance between post-September 11 activities and other issues of concern to the group. They took part in an Interfaith Potluck with the Islamic Center of Rochester and other faith-based groups and lent their support to the efforts of Rochester Restraint Coalition, a group advocating restraint in response to September 11. The chapter also sponsored a speaker, Reverend Mike Roberts, from the Rochester Labor Coalition, to speak on both labor issues and the death penalty, and has begun to brainstorm on a possible project surrounding the issues of world poverty and hunger. Members of the chapter have expressed the need to remain mindful of environmental issues and pending environmental legislation that may evade public scrutiny during this time.

The newly formed **Boston** chapter began a series of Tuesday night vigils entitled "Sit for Peace" in Boston's Copley Square. In November, the chapter participated in an interfaith vigil for peace in honor of Ramadan with the group United for Justice with Peace. In keeping with an analysis of the current world situation in terms of the

Buddhist principle of interdependence, the Boston chapter is considering a study group on the issue of U.S. oil dependency and its political and environmental effects.

Nancy Lethcoe, BPF's contact in **Alaska**, has begun a newsletter that proposes cooperative actions Alaskan Buddhists might undertake given their dispersion over a wide geographical area. The suggested area of focus at this time is supporting a new U.S. Torture Victims Relief Act through letter-writing campaigns to Congress and other awareness-raising efforts.

Developing Chapter News: BPFer's in **Tucson, Atlanta, Portland, Ore.,** and **New York City** have held their first exploratory meetings and are currently preparing applications for official chapter status. The Atlanta group is considering focusing on poverty and illiteracy through outreach programs for prison inmates or underprivileged kids. Folks in Tucson are already in the early stages of planning a "Change Your Mind" day for October, while the Portland group is holding a weekly vigil titled "Buddhas Not Bombs" in downtown Portland.

Welcomes: to Jeff Wilson, the new Triangle Area chapter coordinator; and to new contacts Shaney Komulainen in Montreal, Jon Peters in Bloomington, Indiana, and Roy Money in Hamden, Connecticut. ❖ —Carrie Gaiser

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BASE/Education News

This spring we are starting two new BASE groups. Diversity BASE, run by Kenji Liu and Swan Keyes and mentored by Mushim Ikeda-Nash, will support people in exploring issues of race, class, gender, and other oppressions.

Second BASE for BASE graduates, facilitated by Tempel Smith and Anna-Brown Griswold, will hold its first retreat at the Nevada nuclear test site in March.

The next BASE program in the Bay Area will be in the fall of 2002. Please look at the BPF Web site for more information in the summer.

Coming: Compassionate Transformation Weekend: A Buddhist Way to Heal Racism

Two-day workshop led by Vanissar Tarakali, coming in May. More info forthcoming. Contact: Vanissar Tarakali, 510/594-6812, <vanissart@ciis.edu>.

Ongoing: Buddhist Helping Professionals' Forum

This BPF-sponsored group offers a monthly forum where practitioners can support each other in integrating their daily work and spiritual practice. Helping professionals from all Buddhist traditions are encouraged to participate.

Date: First Sunday of every month, 10 AM to 3:30 PM.

Cost: Donation of \$10-\$20, plus *dana* for dharma teachers.

Place: varies within Bay Area. Contact: Delia McGrath: <deliamcgrath@juno.com>, Richard Bush: 510/558-1865, or Brenda Frechette: <brenda@wco.com>. ❖

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Joan Halifax Roshi, Jeanie Kotchison

JUNE 7-JULY 4: Ango: Upaya Zen Training Joan Halifax Roshi, Stephen Batchelor, Enkyo O' Hara, Kazuaki Tanahashi Sensei, Irene Kyojo Bakker, M.S.W., Wendy Johnson, Harry Pfennig*

JUNE 7-9: The Great Precepts

JUNE 9-14: Dogen Sesshin

JUNE 14-16: Calligraphy Meditation

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Prison Project Report

We, like everyone else, have been feeling the aftershocks of September 11 and the ensuing events. Some of our funding sources have redirected their monies towards post-September 11 projects. The ongoing bad news—about lifers being denied parole in California, more executions, more prisons, and more prisoners—leaves me feeling sad but not despairing. We've got some good solid work ahead of us, but I know that together we can do it.

However, we are heartened by some recent program developments. To expand here on the Prison Project news in the annual report, our Prison Meditation Network is reaching further afield in California. We are now in contact with some practitioners in Arcata who conduct classes in Pelican Bay (maximum security) Prison, as well as with folks down south who teach classes in Soledad. We are working not only in jails and prisons but also in the Drug Court of San Francisco, offering classes in an alternative-to-incarceration program for people who are charged with addiction-related offenses. We are also now offering classes for youth in Juvenile Halls.

In December, we hosted a lively quarterly mailing party (complete with food and jokes) to mail out a mushrooming number of free *Turning Wheel* subscriptions to prisoners. We organized the local Buddhist sanghas to attend yet another execution vigil outside the gates at San Quentin on January 28. Even though the victims' families opposed the execution, Governor Davis refused clemency, and Steven Anderson was executed by lethal injection. Over 500 people showed up at the vigil on a cold moonlit night, and about a hundred of them sat in silent, and eloquent, meditation [see Melody Ermachild Chavis' article on page 43]. We are heartened by the increasing response from dharma communities.

Finally, we are currently very involved in the Californians for a Moratorium on Executions coalition, which aims to gather 100,000 signatures and 300 organizational endorsements by mid-April to hand in to Governor Davis on May 1. Please see the copy of the petition on page 13. ❖

—Diana Lion

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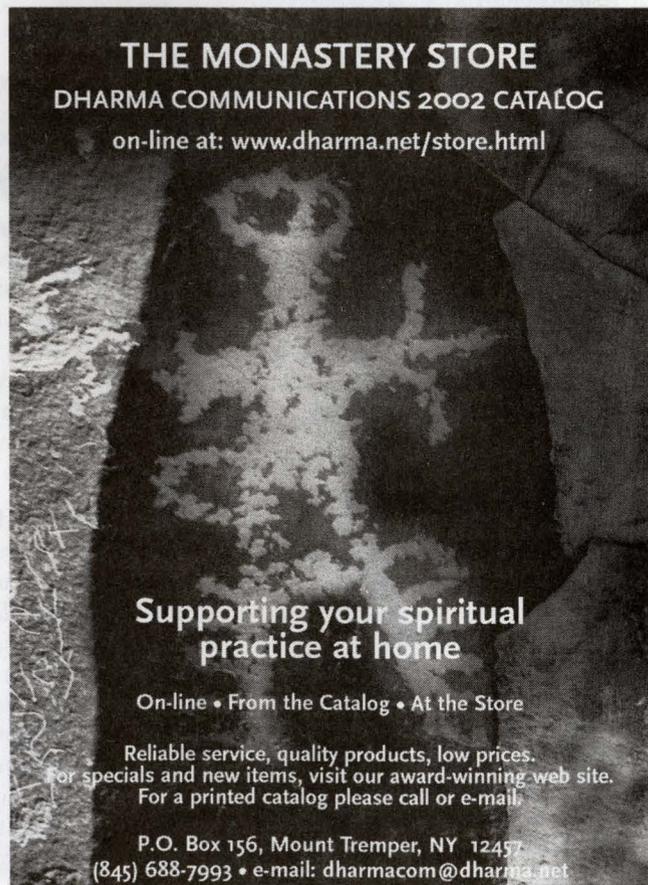
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A special thank-you to our volunteers:

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Announcements & Classifieds

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sangha for Buddhists of Color meets monthly in the San Francisco Bay Area, for meditation, dharma talks, and mutual support. For information, call 415/789-8359, e-mail: <boc_caretakers@hotmail.com>.

Diversity and Social Change Sangha, for those interested in blending mindfulness practice in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh with social-change work, meets weekly in Oakland. Contact Olga at 510/540-0141, <drking@attglobal.net>.

Jarvis Masters is a prisoner on San Quentin's death row, a Buddhist, and a frequent contributor to *Turning Wheel*. Please visit the Web site of the Jarvis Masters Support Group to learn about Jarvis's case, his writing, and his practice: www.freejarvis.org.

BPF Publications: *Making the Invisible Visible*, a collection of writings by people of color and their white allies about healing racism in Buddhist communities, \$6 a copy. *Safe Harbor*, BPF's booklet on guidelines, process, and resources for ethics in Buddhist communities, \$5 donation. To order these publications, contact the BPF office, 510/655-6169, e-mail: <bpf@bpf.org>.

Healing Racism in Our Sanghas. How can we make our Western sanghas truly welcoming to people of all ethnic and racial groups? This question is the focus of monthly gatherings for Buddhist practitioners of color and of European American descent, at Empty Gate Zen Center, 2200 Parker St., Berkeley, the first Friday evening of each month, 7:00–9:30 PM. Info: 510/845-8565.

The Untraining is designed to help you "untrain" the subtle programming of white liberal racism. Put your meditative awareness to work for all beings. Ongoing groups: 510/235-6134.

Gay Buddhist Fellowship. Sittings, speakers, and discussions every Thursday evening and every other Sunday morning in San Francisco. Classes, workshops, retreats, monthly potluck dinners, and work in Buddhist AIDS projects. Newsletter available on request. (See BPF Chapters & Affiliates page for address.)

Free Eight Verses cards for inmates.

The Naljor Prison Dharma Service offers the Eight Verses cards (from the Mahayana Lojong tradition) by request to inmates. For other practitioners, the Eight Verses cards are \$8.95 each. Contact Naljor Creations, PO Box 628, Mt. Shasta, CA 96067, ph: 530/926-1166, <naljor@aol.com>.

EVENTS

Sakyadhita, the sixth International Conference on Buddhist Women, takes place July 11–18, 2002 in Taipei, Taiwan. The theme of this year's conference is "Bridging Worlds." Register by June 1, 2002. For more information, contact Joanne Molyneaux, 109 Fawn Drive, San Anselmo, CA 94960, ph: 415/456-4830, fax: 415/456-1901, e-mail: <jmolynea@attbi.com>. Visit: www.sakyadhita.org

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Help Tibetans in Exile. Many Tibetans escape the oppression of life under the Chinese by making a perilous journey across the Himalayas to India and Nepal. For a donation of \$3.50 to \$30 a month, you can help these and other Tibetans. One hundred percent of your contribution to the Tibetan Sponsorship Project goes to their support. To learn more, please call 877-Tibet-Aid or visit our Web site, www.TibetAid.org.

Help Homeless Women and Children by donating personal care items—toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, hairbrushes, combs—to the Women's Daytime Drop-in Center in Berkeley. Volunteers are also needed. For more information, call 510/548-6933.

Extraordinary Opportunity! Volunteers needed for Universal Education School in India. Buddhist school (children ages 5–15) in Sarnath and Bodhgaya seeks volunteer English teachers, editors for publications, drama teachers, environmentalists, and any skills you have to offer. Must be self-supporting although we will help you find lodging. One-month minimum. Interested? Contact Diana Winston at BPF: 510/655-6169.

Help Ven. Suhita Dharma, social worker and Buddhist monk, to create a community meditation and empowerment center in Mt. Vernon, New York. Those served will include youth at risk, people with HIV, and prisoners. Checks payable to "Mettavihara Monastic Community" can be sent to Ven. Suhita Dharma, Desert Zen Center, 10989 Buena Vista Rd., Lucerne, CA 92356-8313. E-mail: <kalibhante@yahoo.com>.

Seeking Sponsorship for Ngawang Chime, a shy, kind, solitary Tibetan nun living in Sarnath, India, as a refugee. Any ongoing or one-time donations would be most gratefully received. For details, contact <janemashedder@hotmail.com>, please cc to <yogijiva@yahoo.com>.

Prison Dharma Network (PDN) needs your donations of dollars and used dharma books (please, no magazines!) to continue making the dharma available to prisoners. If you are interested in forming local or regional chapters to facilitate contemplative prison ministry, contact: PDN, P.O. Box 4623, Boulder, CO 80306-4623, 303/544-5923, e-mail: <pdn@indra.com>.

BPF Chapters & Affiliates

See our Web site (www.bpf.org) for the most current version of this list, with e-mail addresses and Web sites.

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510/540-5296

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