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Cultivating Compassionate Action

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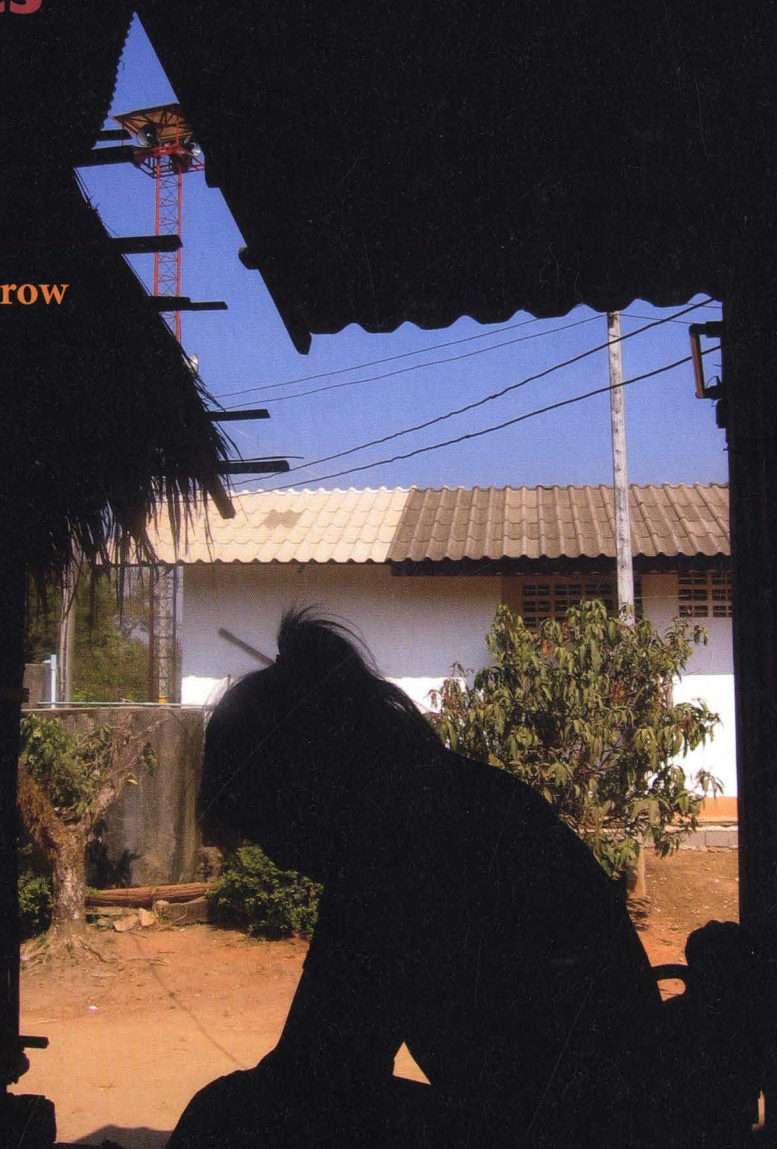

A Father Learns Compassion from His Baby Bodhisattva

A Santa Cruz Buddhist Reconciles the Politics of Red, Blue, & Basketball

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TURNING WHEEL

Cultivating Compassionate Action

Published by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Dear Friends:

For over thirty years *Turning Wheel* magazine has been bearing witness to the suffering in the world—and searching for the appropriate response, where wisdom meets compassion. Our pages are filled with penetrating analysis of world issues, heart-felt stories, resonant poetry, visually stunning art and photography.

There are many magazines and journals exploring Buddhism and Buddhist teachings, but *Turning Wheel* is the *only* journal devoted exclusively to **bringing a Buddhist perspective to the events of the world**. Exploring the world through the lens of interconnectedness, *Turning Wheel* studies the way peace begins with inner awakening and ripples out in ever expanding circles to family, community, the world, and back again.

In the spirit of that generosity, we offer you this issue of *Turning Wheel*. We hope you enjoy our magazine, and pass it around to all your friends, but most of all we would like to invite you to subscribe to *Turning Wheel* by becoming a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Our membership runs on a sliding scale, but with a minimum donation of only $30.00 you will receive a year's subscription to *Turning Wheel*. Simply fill out the form below and mail it back in the envelope provided. Advertising space is also available. For more information send an e-mail to turningwheel@bpf.org.

We do hope you'll join us as we work together for peace and justice from the perspective of interconnectedness.

In peace and with many bows,

Everett Wilson
Editor, Turning Wheel

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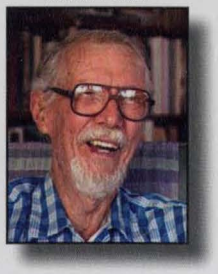
A Symposium for
Western Socially Engaged Buddhism

Robert Aitken



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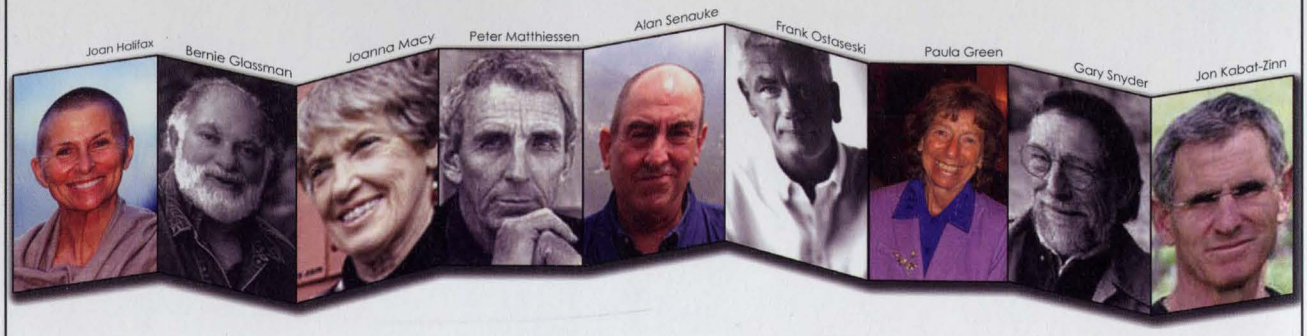

www.zenpeacemakers.org/symposium

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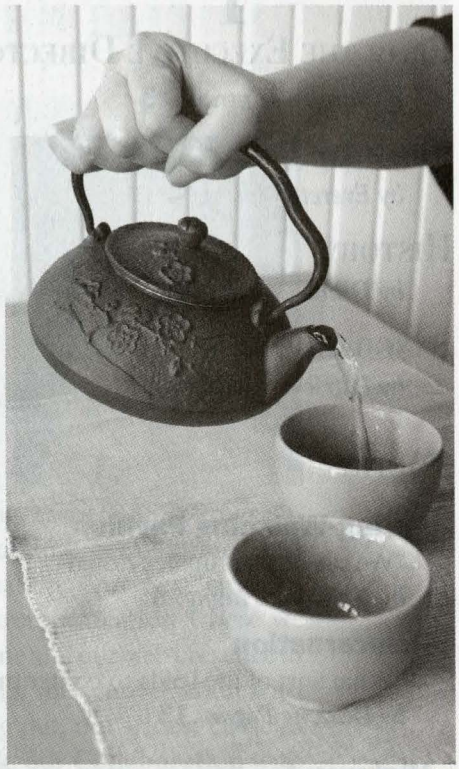

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Cultivating Compassionate Action

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Turning Wheel is published by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF). Founded in 1978, BPF brings a Buddhist perspective to the peace movement and brings the peace movement to the Buddhist community. Turning Wheel explores how Buddhist wisdom and compassion are cultivated into action. Wisdom is compassionate. Compassion leads to action. The Wheel keeps Turning. Subscriptions are available with membership to BPF. Single copies of Turning Wheel are available for $7.00 postpaid. To purchase copies or for membership/subscription information please write to:

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Walking, We Listen

by Sarah Weintraub

This is what we do. We observe carefully the causes and conditions of the world and of ourselves within it. We cannot know everything, but we can know what we know. And then we set out walking. Wisdom is one of our legs; Compassion, the other. This walking is our Action. We set out walking. We put one foot—Understanding—in front of the other—Wanting to Help. And then the next and the next. And while we are walking, our ears are open. As the Zapatista proverb goes: "Walking we listen." While we are walking we don't shut off; we don't put our noses to the grindstone and settle into walking–walking–walking without looking up. All the way along this path, we are listening; we are listening for what is next, for where to turn, for how to respond, for how to correct ourselves, for how to care for ourselves.

We are not standing there only listening, not taking a step until we know. We'll never completely know. The impact of our actions is boundless and unknowable. But we can know as much as we know. We can take the best and most careful information we have at the time and make our best guess. We move forward, and moving forward, we remain willing and alert, listening.

To me, this is Buddhism. This is practice. This is activism. This—to respond appropriately to the constantly changing causes and conditions of ourselves in the world. To make our best guess with the information that we have at the time. To move and to listen at the same time.

Here at BPF, we don't know everything, but we know something, and we are moving forward. With our legs of Wisdom and Compassion, we move forward into this walking, this Action. We look at the world around us—at the history of this organization. We feel the interests and strengths of all of us—the staff, the board, and you, our members—and we see the many situations of war, injustice, and suffering in the world. As we listen, as we look, we are also moving forward.

And this motion ripples out in three ever-expanding circles of action.

At the heart of our work is you, the **BPF Community**—our members, our Chapters, and our reincarnated Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE) Program. This circle is about building communities and networks of transformation. Our next circle of engagement is **BPF Communication** where we make use of this magazine and our web presence to bring Buddhist teachings into conversation with our lives. Reverberating out, our widest circle of engagement is our work, our **Collaboration** with other organizations—working together for peace and justice, adding our energy and perspective to the struggles of our time. These three circles of engagement continually reverberate with each other—like a pebble dropped in a pond, the circles radiate out and back in again, mutually informing our Buddhist practice and our activist practice, which cannot be separated.

Buddhist teachings and practice strengthen and ground our work for peace, while our peace work brightens and makes more relevant our Buddhist practice. I have lived this. Activism and burnout were my dharma gates, my entry into Buddhist practice. Now I have this joyful opportunity to embody this understanding in the context of this organization. While I have the public role of expressing the inseparability of practice and action, we all have that responsibility, and the exquisite gift of that opportunity. In your own life you too work to bring your practice and your action into conversation with each other. I hope that BPF will be a useful vehicle, and that *Turning Wheel* will be a useful tool in your exploration.❖

Hearing the Cries of the World

by Everett Wilson

It's been a turbulent couple of years in the world. The stories behind the turbulence are as old as humanity—divisiveness, war, economic collapse. It's also been a turbulent couple of years at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. We've been forced to face economic reality—expenses cannot outweigh income for long if the organization is going to survive. A non-profit corporation is still a corporation, and must face the same economic realities of all the other corporations. And so it is that our magazine has had to face hard economic decisions, and so it is that we've found our place to grow. This is also an exciting time for all of us at BPF.

But BPF is different from more traditional corporations. Our income doesn't come from selling a product or service; it comes from donations, gifts freely given—*dana*, in Buddhist terminology. Without a need there is no gift, without a giver no one to receive. In the true gift economy, an economy that has almost disappeared in our contemporary civilization, a gift cannot be truly received until it is passed along, passed around again and again until no one can see where it came from or where it went. To borrow a line from one of my favorite poets, Ho Xuan Huong, a Vietnamese poet from the eighteenth century:

Love's vast sea cannot be emptied
And springs of grace flow easily everywhere.

So what is the gift I want to give to you, our readers? Writing. Art. Photography. The cries of all the suffering in the world, and the beauty and joy inside that suffering waiting to be released. Cries that are poetry, not because they're "poetic," but because they are truly felt, truly lived.

Since I joined the BPF staff, I've been wrestling with the question, what exactly is "socially engaged Buddhism"? Sifting through the pages of *Turning Wheel's* decades, I've come to recognize that there isn't a single answer to that question.

Buddhism becomes socially engaged in this issue:

- when a father discovers that he has much to learn from his three-year-old son about wisdom and compassion
- when a Buddhist visits the neighbors on his street, seeking to both offer and receive some comfort after two cars have sped down the block exchanging gunfire
- when an American Zen priest leaves a Japanese monastery to take a pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- when a journalist on assignment repeats over and over that she must remain conscious as a way of coping with her own desapir documenting the suffering of everyday people in a foreign land
- or when a young attorney defending the detainees in Guantánamo Bay discovers that our "enemies" are people like us, with families and friends

These are some of the stories we present in this issue of *Turning Wheel:* stories that I feel wake me up to the suffering in the world by fully embodying that suffering, and in this way offer the possibility of healing.

This is what I want to share with you, and in turn, I invite you to take up this gift through the deep intimacy of reading. In this way, you help complete the circle, the gift offered to you, whoever you are, reading these words, these thoughts, on these pages—aren't they spoken by your innermost voice?❖

Spring-Watching Pavilion

A gentle spring evening arrives
airily, unclouded by worldly dust.

Three times the bell tolls echoes like a wave.
We see heaven upside-down in sad puddles.

Love's vast sea cannot be emptied.
And springs of grace flow easily everywhere.

Where is nirvana?
Nirvana is here, nine times out of ten.

—Ho Xuan Huong
translated by John Balaban

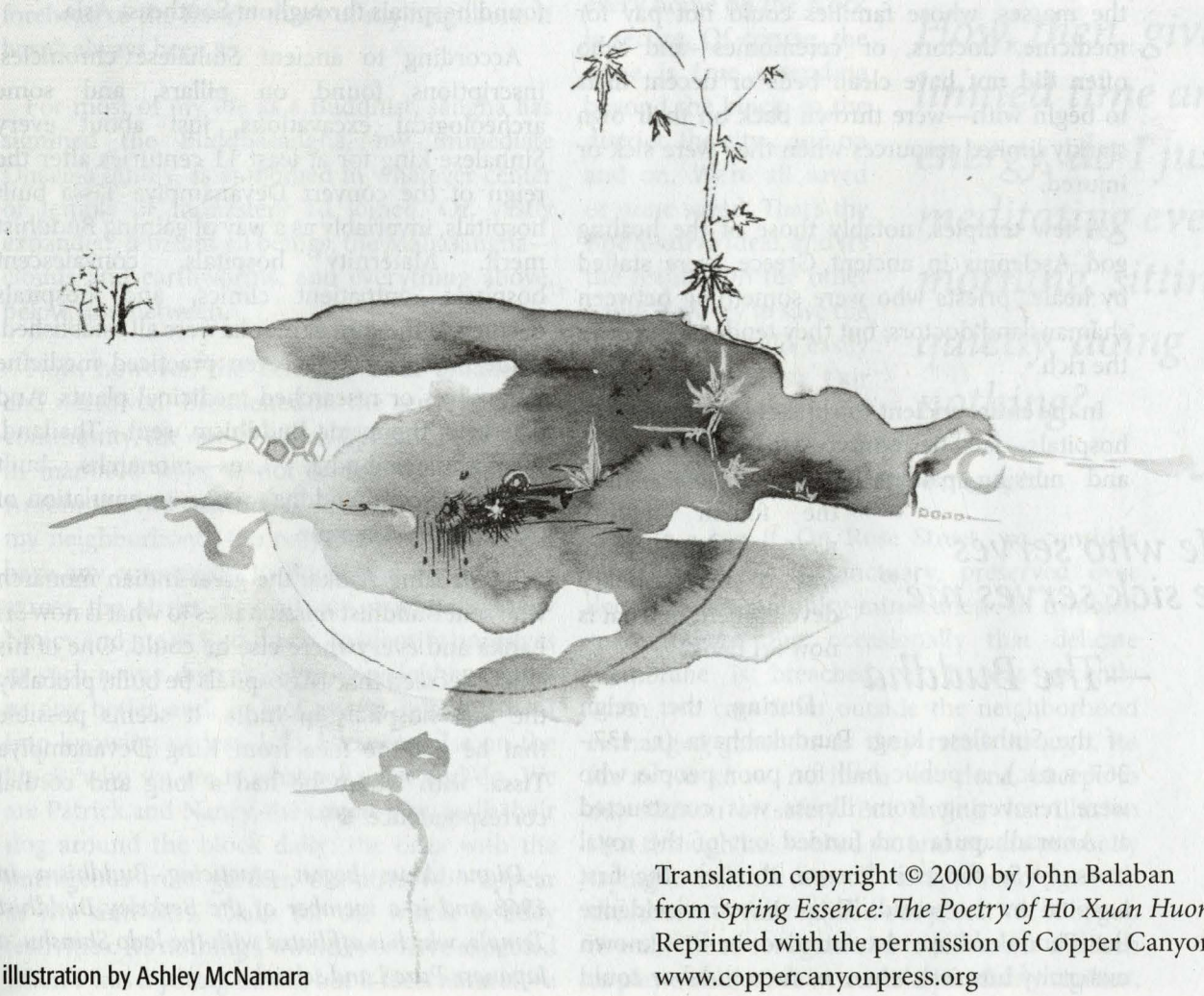


illustration by Ashley McNamara

Ancient Health Care Reform: Buddhism and the World's First Hospitals

by Diane Patenaude Ames

In early civilizations, members of the elite who fell ill were cared for at home. Servants were assigned to nurse them, physicians were hired, and medicines purchased. Usually priests were paid to perform some healing ceremony, as well. But the masses, whose families could not pay for medicine, doctors, or ceremonies—and who often did not have clean beds or decent diets to begin with—were thrown back on their own starkly limited resources when they were sick or injured.

A few temples, notably those of the healing god Asclepius in ancient Greece, were staffed by healer priests who were something between shamans and doctors; but they tended to cater to the rich.

In the entire ancient world there is no record of hospitals—facilities entirely dedicated to healing and nursing patients back to health—until the fourth century B.C.E., when there was a revolutionary development in what is now Sri Lanka.

"He who serves the sick serves me."

—The Buddha

During the reign of the Sinhalese king, Pandukabhaya (r. 437–367 B.C.E.), a public hall for poor people who were recovering from illness was constructed at Anuradhapura and funded out of the royal treasury. So far as is known, this was the first hospital in the world. There is some evidence that Pandukabhaya also founded the first known maternity hospital, where women in labor could get trained assistance. It would seem, then, that hospitals were an established feature of Sinhalese culture and governance when Mahinda, a missionary monk said to be a son of the great Buddhist king Asoka, brought Buddhism from India to the island by converting Pandukabhaya's grandson, King Devanampiya Tissa (r. 307–267 B.C.E.). The new religion gave fresh impetus to the construction of hospitals by making their establishment a source of great Buddhist merit for kings, and it also inspired Buddhist kings to found hospitals throughout Southeast Asia.

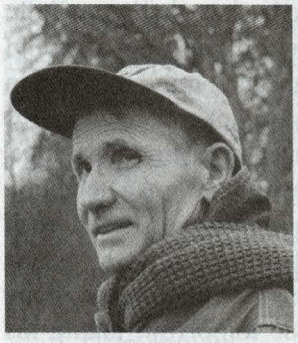
According to ancient Sinhalese chronicles, inscriptions found on pillars, and some archeological excavations, just about every Sinhalese king for at least 11 centuries after the reign of the convert Devanampiya Tissa built hospitals, invariably as a way of gaining Buddhist merit. Maternity hospitals, convalescent hospitals, outpatient clinics, and hospitals devoted to the care of monks were all established. Some Sinhalese kings even practiced medicine themselves or researched medicinal plants. And wherever Theravada Buddhism went—Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, Laos—monarchs built hospitals in the Buddha's name, in emulation of the Sinhalese example.

As for King Asoka, the great Indian monarch who sent Buddhist missionaries to what is now Sri Lanka and everywhere else he could, One of his edicts decreed that 18 hospitals be built, probably the first hospitals in India. It seems possible that he got the idea from King Devanampiya Tissa, with whom he had a long and cordial correspondence. ❖

Diane Ames began practicing Buddhism in 1968 and is a member of the Berkeley Buddhist Temple, which is affiliated with the Jodo Shinshu, a Japanese Pure Land school.

To Whom Do I Bow? Finding Sangha in the Neighborhood

by Patrick McMahon



For the last few years, following my morning meditation, I've made it my practice to offer three bows, taking refuge in the Triple Treasure: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. When I reach the bottom of my final bow to sangha and touch my forehead to the floor, I think of my neighbors. It hasn't always been so.

For most of my life as a Buddhist, sangha has signified the Buddhasangha, my immediate Dharma family, as embodied in whatever center or temple or monastery I'd joined. Or, vastly expanded, it meant all beings, the Mahasangha—clouds and earthworms, and everything above, below, and between.

Now, however, the field has both broadened and narrowed. Broadened in the sense that my community, the one in which I practice daily and in manifold ways, is not limited to Buddhists. Among the two hundred or so souls who populate my neighborhood, the only people I know that have any connection to Buddhism is the family across the street. Few of my neighbors know Nancy and me as Buddhists. To identify ourselves in such a way doesn't help our neighbors know us any better and, in fact, might mislead them into knowing us less. Like everyone else on the block, who we are is what we show and do. We are Patrick and Nancy, the couple who walk their dog around the block daily; the ones with the outrageous front garden; the ones who appear as Mr. and Mrs. Claus for the winter holiday festivities. It's nothing I would ever have expected when I was a young monk, but it feels natural—a widening out, rather than going deep.

The field has narrowed in the sense that, of the innumerable beings in the ten directions, the ones to whom I give the closest and most consistent attention live around me. In my part of town, bordering on an area with one of the highest homicide rates in the nation, to attend to the folks around me is not just a nice neighborly thing to do, it's a necessity, even a matter of life and death. It's clear that none of our homes can be safe unless every home on the block is secure. Of course, the same is true extending beyond the block, to the district, the city...and on and on. We're all saved or none saved. That's the Bodhisattva ideal, and it's the reality. On the other hand, if we try to save the big *We*, we could easily forget the small *we*. Our tiny slice of the universe, this neighborhood, is manageable, if anything can be managed.

How, then, given limited time and energy, do I justify meditating every morning, sitting quietly, doing nothing?

That's a big *If*. On Rose Street, we consider ourselves to be a sanctuary, preserved over decades of community-mindedness, in troubled surroundings. But occasionally that delicate membrane is breached, as it was recently when two cars from outside the neighborhood exchanged gunshots as they raced through. As far as we know, no harm was done, except to our illusion of safety. But having that illusion shot through has rocked us, and we are presently trying to balance fear of our surroundings with the resolve to fully inhabit our place. We've begun to walk the street again and to allow our children to play outside, but we remain justifiably vigilant,

protecting ourselves against other cars racing down the street, other bullets. Things are calming down; life is resuming, and we are once again inhabiting the neighborhood we know and love.

To *really* inhabit it means far more than watching out for ourselves, although that's a great deal. From planting daffodils in our little park, to putting up holiday lights, to serving on the board of directors of our community association; each bit adds up, palpably, to a convivial result. Convivial: living together (staying alive together, as it seems for the moment). Small as our world appears, everything is here. With funding for the prisons shrinking, many inmates are being released onto streets nearby, without a way back into society. Crime tends to become their vocation. Our local schools, the other end of the prison spectrum, are just as underfunded and unconsidered. The economy's downturn is becoming visible in foreclosures. The city's services have been cut, including the park department's personnel, and we see trees planted last year suffering from lack of maintenance, proper staking, pruning. Our urban trees are going surely as the rain forests. My tasks as a good neighbor appear boundless. How, then, given limited time and energy, do I justify meditating every morning, sitting quietly, doing nothing?

If the heart dies, we don't survive; or if we do, it's just survival, and not the communal life we all want.

To answer the question, I go back to that moment in my meditation hut, taking refuge in the sangha, when I think of my neighbors. I might call to mind this person or that person, but the treasure is not contained in this or that. It's in neighborliness itself that I find the refuge. That obnoxious person I'd rather not have as a neighbor, she's still a neighbor; we have things to teach each other. That gentleman next door who brought Nancy and me a sweet potato pie when we first moved in, he may put his house up for sale tomorrow, taking his pies with him. But his hospitality will remain. It's this hospitality that is the heart of the village, the town or city, the nation state. If the heart dies, we don't survive; or if we do, it's just survival, and not the communal life we all want. That step away from the particulars is

why, in the morning, before I begin my daily affairs, I meditate; why I bow to my neighbors.

These are not neighbors in the abstract. I know most of them at least by face, many of them by name. I know what some do for a living—the shade tree auto mechanic, the software engineer, the landscaper, the principal of the local middle school. I'm aware who is divorced, who is engaged, how the children are growing, who is sick, who's dying, who's thriving, who's dealing. I know who attends crime prevention meetings, supports the local schools, gets involved with parolees, plants daffodils in the neighborhood park, brings pies to new neighbors, publishes the newsletter. I feel lucky to know my neighbors as well as I do. But what do I really know? As I bow, to whom do I bow? Questions are better than answers. Matsuo Basho, the 17th century Japanese haiku poet, asked it:

Deep autumn—
my neighbor,
how does he live, I wonder?

Being a good neighbor, being a good planetary citizen, perhaps begins and ends with wonder, with not making up one's mind who is a neighbor, who not. The drivers speeding down the street spraying bullets, who are they? To what neighborhood do they return home? Where is the boundary between my neighborhood and theirs? Who is not my neighbor? Neighbor, wherever you are, I wonder how you live? ❖

I might call to mind this person or that person, but the treasure is not contained in this or that. It's in neighborliness itself that I find the refuge.

Patrick McMahon practices with the Northern California Back Yard Zendo. He chairs the board of directors of his neighborhood association and writes for its newsletter. In the 1980's he was the office manager of BPF and was instrumental in converting the No Need To Kill *newsletter of the East Bay chapter of BPF into* Turning Wheel.

Yasodhara and Siddhartha
The Enlightenment of Buddha's Wife

by Jacqueline Kramer

Over 2,500 years ago, in a kingdom nestled in a fruitful region fed by the Ganges River, there lived a king by the name of Suppabuddha and his Queen Pamita. Good news had come to them. The Queen was pregnant!

At the same time, in the nearby kingdom of Kapila, the king's younger brother, King Suddhodana, was also expecting a child. These were not to be ordinary children. Auspicious signs pointed to this being their last round of birth and death, and they both had the signs of either being great secular or great religious leaders. Because of this it was proclaimed that both children were to be sons. But this was not to be the case with King Suppabuddha's child, who was born a female. Disappointed that his child was a girl but honored at her auspicious signs, the king bowed before her. Her name was Yasodhara. A week after her birth her mother died, and the child was schooled and raised by the court tutors and Brahmins.

***

photo by Ciara Karagianni

Thus begins the female enlightenment story of Yasodhara, wife of Siddhartha. For over 30 years as a practicing Buddhist I searched for a mythical role model of a deeply spiritual Buddhist laywoman, only to discover that she was right before me, hidden in plain sight. None of the stories I had read or heard about the Buddha's life said much about Yasodhara, except that she gave birth to his son, Rahula, that Siddhartha left her to seek enlightenment, and that she urged her son to get his inheritance from his father. This led me to believe that Yasodhara was an insignificant pebble Siddhartha tripped over on his path to enlightenment.

My interest in finding female Buddhist role models quickened when I began teaching Buddhism to mothers. Whenever I shared the Buddha's story, no matter how I spun the tale, my students did not feel comfortable when I arrived at the part where Siddhartha leaves his wife and sleeping child to venture beyond the palace gates seeking the end of suffering. They couldn't bring themselves to tell this part of the story to their children. I explained to my students that, "This was a different time and place. These things were not unusual then. Siddhartha did, after all, leave Yasodhara in the care of his father and a court that would see to all of her needs. It wasn't as if he was leaving her without rent money or health insurance."

I continued trying to convince myself as well as my students.

"It's only a teaching myth; we mustn't take it literally...."

"Siddhartha's leaving speaks to the need to let go of all our attachments, all we know, in order to seek the unknown...."

Still no sale. Not for my students. Not for me. The idea of a man leaving his wife and child was just too painful.

***

Yasodhara grew up to be a beautiful, generous, and loving young woman. She questioned why her servants did not eat the same food as the members of the palace. It never seemed fair to her that some had so much while others suffered with so little. When she turned 16 she heard that her cousin Siddhartha was preparing to pick

a bride. All the eligible girls from miles around ventured to Kapila to meet this handsome, intelligent young man. Yasodhara had heard of Siddhartha from her brother Devadatta. Devadatta told a story about how he had shot down a swan in flight. Siddhartha revived the bird and claimed it as his own.

"The bird belongs to the one who saves his life, not the one who takes it," Siddhartha explained.

When Yasodhara heard this story, she very much wanted to meet this compassionate young man who questioned his culture's values, the prize of the hunt.

Like all the other eligible girls, Yasodhara took the trip to her cousin's palace. When she walked into the room where Siddhartha was greeting the young women, his eyes met hers, and Siddhartha felt a deep stirring. He knew he had loved her over many lifetimes. They both felt this ancient recognition and fell deeply in love. Siddhartha got down on one knee and offered Yasodhara his ornament, asking her to be his bride. Yasodhara came back home and told her father the good news. A look of concern for his beloved daughter crossed King Suppabuddha's face.

He leaned close to her.

"You know, dear daughter, the signs are that Siddhartha will go off and leave his family to pursue enlightenment."

"Yes father, I know this," Yasodhara replied, "but I will have none other than Siddhartha for my husband. We have been promised to one another over many lifetimes. This is to be our last and we are to do it together."

***

Before I was prompted by the vision of Yasodhara as a fully feminine, fully empowered woman, I searched for female lay Buddhists who found their enlightenment while washing dishes and rocking babies. Most of the female enlightenment stories were of women who had lost their families, left their families, or entered the path when their children were grown. Although there were a few exceptions such as Dipa Ma and Machig Labdrön, I still felt I had not found what I was looking for. I wanted to watch her fold her laundry and nurse her baby in deep mindfulness and emptiness. When I shared this concern with my friend Ayya Tathaaloka, she said, "What about the story of Yasodhara, the Buddha's wife?" I sat wide-eyed and incredulous as she related details of Yasodhara's story I had never heard before. The jewel chest was open, and the jewels poured out.

I had only heard Yasodhara portrayed as an appendix to Siddhartha's story at best and an impediment to his enlightenment at worst, yet here was Ayya sharing long-forgotten pieces of this magnificent story depicting Yasodhara as a powerful, deeply spiritual woman, an astrological equal to Siddhartha. When asked, Ayya told me that the pieces of the story were gathered from ancient texts such as the Pali Vinaya, the Mulasarvastivada, the Lokottaravada, the Dharmaguptaka, and the Mahisasaka Vinaya. Which pieces came from which source is a tale yet to be told. I also found pieces of the Yasodhara story in the work of the Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya who had expressed a keen interest in creating a more accurate telling of the Buddha's story. To that end he left me with pieces of the Buddha's story to illustrate and eventually make into a children's book. At the time it never occurred to me that, years later, Bante's writing would shed light on Yasodhara's story.

***

Yasodhara was not passively given to Siddhartha, she chose to be with him, and he chose to be with her. Not once, but twice, Siddhartha knelt before her asking if she would be his wife. Even though Yasodhara knew that Siddhartha would someday leave, even though everyone told her that the four heavenly messengers would call him away from palace life, she was not deterred from intermingling her destiny with his. Was there even a choice?

I had only heard Yasodhara portrayed as an appendix to Siddhartha's story at best and an impediment to his enlightenment at worst...

The two deeply spiritual and compassionate beings had helped and supported one another over many lifetimes. Their compassion showed in their shared concern about inequalities in their culture and their shared dream of abolishing the caste system. Siddhartha not only honored and respected Yasodhara, he felt great joy in her presence. They played and laughed and made love and shared dreams of a better world for 13 years before the birth of their son. When it came time for Siddhartha to leave the palace in pursuit of enlightenment he did not abandon a helpless wife and child, but went out to

seek the end of suffering for her, for his son, and for all sentient beings. On the brink of enlightenment herself, Yasodhara understood this. Yet, she was also a mortal woman and would miss her beloved companion.

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It didn't dawn on me how accurate my students' intuitions about the negative power of the old Yasodhara myth were until a paragraph from Sid Brown's book, *The Journey of One Buddhist Nun—Even Against the Wind,* a biography of a Thai Buddhist nun named Maechi Wabi, jumped out of the page at me. When Wabi was a little girl her father deserted her family for another woman, leaving his wife and four children in poverty without sending any money or making contact for several years. He eventually came back to them promising, upon his return, that he would, "care for the children and not leave again unless it was to go forth as a monk." Her father stayed for one year, fathered another child, and then left to become a monk. This led to a life of grueling hardship for the wife and children he left behind and a deep distrust of men in Wabi. The author goes on to say, "While one might be horrified by Wabi's father's abandonment of his family, one might recognize or even admire him following in Gautama Buddha's footsteps. Siddhartha Gautama left his wife and child to pursue a religiously significant life." Even though there are Vinaya rules stating that a man must get permission from his wife to become ordained, how is a woman, made to feel inferior since birth, going to oppose her husband's wishes? What sort of life would she face if she said, "No, I do not want you to leave us." It's not hard to see how some men could view the story of Siddhartha leaving Yasodhara as a model for how to leave the responsibilities of family life and be virtuous at the same time.

The myths a culture adopts have a pivotal role in shaping that culture. We learn about who we are, how to treat others, the planet, and ourselves from our myths.

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After Siddhartha left, Yasodhara heard that he had relinquished his fine clothing and had taken to wearing simple yellow robes. She too donned simple yellow robes and gave up wearing jewels. When she heard that he was taking only one meal a day, she also took only one meal a day. When she heard he slept on low, hard beds, she gave up the luxurious palace beds and slept as he did. And when she heard he had given up garlands and perfumes she did so as well. As Siddhartha pursued enlightenment outside the palace gates, Yasodhara joined him on the path within hearth and home. This was, after all, to be her last round of birth and death as well. She was a laywoman raising her son, but that did not change her auspicious destiny. Staying home did not mean she could not join her beloved husband on his journey towards enlightenment. Although they each played different roles in the enlightenment story, he seeking enlightenment outside the palace while she stayed within, their intent and focus remained in alignment.

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The myths a culture adopts have a pivotal role in shaping that culture. We learn about who we are, how to treat others, the planet, and ourselves from our myths. They are the wombs in which the seeds of our ethical systems grow. We do not know definitively how Siddhartha and Yasodhara's lives unfolded. The telling of their stories is not history, it lives in the realm of myths designed to teach Buddhist principles. As we import Buddhism to the West, we need to carefully examine which myths we are adopting.

It is remarkable how little is known about the story of Yasodhara in the West, how many details have been dropped along the way. We have subsisted on a diet of predigested tales from cultures that are often less than female-friendly, yet shards of light from other more ancient visions, closer to the bone visions, are there to be mined.

I was led to believe that Yasodhara was incidental to the story of the Buddha's enlightenment at best, and a bitter deterrent at worst. But this was just one telling of the tale, and not necessarily the most credible one. Would a compassionate couple, both on the brink of full enlightenment, desert and resent one another? It turns out that the ancient story of Siddhartha and Yasodhara is more subtle and textural than that. When some of the details are put back in place, the story offers us a role model of feminine enlightenment and of enlightened relationship—co-conspirators, plotting to ease the suffering of the world.

Each symbol in the story of the Buddha's life has been carefully chosen; the four heavenly messengers,

the awakening under the rose apple tree and the Buddha's bowl swimming upstream on the day of his enlightenment. As a more female-friendly culture we can invite the details of Yasodhara's story back into the story of the Buddha's life. Including Yasodhara's story can offer us a view of two different paths leading to the same place, *parinibbanna*. It is important for the future of Buddhism in the West that we pass along models of the enlightened feminine for both our sons and our daughters. We are fortunate that the story of Siddhartha and Yasodhara does this with grace and beauty.

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Although her father and father-in-law asked Yasodhara to stay at the palace and rule the two kingdoms, she was drawn to fulfill her spiritual destiny. She entered the order of nuns at the same time as Mahapajapati Gotami. Rahula joined the order of monks as well. Among the hundreds of Bhikkhuni Arahants, Yasodhara was one of the Buddha's 13 great Bhikkhuni disciples. She attained supernormal powers and was able to recall infinite eras of the past. One night Yasodhara came to the Buddha and said, "Tonight I am going to die." She came to thank him for showing her the path. She told the man who was once her husband and had become her teacher, "I am my own refuge." Then she preceded her husband into the deathless realm.

Thus I have heard. ❖

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Reincarnation

by Darlene Pagán

As the rain pings at the window where
I sit hovered over a notebook, I know
there is no chance I ever lived as royalty.

No Queen or Empress, no Duchess or Lady,
not even a distant Cherokee Princess on
my mother's side. What sort of life leads

to contentment but one of isolation, a
fisherwoman in Greenland who called seals
by name, who longed for human company

though she itched in their presence, who died
at sea, the waves finally spinning her from
the boat into the horizon as an offering?

What real options existed besides teaching,
nursing, prostitution? And if I'm still a teacher,
what had my hands ever worked but dirt?

Born in the middle ages, I'd have burned
at the stake. At the turn of the century,
I'd have bled from needles in a sewing factory,

stitching garments my hands could never afford
to slip over my own hips, garments I stole
to sell so my daughters married better, so I

could forget I hadn't. After birthing a healthy boy
in this life, I should have burned incense for
whichever past saw me barren or beset by

daughters. On the days desire creeps like
a plague in my heart, I would like to have glimpsed
life in China where I envied girls with enough

privilege to bear foot binding. I might have
remembered the chain of hands gripping
others, letting go, breaking bread for too many

mouths for the gift of this one I press to paper
to record those pasts, to bind them with my own.

Darlene Pagán teaches writing and literature at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. Her poems are forthcoming in Hiram Poetry Review, Clackamas Literary Review, Hawaii Pacific Review, Two Review: An International Journal of Poetry and Creative Nonfiction, *and* Apple Valley Review. *Her essays have appeared in* Literal Latte *and* The Nebraska Review. *She lives in Hillsboro, Oregon, with her husband and sons, where they spend weekends hunting for worms and tromping through springs.*

The Courage for Compassion: Teachings from a Baby Bodhisattva

by John W. Ellis IV

"Gween! Twees are gween, wight? 'G' starts wif gween, wight?" my son Sahaas said, still a little wobbly with sentence construction.

"Yep! Green starts with 'g'," Shannon said. "What other words start with the letter 'g'?"

The summer of Sahaas' third birthday I drove east, thick into the Northern California redwoods, deep enough that we only saw highway, trees, and sky. A short car ride across town could inspire my son to howl and tug at his car seat, but we thought that with enough stops we could handle a four-hour car trip. We rolled along toward a spiritual camp to share a few days of fun with other families and played a word game to pass the time.

"Um, gwass. Gwass is gween, also.... Gwavel. 'G' starts wif gwavel.... And gum. Do you have any gum in you mouf, Shannon? Let me see? ... Guns. We don't wike guns, wight? Guns hurt people.... Gwapes. Dad, you like gwapes in the feezer? Dat's silly. Dad is silly, wight, Shannon? Dose gwapes are cold in my mouf."

After the road hummed Sahaas to sleep, I realized that the trip was taking longer than the official directions indicated. When we were still driving an hour after we should have arrived, my irritation grew with every mile. At the end of the six-but-they-told-me-four-hour drive, I jumped out of the car, expecting to swim through the cool, crisp mountain air. Instead, I stepped into a dry, hot oven swirling with dust and brittle leaves. My suitcase was stuffed with jeans and turtlenecks, but I was more concerned about my allergies.

I tried not to let these logistical disappointments distract me, so I engaged in making new friends. To my surprise, most people were rather nonchalant about socializing. Another failed expectation.

The first night I couldn't sleep on the slim twin cot in the cold, dry cabin. Between sneezes, I alternately pursed my lips in defiance of the weather and gulped air like a fish out of water.

To avoid feeling grumpy, sneezy, and sleepy, I concentrated on my family. But as I paid closer attention to my son and his new playmate, my tension rose again.

When we arrived, Sahaas bonded with Malphisto, (not his real name) the only other child near his age. The two spent a lot of time together, and any moment my son wasn't playing with him, Sahaas would ask: "Where's Ma-phis-o? I want to pay wif him."

But during the second day of the retreat, I saw Malphisto hit my son almost a dozen times. With his open hands. With his fists. With his toys. Whenever the little cad didn't get his way with his parents, an explosive tantrum changed the situation in his favor. I had only recently survived my own son's "terrible twos," so I guessed that Malphisto was riding the same roller coaster.

"Why can't they keep a lid on that little brat?" I asked Shannon, reserving my resentment for a conversation behind closed doors. "The world doesn't need any more men who only know how to hit somebody when things don't go their way!"

Just saying those words out loud sounded funny, and dissolved my frustration. This two-year-old showed no signs of becoming a megalomaniac with plans for world domination—he was just doing what most two-year-olds do.

But just when I started to feel a little guilty about judging Malphisto and his permissive parents, others began to mirror my incredulity.

When Malphisto the Malevolent ran unabated through an adult meditation session, bumping and banging things as he went, the adults glared

sharply at his parents.

When Malphisto the Masher whacked kids two and three times his age, their parents found other activities for their children.

And when Malphisto the Fire Fly wanted to stir a bonfire with a long, thin branch, several adults told his mother it wasn't a good idea for a two-year-old to be that close to danger, let alone poke it with a stick.

While his mother was telling us not to worry, Malphisto nearly buried his glowing-hot poker in a man's eye. The man's quick reflexes saved him from having a really bad day. The group erupted with anger and threatened to remove Malphisto from the edge of the fire—if his mother did not—for the safety of everyone. Malphisto's mother launched into a defensive monologue that started with how we didn't understand the normal stages of child development and ended with the primal human urge to capture fire. She grabbed her son and left without saying anything to the man her son almost skewered.

The next morning, our last day at the camp, I suggested to my son other fun things to do that didn't include playing with Malphisto. Sahaas pleaded so earnestly to continue playing with Malphisto, I recanted. *We only have half a day,* I thought. *Nothing too bad will happen.*

After breakfast, the two boys were playing only three yards in front of me. Malphisto grabbed a plastic toy dinosaur from my son, and when Sahaas asked him to return it, Malphisto yelled, "No!" Malphisto's eyes glazed over, and his arms and shoulders tensed.

I didn't make it in time.

I was in mid-stride when Malphisto whacked my son on the head with a T-Rex so hard that Sahaas' body bent to the right. I scooped my little one up as he drew a deep breath, and as I ran for the nearest bathroom he screamed in my ear and squeezed hot tears down my neck.

A fitting end to the weekend, I thought. *Maybe we should leave now.*

After I checked my son's head for blood and punctures, I wiped away his tears and consoled him with hugs.

"We don't have to play with Malphisto anymore," I said.

I'd had enough—the Little Hitter had gone from annoying to dangerous and wasn't getting anywhere near my boy again.

"No, Dad, no. I want to pay wif him. I'm OK," Sahaas said, still sniffling, wiping his tears. "Ma-phis-o is just a little boy. Little boys hit cause dey don't know better."

I stood there blinking…amazed.

My son recently decided that age three was the demarcation point between little boys and big boys. The adults in his life constantly encouraged him to acquire new skills (putting on his own clothes, washing his own hands) by reinforcing the notion that he was a big boy. So, here he was really being a big boy, understanding the

illustration by Sahaas A.L. Ellis

behavioral limitations of a two-year-old who just pummeled him.

But what if I continued to let my son play with Malphisto and a serious injury occurred? What if Malphisto hit my son in the eye, drew blood, or ruptured his eardrum? I contemplated. *What kind of parent would I be for not protecting my son from potential danger?*

Most of us have a limit on the grief we'll take from someone else —a Drama Meter

More than a year later, I wrestled with these questions whenever I told this story to friends. Should I have said something more to Malphisto? His mother seemed inaccessible, but maybe I should have approached his father? Could I have been a little more creative, like the other parents, in finding something else for my child to do at the camp to avoid Malphisto? Or was I just simply obsessing about my son's safety?

"We can't leave our hearts closed," Rev. Liza Rankow told me, when I told her about the incident with Malphisto. "A closed heart is unavailable to give or receive anything else. The heart that I would close to an abusive person is the same heart that I have to open to my child."

I sought other friends for advice, too.

"Your son is really giving you the opportunity to learn about fearless compassion," Mushim Ikeda-Nash said, and I felt a little bit of her family counseling expertise seep into our conversation. "Instead of still being distressed about the actions of your son's friend, realize the gift you are being given."

Mushim also pointed to a helpful passage in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* by Chogyam Trungpa:

> *Compassion contains fundamental fearlessness, fearlessness without hesitation. This fearlessness is marked by tremendous generosity. This "generous fearlessness" is the fundamental nature of compassion and transcends the animal instinct of ego. Ego would like to establish its territory, whereas compassion is completely open and welcoming. It is a gesture of generosity, which excludes no one.*

That nailed it for me.

My son was showing "generous fearlessness," an element of compassion that I wasn't ready to accept—especially in the face of danger. When adults are inconvenienced or hurt by others up to a point, we tend to discard the relationship. Most of us have a limit on the grief we'll take from someone else—a Drama Meter. On a scale of one to ten, ten being the most drama I could imagine, strangers are allowed up to a three, friends and business associates about a five. Core family and close friends get up to an eight, but nine and ten are reserved for my sweetie and children. Scores are given for cumulative experience, and once you hit your limit on my Drama Meter, you are out.

Malphisto clocked in on the Drama Meter at six and was quickly approaching ten, when I shouldn't have let him get past two. But back then my son was asking me to extend myself beyond my perceived capacity for compassion, an act that would ripple into the future and challenge my beliefs about how much grief people can give me before I kick them out of my life. How much drama are we willing to take from our neighbors before we call the cops? How much can we take from convicted criminals before we execute them? How much can we take from various countries before we bomb them, with economic sanctions or scud missiles? When we measure notions of justice, exactly where is the line between rejection spawned from anger and forgiveness born of compassion?

It was easy to think about my situation many months after the camp. But when I was wiping the snot and tears away from my son's nose after Malphisto hit him, I was hot with fury and unable to think clearly.

"Dad, I want to pay wif Ma-phis-o," Sahaas kept repeating while we were in the bathroom. "Pease?"

Exhausted and impatient, I wasn't in the best place to deal with a tiny two-year-old wrecking ball trying to demolish my son. But I realized I faced an important decision. *Is this the moment I teach my son that there is a limit to compassion?*

Do I, in my exasperation, show him how to hold a grudge? I wondered. *Or do I learn from my little baby bodhisattva that compassion is a limitless abode?*

"I want to go, OK, Dad?" Sahaas said as he started to wiggle away from me. "Ma-phis-o is just a little boy. I'm better, OK?"

I took a few deep breaths to calm down. I decided I was afraid of teaching my son a practice that I was working to shed in my own life—that certain transgressions require equal measures of withdrawal. I decided to trust Sahaas' instincts.

Shannon and I agreed that for the next few hours we would stay close to Sahaas to shield him from Malphisto's blows:

- *Four hours until departure*: I snatched Sahaas up when Malphisto tried to scratch him.
- *Three hours to go*: Shannon blocked Malphisto's attempt to push Sahaas into a swimming pool.
- *T-minus two hours*: I jumped between the two of them when Malphisto yelled, screamed, and thrashed about because his mother let my son use one of his toys.
- *60 minutes and counting*: Shannon prevented Malphisto from hammering Sahaas with a small flashlight.

Each time Malphisto attempted to clobber my son, my body flushed with heat. Each time I expected Malphisto's mother to say something. Something to her son; something to me. She said nothing. But each time Sahaas waited in my arms just outside of Malphisto's striking range, silently waiting for the little cyclone to dissipate. As soon as Malphisto's violent mood receded, my son immediately darted to his friend and resumed playing as if nothing happened.

I had already packed the car that morning, so after lunch I tried to hasten our escape. My son wanted to say goodbye to his caballero. Malphisto's mother stood near the door of their cabin, hushing us with her index finger to her lips. Malphisto, she informed us, was napping.

"Why we can't say bye-bye to Ma-phis-o?" Sahaas asked, as I pushed him along a dusty path to the car. "Why do we have to go now?"

"We can't stay until Malphisto wakes up," I said. "We have a long drive (sneeze) home, so it's time (sneeze) for us to leave," I said. "I want to get home (sneeze) before bedtime."

"Why is Ma-phis-o going naptime?" my son asked.

"Cause it's probably tiring to be so ornery," I mumbled.

"What?" Sahaas asked me. I didn't reply. "What did Daddy say?" he asked Shannon.

Shannon looked at me, smiled, and said "Papa!" with a tone that indicated my covert naughtiness had not gone unnoticed.

"We can't leave our hearts closed. ... The heart that I would close to an abusive person is the same heart that I have to open to my child."

—Rev. Liza Rankow

In his car seat, Sahaas folded his arms and scrunched up his face. "I don't wan go home!" he yelled.

"Hey, what letters (sneeze) start with the letter 'g'?" I asked him.

In the rearview mirror I saw Sahaas unfold his arms and look out the window. The camp and all its troubles quickly disappeared in a thick cloud of tan dust as we drove away. For a few moments, we all sat in silence.

"Gween!" Sahaas yelled. "Twees are gween. 'G' starts wif gween.... Gwass. Gwass is gween, too.... Gwavel.... Good.... And gum. Do you have any gum in you mouf, Shannon? Kids can't have gum, wight?... Gwapes. You like dose cold gwapes, Dad? That's silly!"

Already, my baby bodhisattva had forgiven me for separating him from his friend. ❖

John W. Ellis IV is an editorial consultant to Turning Wheel and a father to three sons—Sahaas, Ajhar and Nalin. Follow his blog, which is a little bit Buddhist and a little bit not, at www.buddhisticalish.blogspot.com.

Two Cups of Tea: Building Community through Self-Compassion

by Lea Seigen Shinraku

A poster hangs in the window of a preschool in my neighborhood, and I pass it several times each week. Across the top it reads, "How to Build Community." It lists several suggested actions, ending with: "Know that no one is silent although many are not heard. Work to change this." As a therapist, I often listen to the parts of my clients that they or others in their lives are not able to hear, including the not-silent parts that communicate through habits and unconscious actions, rather than in words. In supporting my clients to listen to their not-heard parts, I sometimes see my therapy work as internal community building.

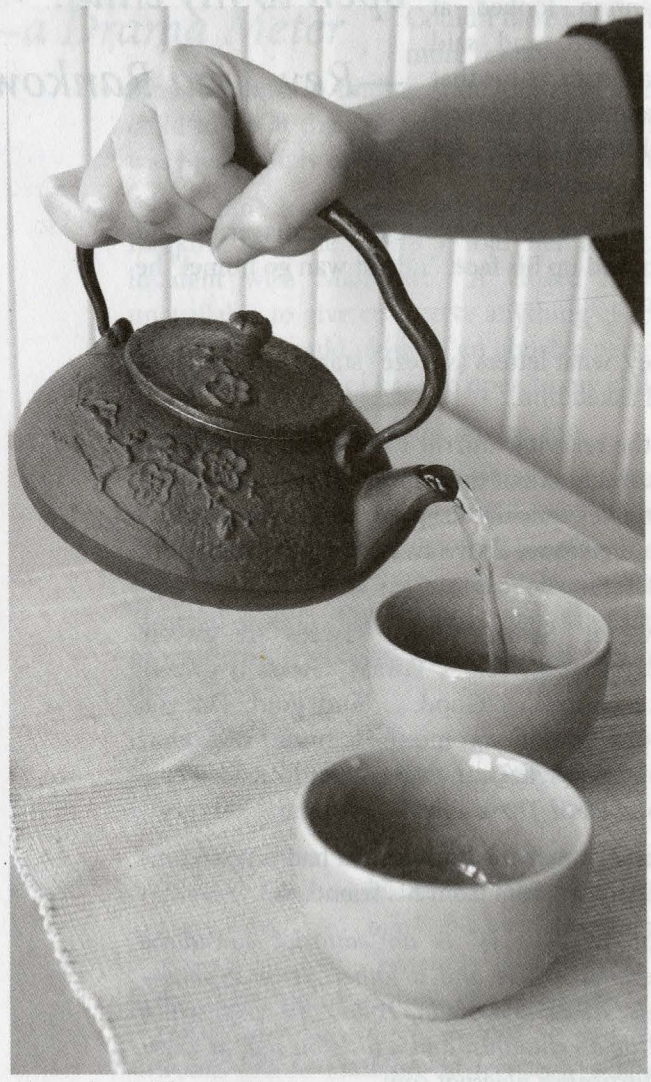


photo by Ashley McNamara

Many people, particularly those of us who work in helping professions or as activists, find it challenging to listen to the not-silent, not-heard parts of ourselves. Yet, without self-compassion—a willingness to acknowledge and abide with all parts of oneself—actions and behaviors that seem generous and wholesome can actually perpetuate unconscious cycles of internal violence and oppression. In our dedication to relieving the suffering of others and working for social justice, many of us need to be reminded to listen to ourselves and give our own not-silent, not-heard parts a place at the table.

I first began to understand the importance of self-compassion when I was living at San Francisco Zen Center. I had been practicing residentially there for nearly a year, when I began a graduate program in counseling psychology and my schedule was rigorous—sitting zazen for many hours each week, working in the kitchen preparing meals for the community, a full load of coursework, writing papers, and studying. Although I had little free time, I did not question my many commitments. My life looked the way I thought it should, and I felt fully aligned with my values: I had a dedicated and community-supported spiritual practice, and I was on a path to right livelihood that would enable me to bring that spiritual practice into the world.

I was able to actually live this life for about a month. Then, one morning just before I sat down for zazen, I realized that I was about to faint. I made my way to the side door of the meditation hall, climbed five steps, and then fell like a domino.

Moments later, I came to, and a friend helped me back to my room. I rested for a few hours, decided that I did not need to call a doctor, and prepared a pot of peppermint tea. I set the teapot on my desk next to my notebook and pen. And then I did something rather unusual: I put out two cups. I had the feeling that my fainting was a signal that a not-heard part of me was speaking without words. In the same way that I might invite a friend to tea, I invited this not-heard part to tea. I let it know that I was now receptive to what it had to communicate. I filled each cup and sat quietly.

I sipped from one cup, and I put it down. I reached for the second cup, and I took a sip. I picked up my pen and wrote. What followed was a dialogue between my everyday self and this not-heard part. Through this process, I began to listen to what I had been ignoring.

Until then, I had made little space for any feelings or needs that conflicted with my vision of how my life should look. I had been unable to see that I was compromising parts of myself in the service of an idea of rightness. In listening to this not-heard part, I discovered that ignoring any one being—including myself—for the benefit of all beings does not work. I had to acknowledge that although my intention was to act compassionately and do no harm, I was leaving myself out.

Attending to this not-heard part helped me recognize that I needed rest, spontanaeity, creativity, joy, and unstructured time if I was to sustain a life of compassionate action in my work as a therapist. I saw that I had been pushing myself too hard, unwilling to accept my limitations and reluctant to admit that I could not do everything myself. These needs were inconvenient at the time and did not fit neatly into my narrow view of how I thought my life should look, and yet, they were an undeniable part of me. In the days and weeks that followed, I found ways to open up my schedule and give myself the rest that I needed. Having tea with myself that day was a powerful experience of conscious self-compassion, and my understanding of its importance has deepened over time.

About a year later, in a class on Tibetan compassion practices, a professor told us that we could dedicate the merit of any experience—whether we perceived it as positive or negative—to the benefit of all beings. In particular, he encouraged us to celebrate our perceived shortcomings. At the end of the first day, as the class began filing out of the room, he smiled widely and shouted, "Don't forget to celebrate your inadequacies!"

This suggestion felt playful and mischievous, and I began to experiment. The next time I noticed that I was criticizing myself for not working harder, I interrupted that habit pattern and said, "May my need for spontanaeity and rest be of great benefit to many!" and then "May my not working harder be of great benefit to many!" and finally, "May my self-criticism be of great benefit to many!" It felt silly and liberating to take something that I had perceived to be a problem and open it up. I saw the practice as a way of taking refuge in not-knowing. I might sometimes criticize myself and believe that I should work harder, but was that really true? Sometimes, the harder I worked, the less I got done. Dedicating merit in this way seemed to perplex my inner critic, and I found relief and a sense of spaciousness in that.

I was introduced to a third self-compassion practice several months later, when another teacher suggested that I could offer my unique moment-by-moment experience of suffering as a kind of container for the suffering of all beings. When we first discussed this practice, I think that I actually rolled my eyes. To the skeptic in me, this did not sound like self-compassion; it sounded like an exercise in emotional masochism. In that moment, I wondered what the benefit could be in taking on the suffering of everyone else in the world, in addition to my own, at a time when I already felt overwhelmed. But, the only way I know to find out what a practice might offer is to experiment, so I decided to try it and see what happened.

"Know that no one is silent although many are not heard. Work to change this."

The next time I noticed self-critical thoughts, I took a deep breath and said to myself, "May my self-criticism contain the self-criticism of all beings." I paused, expecting to feel crushed by the emotional weight of the world's self-criticism. But, instead of feeling burdened, I felt more enlivened and expansive. The felt experience of increased energy surprised me. This practice seemed to enable me to offer my experience as a resource for all beings, and it seemed to plug me in to what felt like a latent power grid of compassion—a community that does not need to be built so much as actively recognized and heard.

I also understood that a particularly painful aspect of suffering is the storytelling we can do about what suffering means: primarily, that it isolates us from other beings. This practice, then, is an affirmation of the first noble truth—that all beings suffer. It asks us to rewrite the stories we might unconsciously believe about suffering being analagous to separateness. Instead, we can experience our often-unacknowledged connection with others in the very places where we believe we are cut off.

When I told this teacher about my interest in self-compassion, she encouraged me to explore it further. "Self-compassion is the nature of mind," she said. "You feel more energy because you are aligned with what is true." Her observations struck me in their simplicity and insight, and they have profound implications about what it is to practice self-compassion.

These practices have shown me that to engage compassionately with oneself is to acknowledge that even the most challenging experiences can be workable and nourishing if we can first find a way to acknowledge and listen to our own suffering and then understand that we can experience it as a container for the not-silent, not-heard suffering of others. In this way, we can know community in any moment, both within ourselves and with all beings. ❖

Lea Seigen Shinraku is a therapist intern at a community counseling center in San Francisco. Her interest in the power of self-compassion springs from her clinical work and more than a decade of regular writing and meditation practice. Visit her website at www.leaseigenshinraku.com

photo by Ashley McNamara

A Buddhist in Hoosier Country

Finding Harmony through Politics and Basketball

by Dane Cervine

Indiana is Hoosier country, home of a particular kind of basketball that is also a way of life, a set of values, an obsession.

Once or twice a year I travel from the West Coast with my wife to visit her family in Indiana. I come each year as a sort of cultural anthropologist—this is the running family joke—since I am a Buddhist visiting a conservative Christian state, a therapist and poet hailing from the liberal town of Santa Cruz, California, whose University mascot is a banana slug, whose city council regularly protests nuclear weapons, or the war (there always seems to be one), and whose downtown mall hosts the likes of the pink-umbrella man, who inches his way each day up and down the main street sidewalks in pink tennis shoes smiling at everyone. But I come each year eagerly, feel at home in a certain way, growing up as I did in a small conservative town in California that was very much akin to the small Indiana town of Madison in which my wife was raised. We both have a little blue and a little red in our veins, our history, our political leanings.

Last year we drove on a family vacation through southeast Indiana over rolling green hills to French Lick (home of Larry Bird, the great Celtics basketball icon) and the French Lick Springs Hotel. It is a resort rich with history, site of the Democratic national convention that nominated Franklin Delano Roosevelt for President at a time when the country was in demise, when the average working person was skirting despair. Much like today.

Sitting in the hotel lobby with my father-in-law Roger we fell into talking politics.

"I always voted Republican because my father did," he told me, "so I voted for President Bush."

He shook his head.

"That man has ruined this country. It's time for a change."

He told me he might vote Republican again, but liked this Barack Obama, the way he brings people together, and won't be sure till he's facing the little lever in the privacy of the voting booth.

Roger was first-string guard on the Navy's basketball team—serious business. His son-in-law Jim is a long-time high school basketball coach at St. Henry's in Erlanger, Kentucky, a few miles from Indiana. All three of his sons play, and the youngest one at 10 years of age just won the state AAU tournament in his age bracket. Indiana is Hoosier country, home of a particular kind of basketball that is also a way of life, a set of values, an obsession. I love the old *Hoosiers* movie, where Gene Hackman finds redemption and new life in a small town with big dreams. I love the game too, and have played in a dads' pick-up game ever since my kids were born. So it's natural that Jim and I take to the court whenever we visit with our sons and daughters. It is one place where red and blue families easily meet, sharing the teamwork of the court, the joy of competition, the camaraderie.

I am a Buddhist visiting a conservative Christian state, a therapist and poet hailing from the liberal town of Santa Cruz, California, whose University mascot is a banana slug...

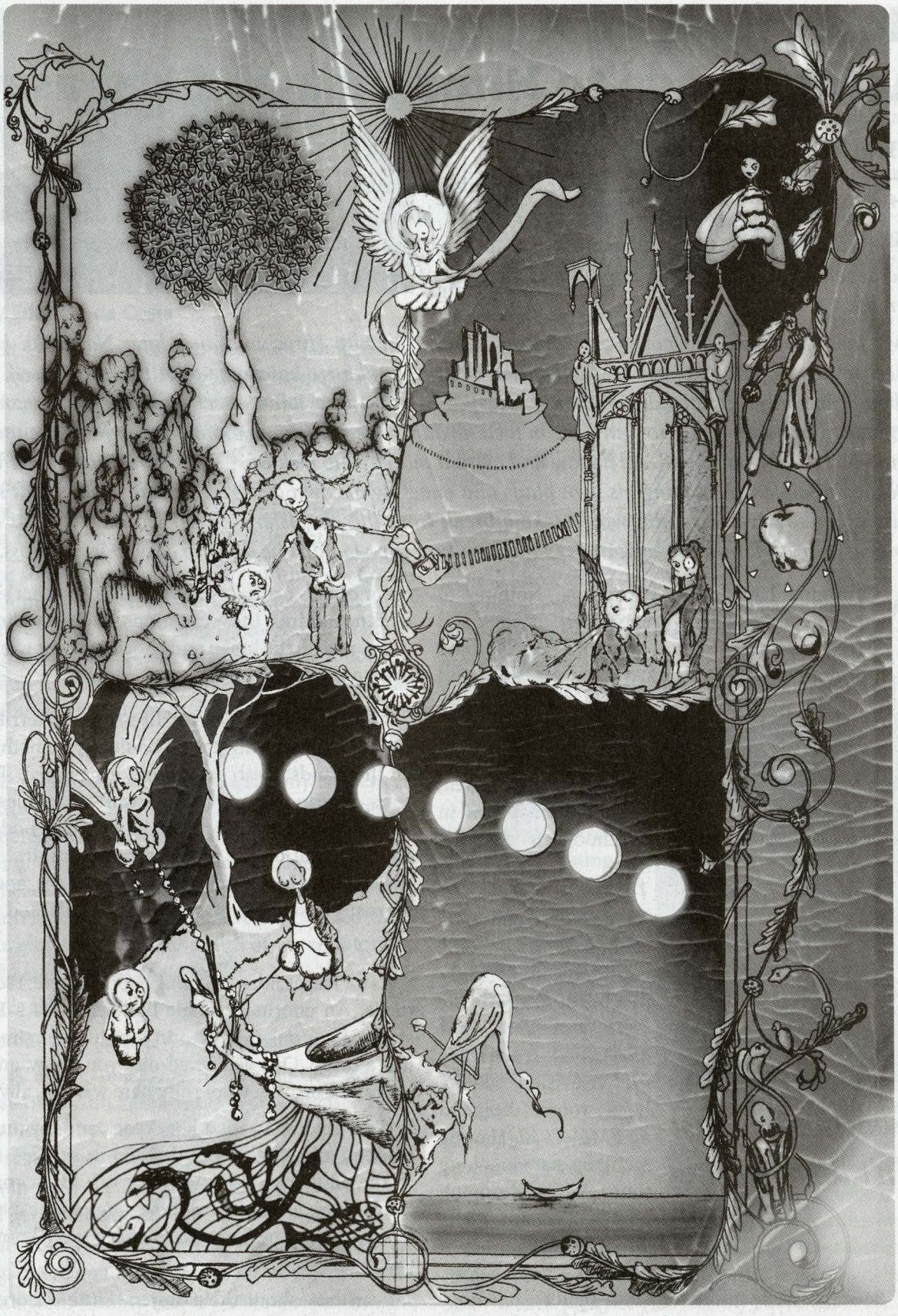
As a Buddhist, I practice the art of suchness (*tathata*), a recognition of the nature of things–as–they–are, the beauty, if you will, of the world when

seen-experienced-felt beyond the human tendency to judge everything, to approve or reject, like or dislike the unceasing phenomena of life. I'm not very good at it, but glimpses come and go. Buddhism also posits the "dependent co-origination" of opposites (*pratitva*), that things that seem polarized arise in tandem, dependent on each other for existence, much like the Taoist notion of Yin and Yang, the seed of each embedded in the other. When I visit Indiana, I think of such contrasts—how the polarized red and blue map of America turns mostly shades of purple when voters in each county are illustrated by person, rather than the Electoral College's all-or-nothing vote count. I try to bring my Buddhist eyes, my ecumenical heart, to find the ties that bind in the opposing strings lacing us together.

I try to bring my Buddhist eyes, my ecumenical heart, to find the ties that bind in the opposing strings lacing us together

This year, we return in the winter, the election over, and I sit in my father-in-law's kitchen over eggs and toast. He asks about the children, I ask about his heart, how he's faring after his fourth heart attack. He says these last years have been hard, and it's not just his heart. He confesses: "Well, I did it. Voted for Obama. Time for this country to get back on track again." He reaches down and pets his little dog Duke, opining that the furry guy seems to accept him just as he is. Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative. "It may take the rest of my life to be smart as Duke," I say. After Roger adjourns to his recliner, I close my eyes and see purple everywhere.❖

Dane Cervine's poetry and essays have appeared in a wide variety of journals, including Contrary, The Sun, The Hudson Review *and* Atlanta Review. *To review his work and books visit his website at www.DaneCervine.typepad.com Dane also serves as Chief of Children's Mental Health for Santa Cruz County in California.*



Voyage

by John Jakubowski

Notes from an A-Bomb Tour: A Pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki

by Jiryu Mark Rutschman-Byler

From the time I landed in Japan seeking initiation into the Old Buddhist world, I felt the need for a pilgrimage, a witness—dare I say even an homage—to the most horrifying and devastating of the myriad conditions that have given rise to American Zen. I understood that through a perversity of interdependence, I owe the A-bomb some measure of gratitude for the Zen practice that has given me my own life.

My Japanese Roshi did not approve of my A-bomb tour to Hiroshima and, later Nagasaki. He didn't object to an A-bomb tour per se, though he'd been an underage kamikaze pilot trainee himself, and the A-bomb not only devastated his country, but put him out of a job and set off a crisis of meaning that would lead him eventually to find Zen. In fact, he didn't even know my months away from the monastery would include the tour at all. All he saw and all that mattered to him was that another puffed-up, Western, so-called disciple was making his own plans and enacting his own agenda. He was furious that someone claiming to be devoted to him would take a break from the monastery. That I left anyway was an early moment of truth for me, a realization that the culture gap wouldn't be quite so easy to leap across.

Nothing happens in Hiroshima. Nothing to remember, *moningu supeshuru* of eggs and coffee, tears at statues' feet, and rain. Nothing much of note: the green, statued memorial an island in the urban sea, the love hotels. I'm a Zen monk after all, and don't—I swear—call any of the numbers underneath the naked women pictures plastered on the phone booths when I try to call home saying, "Listen, I've spent the day in tears but *nothing happened* in Hiroshima." Nothing of note: schoolgirls giggling, eternal flame.

I want to know how we got it in our heads that we could save the world if we just didn't do anything at all.

One considers calling. I, for one, consider calling: daisy in a burnt field. *No, no, don't even think, just dial home, just don't look up.* Television in the hotel room, *Amerika no EMU-TI-BI*. Haven't seen pop stars in a long time. We're dropping bombs again; the girl-stars seem even younger than before, the he-stars seem more violent, uglier somehow. Perhaps it's just the context—was the dead child in the mother's arms, or child in dead mother's?—MTV does not address these questions, and it's sweltering and damp and all the bread and chocolate I eat won't satiate my temple-riced intestines.

Something happened in Hiroshima so terrible that I cannot maintain my gaze. I could say something: tens of thousands, flesh and bone *evaporated*. Einstein's tears, bureaucrats move paperwork from files "active" to "inactive," geopolitics unfold, Buddha's body pulses, children wail beside mothers' melting skin… I could speak, but Hiroshima escapes me. Eggs and coffee. Tourists, businessmen, some school kids, and rain.

***

As for Nagasaki, something happens here: I see a giant turtle. An enormous turtle building with a Buddhist statue, Kannon—Mercy—on top. I forget already why it is a turtle. One gets cried-out, you know, and has to just move on. The whole city here waiting, alive.

With my oversized red backpack and my undersized black monk's clothes—*gaikokujin* in *samue*—streetcar to the adult part of town where children roam with lustful eyes. A few stares; some giggles. The city pulses. Go to where the rooms are cheap, you know. Don't watch the women.

I can't say about the children. Little children at the hypocenter. A huge black column marks ground

photo by Eduardo da Costa

zero. Next to it, a piece of wall from the bombed-out Catholic church, with a little sculpted angel perched on top. Largest cathedral in East Asia at the time—Mass was in session when the bomb… Little toddlers wearing orange caps. A pre-school must be near here. We all need to run around somewhere. Can I tell you how they play around the smooth stone monument? They kiss and waddle, fall and squeal delight.

Is there something more? Shall I pin my eyes open or have lunch—an overpriced baguette, convenience store cheese. Breath lingers in my chest, my head hurts. Sick from crying, I stop. I'm in a park, a bus rolls by. A mother and her child cut across the lawn; old woman leans against her ice-cream stand. A gentle rain begins.

***

"Good morning—welcome back," my American friend Erin whispers to me at Gendoji. Meditation is over, but breakfast is delayed. Waiting for the meal bell, we linger at the row of six *Jizo-sama* statues with their smooth heads and their monks' staffs. Saint of travelers and children; saint of hell. We have just offered them their morning bath with ladles full of water, intoning, *"Om kaka kabi samma e sowaka."*

Her eyes are damp with tears.

"The bombs are falling," I whisper back. She nods.

There is a dog outside a nearby house—we pass him sometimes, on alms rounds or exercise. He is tied in a cement patio. Sometimes his shit is next to him: he scoots as far away as his short leash allows. In meditation we sometimes hear his howls. I wonder if I should get up and go to him; or after meditation if I should slip out the little door beside the closed main temple gate and go to him. Stroke his mangy white fur, weep with him. I know that if I were a saint, I would rise from meditation, let the dog go. He would lick my face, then run into the hills—I don't know—cavort with monkeys and raccoons, live happily ever after.

Harold the Brit goes to the library and looks up cricket scores. I guess it's a real game—I don't understand it, although outside the meditation hall he once tries explaining it to me. Wickets are involved. Along with cricket, updates on our progress: nearing Baghdad.

Our abbot says, "Right hand, left hand," and sighs. Who wrote about the loneliness of a Zen Master's grief?—it's that their eyes see beings flailing in flowers. He says, for us it's just to realize the Truth. That all is one. That all is peace.

Her eyes are damp with tears.

"The bombs are falling," I whisper back. She nods.

I want to know what that will do. I want to know why I can't bring myself to slip out of the gate and go to that white mangy dog, and weep with him. I want to know how we got it in our heads that we could save the world if we just didn't do anything at all. When did we start to think that if we sat still enough, it would all stop hurting?

In meditation, the dog howls. We sit silent, eyes resting on the clay wall. I can't hear the bombs from here—a sweet potato vendor's truck sings out its looped recorded jingle. Rain pounds on the tin roof, slaps against the windows.❖

photo by Jean Miyake Downey

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"Collective Punishment" (from the 10 Plagues series) silkscreen by Erik Ruin

"We Refuse to Be Enemies"

Confronting the Impact of U.S. Foreign Policy in Palestine

by Nora Barrows-Friedman

photo by Bob May

Daoud Nassar, a tall, handsome man in his early 40s, stood on a gently sloping hillside in the southern Bethlehem area, his back to the brilliantly orange setting sun. I visited his farm, which his family now calls the "Tent of Nations," last March, when I was back in Palestine to document the seemingly interminable unraveling of people's lives under military occupation and apartheid.

Surrounded by five illegal Israeli settlement colonies perched on nearby hillsides, Daoud's land was passed down from generation to generation, and settlers have tried over and over again to encroach on the farm, using violence, intimidation, and even bribery to try to get the family to leave the area.

"But we're still here. We're staying right here," he told me as his young children played on a swing set nearby, their laughter filling the air. "It's important for my kids to grow up here. The new generation in Palestine is starting to lose their connection to the land."

In the face of so much daily violence and struggle, Daoud said that he is adamant about not giving in to the cycle of violence. But this is not a passive gesture. It is a call towards collective consciousness and active, participative support on a practical level.

"We refuse to be enemies," he stressed. "Even with the suffocation of our lives, even as U.S. policies dictate what's happening to Palestinians on the ground, we are not renouncing our rights. So, we create our own facts on the ground. We are planting thousands of fruit and nut trees. We're promoting self-sufficiency here in our little corner of Palestine. We bring hope to the people from within ourselves."

This hope—such an intimate and precious gift to protect—was what most Americans held as Barack Obama took the oath of office January 20th, 2009. I was in occupied East Jerusalem at the time, sitting on a couch in my friend's living room watching the ceremony live on Al Jazeera television.

For me and my dear friend, a Chicago-born Palestinian-American who has lived with her Jerusalem-born husband in Shuafat refugee camp for many years, Obama's assumption of the role of U.S. President signified an instant, but cautious relief. *At least the Bush years are over*, we sighed into our cups of tea. At least this new President—a Black man from working-class, single-parent roots—was talking about closing the torture camp at Guantánamo. At least he campaigned on a platform of ending the illegal U.S. occupation in Iraq, eventually. And he was a friend of the Palestinian-American intellectual icon Edward Said during his Chicago-based community organizing days.

But on the television screen, as Obama pledged to bring people of all faiths together and work toward peace, Al Jazeera's news scroll counted the dead in Gaza—a number that rose each hour as more bodies were found under the indistinguishable stacks of crushed homes and elementary schools.

"He's not talking about Gaza!" my friend's husband exclaimed, and we shook our heads in dismayed agreement.

Just a day and a half earlier, steel and chrome machines of war hovered over the ghetto prison of the Gaza strip, destroying entire city blocks with guided missiles and one-ton bombs. White phosphorus and DIME bombs blanketed civilian areas. Israeli warplanes dropped the most repulsive U.S.–made weapons onto a trapped and terrified population. The photographs, the phone calls, the eyewitness reports... A massacre unfolded once again in Palestine, and the international community stood by and did not intervene. And mere hours before

photo by Skip Schiel

Obama stood on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to defend the Constitution, U.S. drones killed 20 people in Pakistan. The day before, American missiles left 25 Afghanis dead.

I had dropped back into Palestine at the exact middle period of the three-week-long "Operation Cast Lead" attacks on Gaza, to assess and report on the ripple effects in the West Bank and inside Israel. Since the Israeli government denied all journalists access into Gaza, I would wake up early, call friends in Gaza City to make sure they had survived the night, and file reports from the West Bank and Israel during the day. In the evenings, I'd join colleagues to trade notes and sorrows. We'd monitor the southwestern horizon as it lit up with the orange glow of massive explosions, watching helplessly as the lights of deployed warplanes streaked across the winter sky like finger paint. Funerals were being held around the clock. Stories were still emerging and circulating of unspeakable horror and unimaginable accounts of survival.

Palestinians eagerly heard President Obama when he said in January 2009, "I was deeply concerned by...the substantial suffering and humanitarian needs in Gaza. Our hearts go out to Palestinian civilians who are in need of immediate food, clean water, and basic medical care, and who've faced suffocating poverty for far too long."

However, a year later, Gaza is still cloaked in ongoing suffering. The crippling collective punishment of blocking goods and aid, which began in 2007, is still in effect. Supplies of all sorts and sizes, from shoes to maxi pads to emergency medications to almonds to pens to paper to ink to sewage pipes to glass, are still banned from entering the Gaza Strip. Agricultural land and open areas are being bulldozed and rocketed by Israeli forces on a regular basis. Gaza's population, recent statistics show, is nearly 60% children. "This is a war on kids," a friend of mine in Gaza City sighed into the phone. "And they have nowhere to escape."

The euphoria of Obama's election to the Oval Office has worn off completely inside Palestine. When I returned in March 2010, basing myself once again inside the occupied West Bank, my friends and the people whom I met—taxi drivers, educators, bread makers—dismissed their earlier hopes in a new American president without hesitation. When I asked a close friend of mine to explain this sentiment, she laughed and gestured towards her living room window.

"Because of this," she replied.

On the hillside, beyond the artificial horizon of the meandering separation wall in Bethlehem, cranes and bulldozers were hard at work, building new Jewish-only settlement homes on land confiscated from Palestinians—including her family, people who still live in the refugee camp in which we sat—62 years ago.

"The Obama administration," my friend remarked, "says to the world that the settlements are an obstacle to peace. That's great to say, but nothing's changing on the ground. And the Israeli government still gets to do what it wants, and the U.S. keeps giving billions of dollars to support it. That's the real obstacle to peace."

And it is clear that the entrenched U.S. policies in the broader region have not changed either. Is this the hope and change we wanted? Or is it the entire system—endless wars, expanding empire—that is at fault? And where does that place our own responsibility, our own consciousness throughout this time of deep pain?

In my work, documenting the stories of everyday life, the trauma of so much collective, cumulative, and ongoing loss, it's easy to become consumed by cynicism and heartbreak. It is as though we are witnessing the slow-bleeding death of an entire country and its rich, ancient culture, and no one seems to notice.

Throughout this work, one mantra has remained constant within the daily task of story collecting: "Remain conscious. This suffering is happening; it is real; and we must do everything we can to stop it."

Ahmed Habib, an exiled Iraqi journalist friend of mine who has seen his country become dismantled by systematic war and devastating occupation, told me "it is important for social movements in the United States not to get complacent during Obama's reign as president. It has become clear that on every international issue, America's new president maintains a policy of violent occupation and ruthless exploitation. It is important to channel our inevitable frustrations with these racist and greedy policies into a vibrant and inclusive campaign of opposition and resistance."

The more that Israelis push Palestinians to the edge, the more that U.S. drones shatter lives in the region—masked as democracy building in action—the more people are becoming galvanized to oppose and resist, using whatever measures at hand. Protests, demonstrations, boycott campaigns, and good, old-fashioned Congressional lobbying are all "vibrant and inclusive" forms of consciousness raising. U.S.-based peace groups have repeatedly called on the Obama administration to lift the siege on Gaza and take immediate measures to stop illegal settlement colony building in the West Bank. Others have protested the continued bombings of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Yemen, vowing not to let the romanticism of President Obama's reign block the momentum of channeled outrage.

"Instead of putting so much hope for change in one man," my friend in Bethlehem said, "we need to move that hope towards ourselves. We're the only ones who can change our future."

"Remain conscious," I remind myself repeatedly. "This suffering is happening; it is real; and we must do everything we can to stop it."

Stand up for justice. Commit ourselves to solidarity. Even put our bodies on the line. From the bottomless pits of despair in our own spirits as we carve our consciousness around so many injustices and atrocities, from our own backyards to the squalors of Palestinian ghettos, we have no time to shove these stories under the rug, nor ignore the voices calling us to act.

Remain conscious. This suffering is happening; it is real; and we must do everything we can to stop it.

After that brilliant sunset in March, Daoud Nassar told me he believes that peace grows from the ground, just like the thousands of olive saplings he has planted on his family's land. "We should work together, constructively, and with great amounts of energy," he said softly. "Because the sun of justice, sooner or later, will rise here again."❖

Nora Barrows-Friedman is an award-winning freelance writer and journalist based in Oakland, California. She was the Senior Producer and co-host of Flashpoints *(KPFA/Pacifica Radio) for seven years. Nora has worked inside occupied Palestine since 2004, reporting, writing, and working with Palestinian refugee youth in digital media arts. Nora is a 2009 recipient of a Lifetime of Media Freedom Award from the Media Freedom Foundation and Project Censored and was named a "Top 20 Global Media Figure" by Pulse Media. She's also the proud mother of Ciel Phoenix, 9 years old.*

photo by Bob May

Making the "Enemy" Human
An Interview with Kristine Huskey

By Caroline Acuña

I first discovered Kristine Huskey when I read her book, Justice at Guantánamo: One Woman's Odyssey and Her Crusade for Human Rights. *It spoke to me for a number of reasons. Rather than simply offering an analysis of the human rights issues pertaining to the treatment of detainees at Guantánamo, Huskey offers a woman's perspective on what it's like to be there. Her story also spoke to me because she is a woman of color who found an unconventional path to a traditional career that then took a radical turn. At her book reading in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I was thrilled by her wisdom and experience as a human-rights activist and lawyer, and her bravery in representing Guantánamo detainees after 9/11, at a time when taking a stand for human rights was often portrayed as unpatriotic. To me, her stand required the same kind of courage shown by Barbara Lee when she became the only congressperson to vote "No" on the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists (AUMF) in the aftermath of 9/11. After the reading, I spoke with Kristine, hoping to gain some deeper understanding of both her journey, and how her meetings with the so-called "enemy" changed her perspective on life and spirituality.*

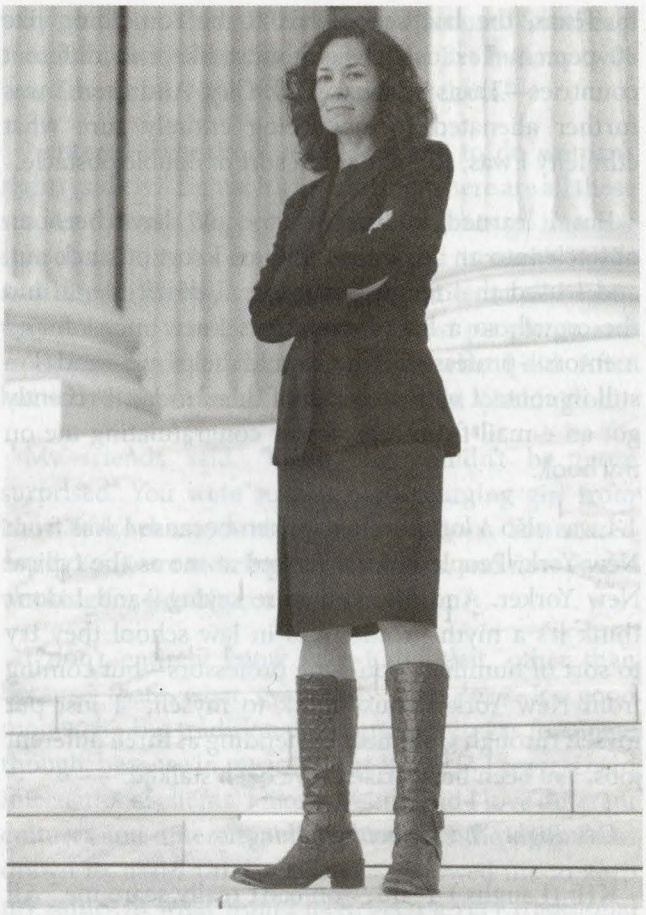
Caroline Acuña: *What prompted you or moved you to write your current book?*

Kristine Huskey: The book, essentially, is in two parts. The first is the story of my unconventional journey, being quite young and living in Africa, being adventurous and reckless in New York, and finally discovering what my passion is, what career I wanted for myself. The second part of the book is all about Guantánamo, and the human side of it. What motivated me to write it are those two pieces.

In the first piece, I became interested in how law students make choices about their next step. I noticed that a lot of law students were drawn to me because they knew about my unconventional past. I didn't go straight through school, and I did some crazy things, and then I worked in a big law firm and still somehow managed to do very controversial international human rights work. I started to see a lot of law students asking me about that. "How did you do it?" I think students were motivated by my story because a lot of lawyers have a very traditional story: "I went to the greatest high school, then I went to the greatest college, then I went to the greatest law school, and then I went on to be a lawyer at a big law firm."

I wanted to write about the many stories and lives I lived before I actually settled down into my career. There are so many things that you can do before you find your passion, and for some of us it may take a lot longer, but that doesn't mean that you don't eventually find it and have a career where you feel that you accomplish things that you're proud of. You can go from being the person tending bar, or having wacky careers or jobs, and go on to be something like a lawyer. That was something that motivated me—to tell that story.

Then the Guantánamo piece, which is the second half of the book. Now, you read a lot more about Guantánamo; it's much more present in our popular culture. We have that movie *Escape from Guantánamo*, and I heard it mentioned on *Law and Order* a year ago. It's part of our popular culture and it's in the newspapers, and the lawyers who work at big law firms and donate their time—they're in the newspapers all the time. I wanted to tell the story of how it started and how I was at a big law firm and the lawyers that I worked with were some of the first lawyers to do that work and we were called unpatriotic and none of the journalists would meet with us to write about our story. I wanted to tell that story and how my law firm was courageous enough to take on that work and be the first law firm to do that.



Kristine Huskey in front of the U.S. Supreme Court
photo by Anant Raut

I also wanted to write the personal side of meeting people at Guantánamo, not just suspected terrorists who have rights. I wanted to tell the story of who they are as humans, as people, and how I struggled with representing people who were considered to be terrorists but at the same time were also people, and the emotional conflict that I went through. Those were the two main things that motivated me.

CA: *Do you recall a moment when they stopped becoming terrorists and started becoming people?*

KH: Yes. Really it happened in the first meeting. I represented the detainees for about two and a half years before I was actually allowed to meet them because of the government control of them. I wasn't allowed to go to Guantánamo until finally the Supreme Court ruled in our favor and allowed us to go. Then I went and I finally saw, in person, the people who I'd been helping all along. Because of the controversial aspect of representing these suspected terrorists, whenever I would talk about my work to the public—before the Supreme Court ruling—we would always say, "This is a case about the rule of law. This is a case about the separation of powers. This is a case about due process." And I always thought of the detainees that way—as a rule of law.

Then I went to Guantánamo, and I was amazed. "Wow, these are *people* I really represent." I could see them flesh and blood, sitting there in prison garb chained to the floor, and I met them for the first time and learned about their children and their brothers. Some of the first questions that they asked us were about their families. "When I left Kuwait my child was about to have an operation. Do you know anything about the operation?" "When I left, my father was very sick. Do you know how his heath is?"

It couldn't have been more of a revelation for me, that first meeting. "Oh my gosh, they have wives and children and mothers and fathers, and they are just like us." I'm giving myself chills just thinking about it. It's powerful.

I always thought of the detainees that way—as a rule of law.

Then I went to Guantánamo, and I was amazed.

"Wow, these are people I really represent."

CA: *That is powerful. I think it's a thing that we do as humans. Maybe it's in our DNA, or maybe it's learned behavior, but we're so quick to "other" ourselves from somebody else. We fall into that so easily because we've been doing it for so long, and then those moments happen where we see "Wow, you're like me."*

KH: Yeah, and after I met them and I was back in the DC area and giving presentations and talking about the detainees in the press, I'd say, "You know, imagine for a second, when you think about your family and your friends, that the people in Guantánamo are the same as you. They have friends and family and they are just like us. They are not *those* detainees. They're not *those* people."

CA: *In your life experience have you felt like the Other? Not in the sense of a terrorist but …*

KH: Yes, and it's interesting that you ask that because that's another theme that runs through my book. My mother is Filipino and my father is Caucasian, so I was sort of a *mestiza*—you know, half and half. So, I would go through life, and see it come up now and again. In one scenario I'd be the white girl. In another scenario, where I'm tending bar, for example, I'd get asked how I learned to speak English. So I talk about living in two different worlds and being seen sometimes as an outsider depending on who the insiders are. I think that my DNA makeup, my genetic background, my ethnic background, and also the fact that I have traveled so much, just made me really identify with my clients. Like you said, not the terrorist part. But being that Other, being one of *those* people. Being treated as a foreigner. Or foreign.

There are people, such as lawyers, who can make change happen. And I thought, "Wow that's really an amazing thing to be able to do!"

CA: *Was your mother born here?*

KH: She was born in the Philippines. She moved here when she was 22.

CA: *How did that show up, in terms of law school, because I understand that it's a pretty trying path? I would imagine as a woman who identifies as a woman of color that there were obstacles for you. How did those show up for you?*

KH: I went to law school in Texas—the University of Texas in Austin—and I went there after I had been living in New York City. I did my undergrad in New York after I had taken time off and lived in New York and bar tended for a while. Then I woke up and said, "Oh my gosh! I have to get my act together and go to school." So, I ended up going to Columbia, which, you know, is a very good school, and I put myself through Columbia and then took another two years off again, before saying, "Ok, I have to get my act together again and go on to law school or something." I chose law school. Coming from the New York area and living a really New York City life, living in Hell's Kitchen, I went to Texas and they thought I was an alien, because in Texas, the law school has to be something like 80 percent Texans. It was almost like two different countries—Texas vs. New York City. And then I was further alienated by not being entirely sure what ethnicity I was, so there was a sort of double obstacle.

But I learned to turn what could have been an obstacle into an advantage. I knew I sort of stuck out, and I used that to my advantage. I didn't blend into the crowd, so a lot of professors knew me. I found mentors—professors who would help me—and I'm still in contact with a couple of them today. I recently got an e-mail from a professor congratulating me on my book.

I was also a lot more outspoken because I was from New York. People kind of looked at me as the typical New Yorker. And like you were saying—and I don't think it's a myth—sometimes in law school they try to sort of humiliate you—the professors—but coming from New York I'd just think to myself, "I just put myself through Columbia bartending at three different jobs. I've been burglarized. I've been stalked."

CA: *Right, "Law school's nothing!"*

KH: (Laughs.) Yeah! "You can't really scare me." All of those experiences really helped me.

CA: *When you were thinking about getting your act together, why was it law? And what type of law were you thinking of, originally?*

KH: Talk about life coming full circle. When I was at Columbia I took this class in my junior or senior year called "Civil Liberties and Civil Rights." We read all of these great cases: Brown v. Board about segregation and desegregation, a case about First Amendment rights. We read these big cases about civil liberties and civil rights, and what inspired me was the actors involved. It wasn't really the substance of it—civil rights starting to interest me—it was more the fact that there are people, such as lawyers, who can make change happen. And I thought, "Wow that's really an amazing thing to be able to do!"

That inspired me. But after I graduated from Columbia, I didn't want to go right into law school because I think I knew that I just had too many more adventures in me. (Laughs.) So, I modeled for a year in New York, which was kind of fun, but I very quickly got tired of that, because, as you can imagine, it was

very shallow. Then I backpacked around Southeast Asia for a year. Then I decided, "Now I've had my two-year adventure. Now I can go to law school."

I entered law school really wanting to do women's rights and civil rights. It's interesting. There are all these studies that say 70 percent of law students go into law school wanting to do civil rights and women's rights and human rights, and then they come out all beaten up into more traditional people. Most people go and work in a big law firm, and so that's what I did. After law school, I worked at a big law firm in Washington.

My friends said, "Gosh, we couldn't be more surprised. You were such a hard-charging girl from New York when you came to law school. You scared us all. You were wearing combat boots, and now you're working for this big corporate law firm."

I don't entirely know why I did that, other than because that's what everybody else does. It's good money. It's the traditional thing to do. It was fortunate though, because in my job at the law firm I represented international clients. I like traveling and I love different cultures and different people, so that is the work I was drawn to, and I think that's what allowed me to keep my sanity in what would have been a very traditional environment—oppressive, even. I traveled all over the place, and none of my clients spoke English as their first language, and that was very exciting. Then, very soon after I arrived, we started representing the Guantánamo detainees.

I was very fortunate.

CA: *Even though you worked in a conventional, straight-ahead law firm, this one actually took a turn outside its own box. That's interesting.*

Going back to the prisoners in Guantánamo: Were they able to practice their own religion within the prison? Was there any spiritual guidance in the prisons, and if so, what religion was used?

KH: Honestly, I think this is a terrible mark on our history. When I first went to Guantánamo in 2004, these first visits were spent just listening to the detainees, and they wanted to talk about their treatment. We felt like we didn't want to ask them a lot of questions because then it might seem like they were being interrogated. So we took their lead. If they wanted to talk about it, we would encourage them to tell us what was going on and how they had been treated. They really did want to talk about how they were treated. I learned that in addition to a lot of abuse and harsh treatment and harsh conditions, when they first arrived, they weren't given any sort of ability to practice their religion. Most of them were Muslim. I would say 99 percent of the detainees were Muslim, maybe even 100 percent—from all different countries. A lot of the countries were in the Middle East, but definitely all over. I learned that when they first got there, they were held in outdoor cages. They were punched for praying. It wasn't until finally some smart people in the military began to think that things might go a lot better for the interrogations if they started giving them some more room to practice their religion that things changed.

Again and again my clients told me that their religion was used against them, that some soldiers would say, "See what happens when you're a Muslim."

But they spent at least six months there without getting anything. They'd ask for a Koran, and they weren't allowed a Koran. It wasn't until after a couple of years that they were allowed things like prayer beads and a prayer mat. Again and again my clients told me that their religion was used against them, that some soldiers would say, "See what happens when you're a Muslim."

Really.

I don't know if you remember, but there was a whole incident—*Newsweek* magazine reported it, and then they rescinded their statement about it—but it had to do with the Koran getting thrown in the toilet by some of the guards.

Throwing the Koran in the toilet.

Newsweek reported it, and there was a big outrage, but I had actually learned from my clients before the *Newsweek* thing even came out, that some of the guards had stepped on the Koran. You probably know this, but in the Muslim religion, touching the Koran is sacred. If you're a non-Muslim, you're not supposed to even

touch the Koran. To me, it was just a terrible mark on our history when we used religion against them.

It's such a terrible mark. To think that even though they were alleged terrorists the military used their religion against them.

One of the first things that we did when we started meeting detainees and learning about this was file a motion to the court. The clients asked us if they could get something called a *Tafsir*. It's a sort of scholarly commentary on the Koran. I even got an affidavit from the executive director of a very accepted Muslim association in the United States saying that the Tafsir is a non-extremist, scholarly commentary. The government refused to let us give that to our clients, and the court didn't even rule on it. The court didn't even bother to listen to us. I talk about that in my book—it was so depressing. It was one of those darker moments in my time representing them, trying to help them just with their condition—not even necessarily get in to court and challenge their detention. Can I get them something like the Tafsir? It's a scholarly commentary, and it helps you study the Koran.

CA: *They couldn't even have that...*

KH: They couldn't even have that, and the court just ignored it.

CA: *Was Christianity or the Bible forced on them, or any other religious text?*

KH: There happened to be a Muslim soldier—I think he was brought to Guantánamo to be the chaplain—and he was Muslim. He started holding services for the detainees, not joint ones, but he was allowed to lead individual detainees in prayer and talk with the detainees. His name is James Yee and he has a great book out.

CA: *Is he Chinese?*

KH: Yes. He's a Chinese Muslim. American. He converted to Islam some time in his adult life. I've actually brought him to UT to speak to some of the students. He has a great story. He went to Guantánamo, and he was allowed to talk with the detainees. He started submitting to his higher-ups at Guantánamo some suggestions about how to allow them to practice their religion in a better way. He offered ideas for improvements in the detainees' lives, as far as religion goes. He submitted these suggestions and proposals, and he also submitted some concerns: "I'm concerned about the way they are being treated." "They're not allowed to pray in the way that they should be allowed to." After about a year of doing that, he was accused of being a terrorist himself.

CA: *I remember him.*

KH: Yes! He was locked up for 90 days without a lawyer. They accused him of selling classified information and being a traitor. In the end, they charged him with having pornography on his computer. They totally smeared him, and he was kicked out of the military. He went through this terrible time of basically being an accused terrorist. And they never replaced him with another Muslim chaplain.

CA: *Wow.*

KH: I know! Isn't that terrible? You brought up this question, and I had forgotten all about that because there are so many wrong things about Guantánamo. That was just one of them. They never replaced him. Somebody told me that at some point in time the government brought in a chaplain who was a born-again Baptist or something, and that was the chaplain for the Guantánamo detainees. They couldn't have found some Muslim chaplain? I'm sorry I'm getting so upset about it. Again, that's just one small thing—but that seemed to me so... if you think about religion... and I know that you are obviously spiritual in the work you do and everything... it's such a terrible mark. To think that even though they were alleged terrorists the military used their religion against them.

CA: *When I think of oppression, I think that religion or spiritual practice is one of the first things taken away. When slaves were brought over from Africa, their spiritual and cultural heritage were taken away from them—their drum, their language, their music, their religion—and Christianity was forced upon them, and the same with the Aborigines and the Native Americans. It's the assimilation process. I was curious about that, because I suspected the military would use this tactic as*

they have historically, as a psychological tactic imposed to weaken a human being.

KH: Exactly. It's sad on many levels, but it's also sad because from my understanding, having lived in Saudi Arabia for a couple of years… I think of it this way—and it sounds terrible—but I'm just going to be honest and frank. I think in a lot of America, we don't take our different religions as seriously as perhaps the Muslim world takes their religion, or other cultures take their religions. For example, if you're a Buddhist you really believe in it, you really practice it. But I think for a lot of America we're not really a very religious society. You know we are and we aren't—it's kind of weird. But to use somebody else's religion against them, just because it's different from ours, is such an appalling idea. It just astounds me.

CA: *Right. Speaking of religion, did you grow up with a spiritual background?*

KH: I did. I was raised Catholic. The Philippines is a very Catholic nation, and I'd say my mother is very Catholic. She does all of the things that good Catholics are supposed to do—go to church and all that sort of stuff. I always say this to people, and I really do mean it: My mother is an angel. She is a practicing Catholic, Christian, whatever you want to call it, in the sense that she really practices and lives her life the way I think somebody who is spiritual should live her life. She's always helping people. She volunteers at her church. I always say she's my role model on how to be a better person. I always try to be like her. Of course, I don't think that's very possible because she's an angel.

My dad was a Protestant, but he didn't really practice, so I was raised Catholic. I went through a period of being sort of anti-Catholic and anti-religious, but in the last 10 years I've started coming back to my religion, which makes my mom very happy.

You know, I like how you use the word *spiritual* instead of *religious*. I think I've always been spiritual. I may not have always been a practicing Catholic, or I may have turned away from the Catholic Church, but I'm very lucky to have lived in Saudi Arabia and Africa and traveled a lot, to have seen other religions. I went to a boarding school for performing arts, a school for people who are musicians and dancers and actors, and those people were constantly experiencing and experimenting with different spiritualities. I think I probably met my first Buddhist when I was 14. So at an early age, I saw people who were not Protestant or Catholic, and I have continued throughout my life to meet people who were from different spiritual backgrounds. So I always thought that was part of my makeup, and those people always inspired me because it's different for me, and I embrace the difference.

CA: *I use the word* spiritual *because I think we come to an understanding that we're not spiritual unless we're religious, unless we belong to a religion. And I believe that there is spirituality in both of those things.*

KH: Oh, yes.

CA: *I think there is spirituality within religion and outside of religion. For example your mother sounds to me like a very spiritual, practicing Catholic, but I think there are also people within religion who speak their religious beliefs loudly and think everything they say and do is the right and only way, yet they don't hold out a hand to their neighbors for whatever reason. They don't*

Kristine Huskey outside the Combined Batchelor's Quarters, Guantánamo Bay photo by Tom Wilner

participate as an angel on the planet. And then there are those people who don't identify with a religious group but who do practice spirituality, who do *practice their angel-like ways on the planet.*

I think to use the word spiritual *is to include what people do outside of religion that is also spiritual. That seems to be what you were speaking to, but I think the word* spiritual *also applies to what people do within the religion. In the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, we call that social engagement. Buddha actually had a practice in the world to help humanity move toward liberation.*

But I often think spiritual philosophies also turn into religious philosophies, and then societies become more tight with them, for a variety of reasons—power, ego, what have you. But it doesn't necessarily take the spirituality and the kindness and the compassion out of religion, and it also doesn't dismiss those who practice spirituality but are not specifically connected to religion in an ongoing way.

"Am I doing the right thing? I'm representing the supposed terrorists, maybe I am unpatriotic." I would question myself. But then to see these religious figures say, 'I'll get arrested for this cause.'—it was so inspiring.

KH: I couldn't agree with you more. I think there are some people who would say they are religious, but they're not spiritual at all. It's exactly like what you said about practicing spirituality within and outside the religion.

When I was in high school, I had some roommates who opened my eyes about all of that. It was the first time I had met people who talked about ideas and spirituality and these philosophical and practicing ways, like you say, with social engagement and helping people and helping humanity. It was the first time I heard people talk about that outside of organized religion. Which is kind of interesting, because when I turned away from my religion, I was turning away from organized religion. I didn't like the way of organized religion because it was exclusive, or exclusionary.

CA: *Do you see your work at Guantánamo as a kind of social-justice activism?*

KH: Yes. That's another interesting thing. I love when I can go back and say that was such a revelation for me and actually recognize it as something that changed my life. I think it's good to go back and reflect on your life and pinpoint certain events or places in your life where you changed your position and your eyes were opened up so you can be reminded of that.

When I was practicing law at this law firm—before I did the Guantánamo stuff—the work was really interesting because I could travel and meet different people, but I understood the practice of law in a particular way. I thought practicing law meant I would write briefs and go to court and meet clients, and that's what I am as a lawyer. I do those things.

But when I started doing the Guantánamo work and meeting my clients, the idea of social activism and engaging in a cause that was bigger than a client or bigger than a person suddenly became very real for me, and all of a sudden I thought, "I'm not just a lawyer. I'm an advocate." Which encompasses so much more. Obviously I have my individual clients, because you can't get away from that, and you have an ethical obligation to them. But now, all of a sudden, I had a cause. I don't know that I ever had a cause like that before. One of the things I teach my students is that when you are a human-rights lawyer, being a lawyer really means being an advocate, and there are many different ways you can use your skills and use your degree. Part of that is realizing that you are a social activist.

CA: *Right. It's beautiful.*

KH: Yeah, it's eye-opening.

CA: *Does spirituality guide your activism? How do you use your Catholic practice within the activist work?*

KH: I honestly look to two sources—one is my mother, as I said—and, it doesn't matter what religion you call it, she always sees the best in people. She takes time to help people who don't have other people helping them. She takes old ladies in her church to coffee and listens to them for hours. That's a source of inspiration

for me, to help people who can't help themselves, or who have limited resources.

The other source of inspiration comes from the Guantánamo situation. When the plight of the Guantánamo detainees started to become more public, there were a lot of people who were opposed to the work that we did. They said, "Who cares? They're terrorists. They should be tortured" and all this sort of stuff. But a lot of groups that came out and spoke out against torture and spoke out in favor of the Guantánamo detainees were groups that were based in religion. Some of them were Catholic, but some of them were other religious groups that were very much speaking out. I was really struck by that. It was part of my coming back to having faith in religion and seeing spirituality as something different, a kind of social activism.

It was at a time in my life when I was sort of ambivalent about religion, and seeing those groups speak out against torture, protest in front of the White House, get arrested ... I was part of this torture survivors' group, and they protested in front of the White House. You're not allowed to stand in front of the White House for longer than like a minute, in any particular area. And these priests wearing Franciscan robes and white collars were getting arrested in the name of justice. It was so inspiring. That was another event that gave me a new strength.

Because I've had moments representing the detainees where I would ask myself, *Am I doing the right thing? I'm representing the supposed terrorists, maybe I am unpatriotic.* I would question myself. But then to see these religious figures say, "I'll get arrested for this cause."—it was so inspiring. It helped me to keep believing in what I believed in, the reasons I represented these detainees. It helped me see that it was important, and a good thing, and part of what we should be doing.

CA: *A lot of awakening.*

KH: Yeah, it was! And I have to say talking about it is also very... You know when you're asked specific questions and when you have to talk about it, you find a kind of second revelation.

CA: *It's true. The process of talking about it opens up the energy of it, and you can realize your own wisdom. In talking about your experience, the wisdom actually changes into more wisdom while you're talking about it.*

KH: Exactly.❖

Kristine Huskey is a law professor and the former Director of the National Security Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law and began representing Guantánamo detainees in early 2002, as one of the few lawyers willing to challenge the government soon after 9/11. She has practiced international litigation and arbitration at Shearman & Sterling and taught international human rights and humanitarian law in the U.S. and abroad. Kristine grew up in Alaska and has lived all over the world, including Angola, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, and the U.K., and was a professional model and dancer before she found her passion in human rights law. In addition to advocating for human rights, Kristine loves to cook, sample global wines, do triathlons in the summer, and ski in the winter.

Caroline Acuña is an "organic intellectual", musician, sound practitioner, curandera, dancer, and ritualist. She has 20 years of experience in fundraising, facilitation and mentoring in organizations engaged in social justice transformation. Fundamental to all of her endeavors is her spiritual practice that is rooted in her council of ancestors (Maré). Based on earth practice, her spirituality is a combination of Indigenous Native and African, Maré and Buddhism.

For More Information About Guantánamo Bay:

- **Center for Constitutional Rights**
  http://ccrjustice.org/illegal-detentions-and-guantanamo
- **Human Rights Watch**
  http://www.hrw.org/en/category/topic/counterterrorism/guantanamo
- **Cage Prisoners**
  For coverage of Guantánamo detainees and other detainees held in the "War on Terror"
  http://www.cageprisoners.com/index.php
- **GTMO Blog**
  by Candace Gorman, attorney to detainees
  http://gtmoblog.blogspot.com/

Making Way

Photos and Text
by Michelle Arevalo Carpenter

Ms. Seng wonders if she should plant her rice field this year. She laments that what used to be an annual ritual for her and her family now stands on shaky ground.

The Ream and Beattrang villages in southern Cambodia, where she lives, were re-founded in 1979 by a courageous group of surviving families after the Khmer Rouge fell. For years, they have worked tirelessly to rebuild their lives, cultivate their rice fields and educate their children. Farmers are proud to report that in good years they have enough rice to sell at the market after feeding their families for an entire year. More than 30 years after having experienced the horrors under Pol Pot, their lives seemed to be improving.

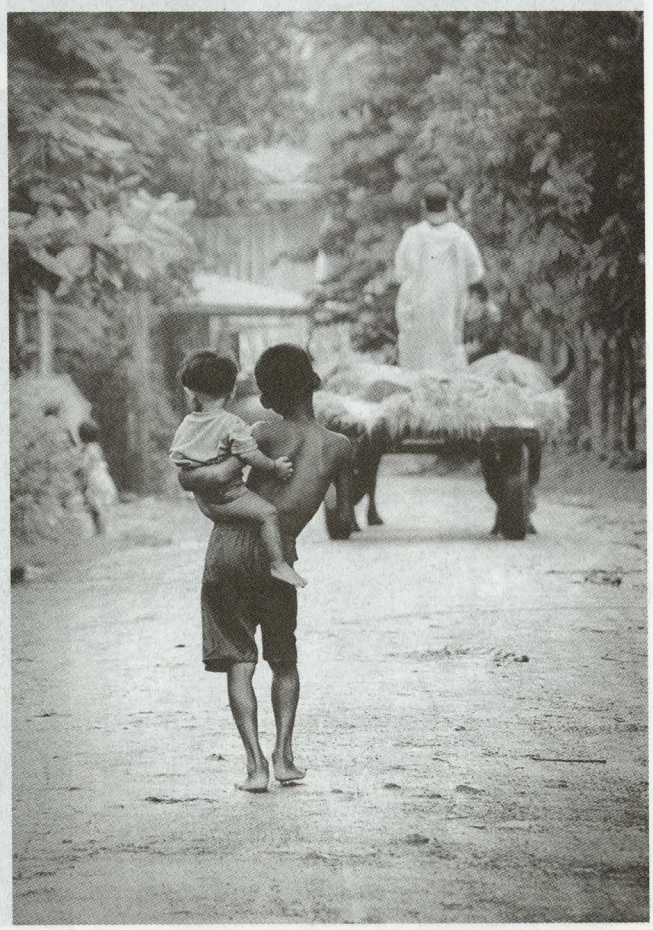
Now, more than 300 families could be forced out of their homes and away from their land to make way for an airport runway extension, in the name of tourism development and the public good of Cambodia. The funding for the airport extension project is earmarked as a stand-by loan from the International Financial Corporation (IFC), the private lending arm of the World Bank.

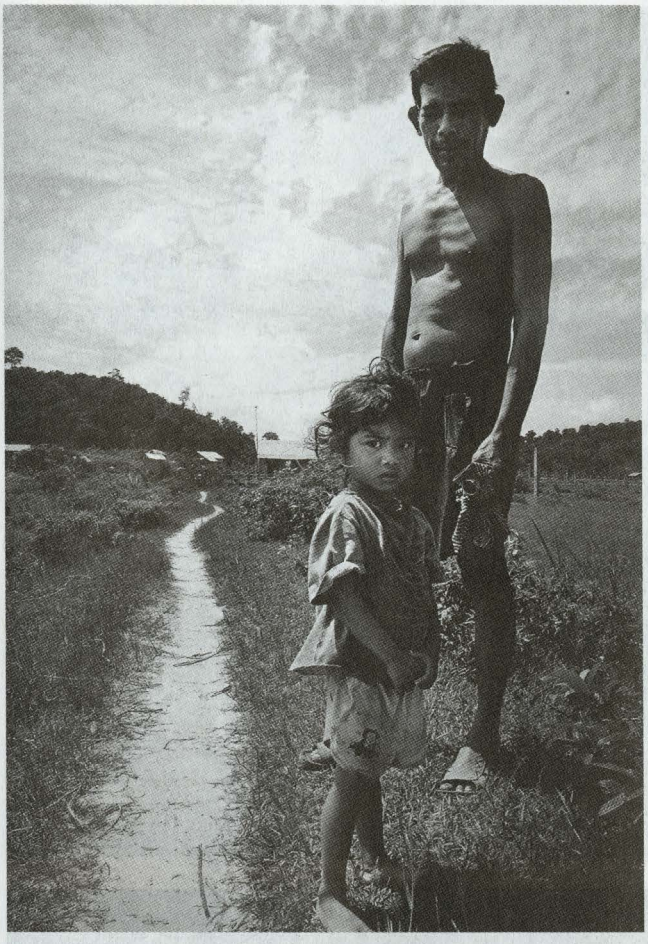
"We are not against the development of Cambodia," explained Ms. Seng, who is a local community leader, "but we don't want to lose our lands, our source of livelihoods, without fair compensation."

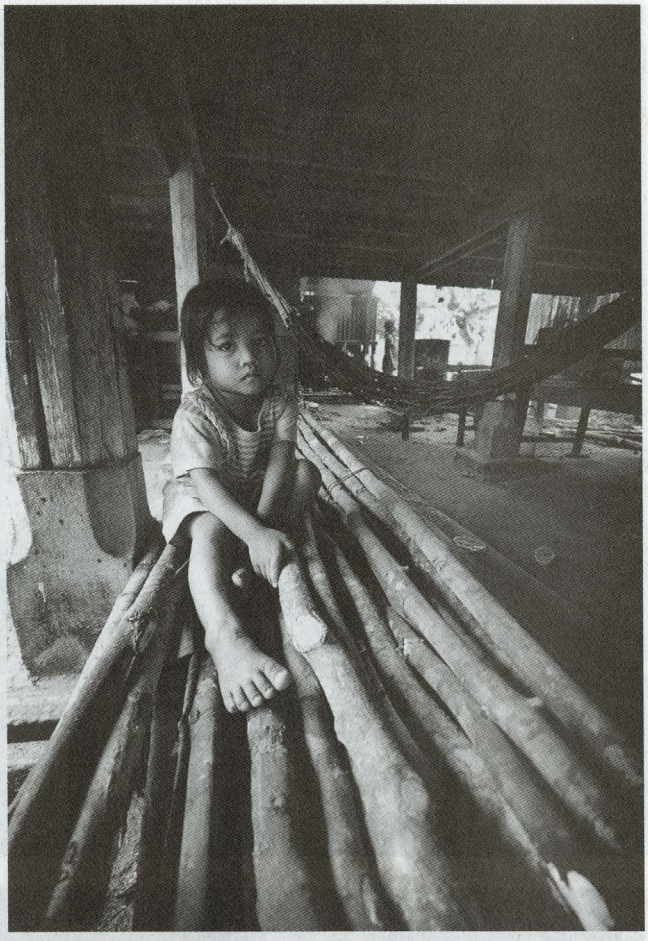
The World Bank's safeguard policies are on her side. IFC's Performance Standards require, among other things, that the company provide compensation for land and homes at replacement cost, and fair treatment. The company must provide affected communities free advice and enough time for the community to consider the advice so that they can give fully informed consent to the proposed project before it is funded.

The community—working with International Accountability Project (IAP), Bank Information Center, and local NGOs—filed a complaint this year before an independent body of the IFC, the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO). In the complaint they present their case by targeting the root of the project's funding. CAO has recently decided to open an investigation.

I met Ms. Seng and her neighbors last summer, as I conducted research for IAP, a San Francisco–based NGO. My final report found that the borrowing company failed to abide by IFC standards. The portraits I took of them tell the rest of the story.❖







Michelle Arevalo-Carpenter is a human rights lawyer from Ecuador currently finalizing her graduate studies in Public Policy at UC Berkeley. She combines her passion for photography with human rights advocacy to broaden awareness and trigger action. Michelle's photographs have been featured online by Reuters, The Wall Street Journal *and* Condé Nast *Magazine.*

Highway 1

by David Sullivan

Eyes strained from driving
rain which, late at night, smears brake
lights on the highway.

The concrete barrier
between speeding cars was built
canted so wheels ride

up, then drop back down.
It's rain slicked—stutters with
flashing neon signs—

so tired eyes shift right
and then I see it—the white
body curled on itself,

sheet loose and trailing—
quick snapshot—something thrown out
of a moving car?

Can't be a body.
Not here. But immediately
I'm where it could be—

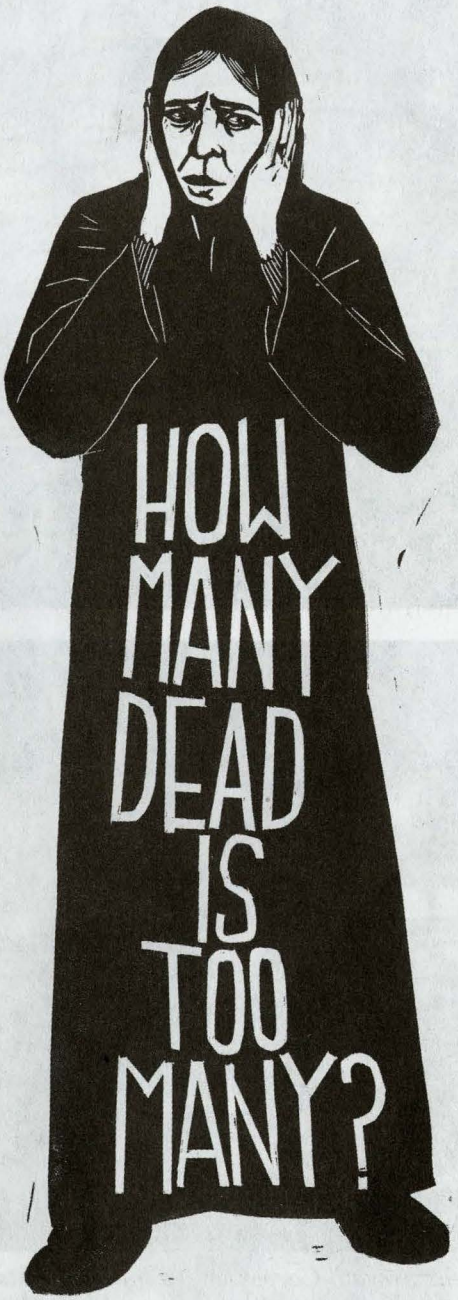
would be. Every day.
Afghanistan lord's payback…
Baghdad's IED's…

I get to believe
it's not a body. Others,
accustomed to killings,

know it has to be.
Teach me reverence for thrown things,
teach me how to sing

with my mouth shut tight,
to listen with every pore
when the world's crying.

David Sullivan's first book Strong-Armed Angels *is available through Hummingbird Press, and two of its poems were read on Garrison Keillor's* The Writer's Almanac. *His second manuscript,* The Devil's Messengers, *is a multi-voiced manuscript responding to what's occurring in Iraq. David teaches literature and film at Cabrillo College, in Santa Cruz, CA, where he lives with his love, Cherie Barkey, the historian, and their two children, Jules and Amina.*



"How Many..?" linotype with spray paint
by Alec Icky Dunn

Mustard Seeds in Afghanistan

Searching for a Home that Has Never Known Sorrow

by Everett Wilson

Last autumn, in the weeks leading up to President Obama's decision to send more troops to Afghanistan, two courageous Afghani women were touring the United States trying to educate American citizens about what is happening in their country. In October, Zoya, a member of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), gave a speech in San Francisco. Two weeks later, in early November, Malalai Joya, the Afghani parliamentarian banished from Parliament for her refusal to stop speaking out against the Northern Alliance warlords, made numerous appearances throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. While they were touring for different reasons—Zoya to promote RAWA's work, and Malalai Joya to publicize her recent memoir—it was striking how similar their messages were. They both spoke of the devastation in Afghanistan after more than 30 years of war. They both spoke of the key role the U.S. government has played in arming and supporting the mujahideen that have destroyed their nation, and they both urged American citizens to push our government to radically change its foreign policy.

Their message is political, but the stories they told and the horrific photos they shared underscored the need for the Buddhist ideals of non-violence and compassionate understanding to heal the wounds of Afghanistan. These ideals, of course, don't belong to Buddhism alone. Virtually every religious faith in the world holds up compassion, understanding, and peace as the best qualities of what it means to be human. But a Buddhist story, the story of Kisagotami, seems to offer some insight into the wisdom of the people of Afghanistan.

Kisagotami's story

Kisagotami was a cousin of Siddhartha Gautama who found herself plunged into despair when her infant son came down with a fever and died unexpectedly. Devastated, she wandered the streets for weeks, crazed with grief, clutching the tiny corpse, and holding it out to everyone she met, begging for someone to save her child. Finally someone took her to the Buddha.

He looked at her kindly when she held out her son's body and gently took the child's corpse, crawling with maggots by now, into his arms.

"Please help me, sir," she begged.

"I will revive your child under one condition," he answered. "Find a household that has never known death, and bring me some mustard seeds from that home."

If Kisagotami had come to virtually any American home in those first weeks of September 2001, she most likely would have found no mustard seeds. She'd only have found shocked Americans, deeply shaken by the incomprehensible deaths of thousands of ordinary citizens. If Kisagotami had come to virtually any Afghani home in the past 30 years, she also would have found no mustard seeds.

photo by Susan Hall

"You cannot find a family without sorrow and pain in Afghanistan," Zoya said at the beginning of her interview, "like millions of other girls belonging to this generation of war and crime, I also lost my parents. But I think more important than that I lost—like millions of other girls—our future, our generation."

Zoya's story, and the history of RAWA

Zoya is not her real name. As a spokeswoman of RAWA, Zoya's life and the lives of all the women in her organization are constantly threatened by fundamentalists who disapprove of their struggle for

a secular, democratic government. This is why all the members of RAWA have taken aliases. This is why RAWA is "revolutionary." They want to secure free and fair elections for all Afghanis. They want to educate girls. They want to build orphanages and hospitals.

RAWA was founded in 1977 by Meena, a young woman studying law in Kabul University. She dreamt of establishing greater rights for women but saw no hope for that in either of the dominant political parties of the time—neither the communists under the leadership of first Nur Mohammad Turaki and then Hafizulah Amin, nor the fundamentalist Muslims inspired by Berhanuddin Rabbani, Gulbaddin Hekmatyar, or Abdul Rabb Rasuul al-Sayyaf. After the Soviets invaded, Meena risked her life again and again helping the resistance against the Soviets. But she refused to align with the resistance being spawned in the *madrasahs* in Pakistan, the birthplace of the Taliban and other fundamentalist mujahideen, funded and armed by Osama bin Laden, Pakistan, and the CIA. Meena was murdered in Quetta, Pakistan, in 1987, most likely by members of the mujahideen influenced by Hekmatyar.

The mujahideen also murdered Zoya's parents, and Hekmatyar is still a powerful figure in Afghanistan. His power, and the power of other Northern Alliance warlords, is one reason democracy is failing there.

The U.S. invasion

According to Zoya, the three justifications that the U.S. government has used for its invasion of Afghanistan are the war on terror, a desire to establish democracy in Afghanistan, and finally bringing women's rights to the nation. She said that the occupation has failed to meet all three objectives.

Women are the victims of domestic violence, rape, gang rape, and the men guilty of these things are immune from justice because of their ties to the warlords and the warlords' control of the police, the courts, and the government.

"There is no law," Zoya said. "There is no implementation of law. There is no protection of women."

As for the war on terror, after eight years of fighting, the Taliban are still in control of 80 percent of the country, and terrorists continue to kill Afghanis who are in the vicinity of U.S. and NATO targets. Afghans are caught between the Taliban fundamentalists, the Northern Alliance Fundamentalists, and the constant threat of U.S. and NATO bombs killing civilians.

And finally she views democracy in Afghanistan as a fraud, as evidenced by the last elections. Even setting aside the actual fraud reported widely in the press, she views both of the leading candidates—Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah—as equally dangerous for the Afghan people—Karzai because of his appointments of Northern Alliance warlords in key government positions, and Abdullah because of his own involvement as a commander in the Northern Alliance in the 1992–1994 conflict.

"The Northern Alliance groups committed such inhuman crimes toward our people. We can't forget that," Zoya noted. "They were the first, before the Taliban, who destroyed our country."

"So we see that today this election was just like a drama, a very dirty game being played with the destiny of our people."

According to Zoya, Afghanis want peace and security most of all, but after eight years, they've lost confidence in the ability of the U.S. troops to provide it. For this reason she feels it is necessary for the troops to withdraw.

"But what the United States really needs is a change in policy, a very radical change in foreign policy about Afghanistan," she continued. "Because in the past 30 to 35 years the United States has supported these fundamentalist groups in the country. They created these fundamentalist groups during the Soviet war, the Cold War against Soviets."

The covert history of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan is finally getting more public attention now; even Hollywood has shown a spotlight on it with the movie *Charlie Wilson's War.* It's no secret anymore that the CIA funneled weapons to the mujahideen fighting the Soviet occupation. Ultimately, the policy successfully forced the Soviets to withdraw; but after the Soviets withdrew, the Northern Alliance warlords turned the weapons on each other—and tens of thousands of Afghan civilians—in a bloody civil war from 1992 to 1996 that only ended when the Taliban finally took control of Kabul. By providing arms to the mujahideen, the U.S. government helped create the conditions necessary for the rise of the Taliban, and a safe home for Al-Qaeda.

Now with the "war on terror," it seems that Washington has again followed the same mistakes of the past, supporting an enemy of our enemy, this time the Northern Alliance warlords against the Taliban.

With the Bush administration's early support of Harmid Karzai, they effectively handed over key government positions to the Northern Alliance warlords.

"The United States should disempower these war criminals from the three organs of the government," Zoya said. "They should stop supporting the Northern Alliance groups who are equally as dangerous as the Taliban—there's no difference between them—and they should start supporting *real* democratic movements in Afghanistan."

Malalai Joya's story

"You may have been led to believe that once the Taliban was driven from power, justice returned to my country," writes Malalai Joya in her recent memoir *A Woman Among Warlords*. "Afghan women like me, voting and running for office, have been held up as proof that the U.S. military has brought democracy and women's rights to Afghanistan."

"But it is all a lie, dust in the eyes of the world."

The BBC News has called Malalai Joya "the bravest woman in Afghanistan." In her first speech as an elected representative of Farah Province, she attacked the Northern Alliance warlords sitting beside her in the Loya Jirga as war criminals. For the past seven years she has refused to back down from her outspoken criticism of these warlords. Because of this she has been called an infidel and a prostitute. She's been threatened with rape; she's received death threats—all within the Parliament building—until finally she was banned from Parliament altogether. She has survived numerous assassination attempts, and must travel under the constant protection of bodyguards. She cannot stay more than two nights in any one house and often chooses to wear a *burqa* to avoid detection when she goes out.

And still she refuses to remain silent, traveling around the world, speaking out for the cause of democracy in Afghanistan. Malalai's speeches are full of anger and outrage at what is happening in her homeland and full of a dizzying blur of Afghan names: Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Berhanuddin Rabbani. Abdul Rashid Dostum. Mohammad Qasim Fahim. Younis Qanooni. Karim Khalili. Mohammad Mohaqiq. All former members of the mujahideen that fought the Soviets. All warlords who fought each other for power during the 1992–1996 civil war. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Afghanistan Justice Project, and other human rights organizations have implicated most of

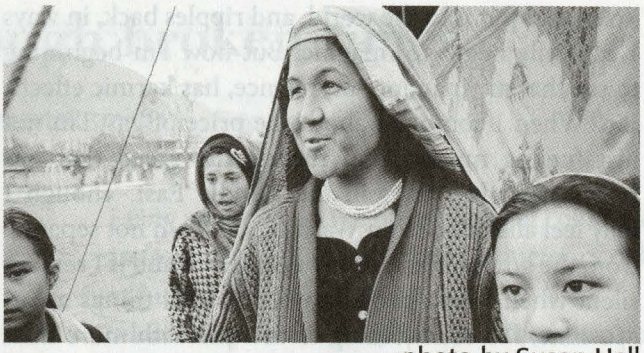


photo by Susan Hall

these people in the indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations, abductions, disappearances, rape. From January to June 1994, over 20,000 civilians died in Kabul. According to the Afghanistan Justice Project, rape had not been used by the Soviet regime as a systematic weapon in Afghanistan. "The civil war that raged in Kabul between 1992 and 1995 changed that."

The karma of speech, the karma of silence

It's chilling to listen to Malalai and Zoya list off the atrocities that the Northern Alliance warlords are still committing under the banner of democracy, with the support of the U.S. government.

It's painful to hear the outrage in their voices. As a citizen who believes in peace, when I look back at my government's actions in Afghanistan over the past eight years, I feel obliged to hang my head in shame.

When the United States and NATO invaded Afghanistan, I was on a two-month retreat at Green Gulch Farm, in Marin County, California. An American newspaper ran a story about the military dropping processed food into villages from planes, with leaflets: "A gift from the people of the United States of America." Then a crate full of Pop Tarts crashed through the roof of a villager's house, killing a baby in his crib, and I could only shake my head in disbelief. I'd wondered from the beginning of the invasion how an army with tanks and bombs was ever going to track down an organization as secretive and elusive as Al-Qaeda. They'd be long gone before Special Ops came busting down somebody's door in the middle of the night. It was PR. A big show. And it was selling.

But I said nothing.

I went to the Zendo and sat on my cushion, and tried to find a taste of something beyond understanding that could hold all of that. It felt like the best I could do at the time. But over the years, my Buddhist practice and my study of karma have taught me that everything I

do ripples out into the world, and ripples back, in ways I can only begin to imagine. But now I'm beginning to see that my inaction, my silence, has karmic effects, too. When I complain about the price of gas, I'm not just fueling my car; I'm fueling the greed that has fueled countless wars in the Middle East. Though I may feel alienated from Washington, I am not separate from the government, or my neighbors, and if I remain silent when I hear people saying hateful things about Muslims, I'm contributing to the war with more than my tax dollars.

Malalai of Maiwand meets Kisagotami

After Malalai Joya's speech a woman stood up in the audience, greeted her in Pashto, and asked her about her name.

"As you know, we have in Afghanistan, many Malalai's, the name, because of Malalai of Maiwand," she answered. "She was one of the heroines of Afghanistan."

"Still in my country, the first casualty is the truth."
—Malalai Joya

She outlined the story: a hard battle fought between the British and the Afghans during the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1880 in the desert of Maiwand in Kandahar Province. Malalai was a young, patriotic woman who had gone to the front lines, to tend to the wounded. At a key point in the battle, the British were gaining the upper hand, and the Afghan fighters were becoming demoralized. Malalai took up the Afghan flag from a fallen flag bearer, and led the men back into battle with a poem to her husband:

Young love! If you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand then
By God, someone is saving you as a symbol of shame.

Malalai of Maiwand died in the battle, but the Afghans fought with renewed inspiration and routed the English with her inspiration. The battle turned the tide of the war.

While telling the story, Malalai's eyes began to well up and her voice turned husky.

"The first award I received from my Afghan community, my supporters, was the Malalai of Maiwand award," Malalai continued. "I gave it to the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture during a press conference. I said it belongs to all of my people, not only me, that we follow the path of Malalai of Maiwand, and Meena… the many heroes and heroines in our country who've sacrificed their lives for freedom and democracy. Now we are just students of them."

Afghanistan is a nation full of women and men who have fully embodied the wisdom Kisagotami discovered after she searched and searched, with all of the desperation of a mother who has lost her only child, for a home that had never known death. Everywhere she looked she found only the pain that others had suffered from the loss of loved ones. Finally she understood she was not alone in her grief and returned to the Buddha.

"Well?" he asked, "Did you bring me the mustard seeds?"

"No," she answered. "I don't care about the seeds. I only want peace."

Then she took back her child, walked to the graveyard, and gently buried the decomposing corpse.

"I don't really like to talk so much about my personal story," Zoya said when I asked her about the deaths of her parents. "I think there are many other stories which should be highlighted."

At the beginning of every speech she gives on her worldwide book tour, Malalai Joya apologizes for writing a book about her life. For years she turned away offers from activist writers in the West who wanted to help her write her story.

"Let me introduce to you some orphans, some widows, and some underground activists—men and women," she told them. "You can write their story."

But in the end she finally agreed to write her book for three reasons.

"First to tell the truth. Still in my country, the first casualty is the truth. Even the mainstream media are throwing dust in the eyes of the great democratic, justice-loving people around the world. The second reason is to tear the mask of democracy off the fundamentalist warlords, these drug lords, these criminals who are a photocopy of the Taliban…. The third reason is to reflect the sorrow and pain of my people."

"There aren't enough books to write about that."❖

Everett Wilson is the editor of Turnng Wheel

wandering through broken times

by liza maytok smith

i started the year singing karaoke with friends in boulder
i ended it that way too
this is the circular nature of time
my home was theoretically oakland in 2009
because that's where the postman delivers my mail
but maybe my real home is in airports
going to and from the many places i love:
colombia three times, puerto rico, france and holland
colorado five times and oregon twice
southern california twice and visited georgia too
in love i took risks
i wrote the word ambivalence on a small piece of paper
i felt my heart open to the possibility
i felt devastated by my loneliness
i went to two weddings and cried my eyes out at one
for the revolution i was on the streets
carrying thousands of hand made paper dolls

the night before: i was surrounded by them in my room
but I couldn't imagine the thousand human beings in colombia
that each paper doll represents, forced
to leave their homes and lands

the night after: i came home to an empty bed
and wondered if it really matters, all this effort
if i didn't have anyone to share it with

in protest of the death project, i locked
the doors of a building shut,
and threw the keys in a trash can

in the northwestern mountains of colombia
i climbed hills with sweat dripping in my eyes
alongside the george clooney of the peace community
his beautiful wife and dogs waited for us at the top of the hill
she and i walked back together
we spoke of mountain spirits and demons

i sang at a cafe to just a few
and at the gates of a military base
for many more than i had ever before

i sang standing on the open plains of colombia
in front of a sign that marked the memory of life
i plucked my strings next to a son
while he spoke the words of his father's last poem

i wrote a song about a whale and a mouse
i didn't write a song about happiness
but maybe they aren't quite as sad anymore...

i took a south american hallucinogenic
sang by the fire for hours
the taita saw the tubes that made sound
inside my body
in the morning he asked me what i was longing for,
why so nostalgic?
i spoke of this split
the one that makes me inhabit two worlds
the burden i carry going back and forth
between them
i walked down the streets of bogota and wondered
if i could shed the weight
and go forward as a weaver of worlds

i found a juniper tree in the mountains
and a secret spot under the full moon
i meditated for a week
deep instead of out
i was an elder for the practice i know best
i knew i have much to learn

Liza Maytok Smith is an activist and cultural worker, who shares her reflections about life, love, and the revolution through her lyrics, missives, and an occasional poem. She has been involved in Colombia human-rights work for the last 10 years, organizing grassroots solidarity from New Orleans to the San Francisco Bay Area and has accompanied threatened human-rights leaders in Colombia. She currently works for the Fellowship of Reconciliation Colombia program. You can read her blog or listen to her music at: www.myspace.com/lizamaytok

The Long Road from Rangoon

Exploring Burma in the Aftermath of the Saffron Revolution

Text and Photos by Karen Zusman

The drone of early morning crickets drowns out the sound of my footsteps as I walk through the doors of the Pagoda View Hotel, the dirt drive damp from the heavy Rangoon mists, the sun hefting itself wearily above the horizon. Mo Win stands off to the side of the driveway; I can barely make him out in the shadow of two tall trees. U Thein Ya waits with the engine of his taxi turned off. He flashes on the headlights, and Mo Win and I jump in quickly. Yesterday the soldiers had patrolled back and forth on their bicycles across the street from the hotel, but this morning I look and see no sign of them.

On the way to our bus Mo Win speaks excitedly. Just before dawn, he reports, a small protest broke out in Bago, a town we'll pass through on our way to the Golden Rock Pagoda. I feel my eyebrows rise and must admit, the news succeeds where the Nescafé failed: finally, after being in Burma a week—I'm awake.

I met Mo Win a few days earlier, just after I arrived in Rangoon. He was introduced to me by his British English teacher, whose address I had been given as my only contact. I found the teacher's house after three hours of trial and error. The street address I had been given was wrong and so was the street, but my young cab driver was insistent on helping me, the foreigner. So without any additional fee, we spent an entire afternoon together figuring it out. Not such an easy task if you consider the fact that we didn't want to call much attention to ourselves.

Guard at Shwedagon Pagoda

It's just three weeks after the brutal crackdown on protests in Burma. None of the people I knew from my last visit to Burma are where they're supposed to be. My monk friends are not at the monasteries. Some fled the country before the violence broke out, and many have simply disappeared. Many in the States want me to check on their Buddhist teachers, but I've been advised by Rangoon residents, if I'm seen visiting the monasteries, my presence will endanger the monastics living there.

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In 2004, I traveled to central Burma to practice meditation at one of the hundreds of monasteries there. I'd heard about the harsh military dictatorship and had read a little about the suffering of the people, but the monastery had been so peaceful—the constant murmur of chants mixing with the tinkling of temple bells; the dark, narrow boats gliding down the Irrawaddy River at dawn; the morning rays illuminating the tops of the white pagodas, which rose from the hills like sun-bleached mushroom caps across the water sheltering us yogis and monastics from the bustling commerce of Mandalay. For the entire month I had been enveloped in some kind of ancient tranquility; and yet once the retreat was over, I hardly felt at peace. Looking out beyond the river on that last day, listening to the chants of hundreds of monks and nuns, I knew there was so much I didn't hear and see.

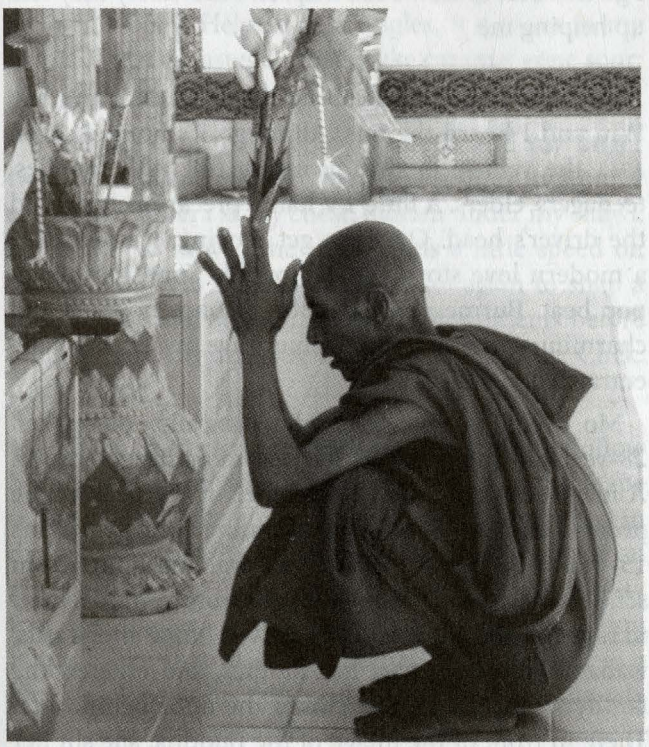
I decided I would overstay my visa and try to discover for myself why Burma had become such a controversial place to visit. And after about a week, when a broken train track forced me to take a cab outside the usual tourist circuit, I saw what the military government

didn't want me to see: girls no more than 10 years old stooped over shovels as they dug a new road in the scorching Southeast Asian heat. Boys armed with rifles as big as themselves sitting atop a military truck that passed my bus. But when I asked people in Burma about what I'd seen, their eyes turned dark, and they quickly looked away.

After the Saffron Revolution in 2007, and the brutal crackdown by the Burmese Junta on the protesters, I left New York for Kuala Lumpur to try to get a visa into Burma.

"I doubt you will get in," a man back home widely regarded as an expert on Burma warned me, "But if you do, always remember: bet your life you're being watched. Be impeccable in public places, lest those you're seen to consort with are taken in to sleep on the floor of a concrete cell."

But I did get into Burma, and the people proceeded to tell me their stories. In fact, they seemed to seek me out. When I sat in the Sule Pagoda, the main temple in the city center where outside, just weeks ago, monks and protesters had been shot, people motioned me to join them behind large statues of Buddha. Someone whispered to me where the bodies were buried—how they awoke last week to the strange lyric of metal meeting rocks and saw soldiers digging graves in the mists of the moonlit night near the fields of Shwedagon Pagoda. Another describes the torture received by a woman for tending to a monk who lay bloodied in her arms—they tell me her name and the name of her brother, a soldier drugged by the Junta when he refused to shoot and tried to run away.


Grieving monk

Behind closed doors with the shades pulled down and the music turned up, I sat with a group of students cross-legged on the floor. The girls took turns placing their hand in mine as I listened to each one's story.

Yamin Au saw two girls shot right in front of her hostel.

Aye Aye Cho was arrested and beaten for offering water to a young man who carried a protest sign.

Of the group of 12 students who meet here twice a week, only one was not accounted for, Nay Mo Myint, who works in the crematorium and disappeared 10 days ago after he began telling his friends he witnessed naked men burned alive alongside a pile of saffron robes.

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The morning I arrived in Rangoon, I headed straight to the Shwedagon Pagoda, where I had met many of the monks I came to call friends three years before—a place that held the unworldly hush of places infused with millennia of worship, washed in white and gilded in 18-karat gold. The place where less than a month ago two monks had been shot, directly inside, on the sacred floors.

Three years prior, I sat in the same Pagoda for hours attempting to meditate but was distracted by the lively swarms of monks, nuns, and families combining picnic with prayer on weekends and in the evenings after school and work. Tourists like me mixed among them to experience the spirited and gentle Burmese life. But in 2007, the Pagoda was nearly empty—a few elderly men and a couple of unsmiling monks ghosted warily across the polished marble floor. The main stupa itself, which rises high above the Rangoon treetops, its gold tip shining both in mid-day or midnight, appeared to have been robbed of its luster. The golden thimble looked more like a garish bandage masking a wounded thumb.

I took a place on one of the many white platforms beside a monk who was quietly chanting the Metta Sutta. I tried in earnest to match his chanting with my

own. We continued for some time when I noticed only my voice carried the verses. I turned and saw his wet face, streams of water dripping over his hands held in prayer below his chin. I swallowed hard repeatedly to prevent myself from sobbing. I had never seen a monk weep openly. It told me everything he could not say.

This is how I seem to cultivate friendships in Burma. I go there to see how I can help, and inevitably they end up helping me.

Suddenly he was gone, and I also left the pagoda quickly. I hadn't the heart for this. I jumped into the nearest cab and asked the driver to take me downtown where I could get a western coffee. As we neared the hotel, I noticed a group of soldiers with rifles sneering at people as they ran barefoot across the street, fruits dropping out of baskets as women lowered them quickly from their heads. They were trying to get under the thatched awning that served as a bus stop, where they could wait out the sudden rain.

I knew I wasn't supposed to take photographs of the military, but I couldn't resist. I paid the cab driver quickly and jumped out as soon as he passed by a large, white street sign. From behind this post I tried to focus the frame, but I wasn't fast enough. A soldier took notice and began to chase me screaming angrily in Burmese. I ducked into a large tourist hotel, the one where I'd come to get the coffee, and ran into the deserted gift shop. I hid behind a large statue of a Buddha. I waited, shaking with the shock, for 20 minutes, berating myself many times over for such naïve stupidity.

Afterwards I had my coffee as planned, but when I went to pay for it, my wallet, and the 2,000 U.S. dollars—the most I was allowed to bring in—was gone. There are no ATMs in Burma, so that the military can keep track of western monies coming in. In my haste to capture the soldiers on film, I had somewhere dropped my wallet. I ran the distance back to my hotel and burst into my room; there was no wallet on the bed. Nor in the safe. Nor in the suitcase. There was no one to call. International lines had been cut, as well as the Internet. I went back outside and sat on a bench. There was no blood in my face or hands. My mouth felt drier than I knew was possible, as if I had no tongue.

A few moments later a taxi drove up honking wildly, and the driver jumped out, waving my wallet in his hand. I hadn't told him where I was staying—I was instructed to tell no one—but since I was one of the only new foreigners on the scene, it was easy to track me down. I'd already begun to think that perhaps I'd left the wallet in the cab, but I didn't dare to dream it would be returned.

And why would it be? Everywhere the poverty of Burma screams out. The protests themselves had been in reaction to the rise of fuel and food costs escalating as much as 500 percent, and now, there was no tourism. No way for money to reach the people's hands. And this man's taxi seemed to run on duct tape and fumes. Yet here he was, beaming as he held out my bulging wallet. He insisted I check its contents. I flipped through the cash embarrassingly, all 2,000 dollars of it there. I tried to give him some money in appreciation. He refused. Back and forth we went. Until he jumped back in his cab and I reached through the open window and threw it in the seat beside him. When I ran into him by chance a few days later he insisted on taking me home to meet his family, who served me lunch. I learned from them that he had donated the money to the monks. His name was U Thein Ya.

This is how I seem to cultivate friendships in Burma. I go there to see how I can help, and inevitably they end up helping me.

***

U Thein Ya pulls his cab up to the station, and Mo Win and I board the bus. Although it's not yet seven AM., the vehicle is already nearly full with families, teenagers, elders. A little TV hangs precariously behind the driver's head. Once we get moving, it broadcasts a modern love story with a horrible Southeast Asian pop beat. Burmese Bollywood—at once horrible and charming—everyone on the bus, save myself, is totally entranced.

Mo Win is an uncharacteristically outspoken 28-year-old monk who'd left the monastery recently. A few weeks ago in late September, at the peak of the protests and the violence surrounding them, Mo Win's 15-year-old sister, Ei Ei Au, was walking home from school when two soldiers leapt out from behind a bush to rape her and a friend. Ei Ei arrived home afterwards, walked wordlessly past her mother, and entered the family shrine room. She closed the door behind her. There in front of the image of the Buddha, she slit her throat with a shard of glass.

In Buddhist thought, suicide carries the worst karma, because you take the most precious of all lives—the only one you're truly responsible for—your own. What happens to Ei Ei Au becomes a triple tragedy—the magnitude of which is compounded, if in the accounting, one is generous enough to add the suffering of the soldiers. The drugs, the coercion, the threats—involuntary conscription into the Burmese Army is well documented—these are the conditions that they face. Who's to say what we would do if faced with the same conditions?

Mo Win is convinced that if he goes home he will kill the soldiers. My plan is to buy a few days' time for him to meditate, so I offer to take him on an out-of-town trip to the sacred Golden Rock instead. About three kilometers outside of Bago, a snake of drab, green military trucks begins to overtake our bus. I count more than 40. A truck goes by with a boy no more than 11 or 12 years old manning a rifle on top. Mo Win nudges me hard.

"Come on, take it! Take the picture—you must sneak it out and send it to the BBC!"

If I take the picture and they see me, it won't be my head but the head of the bus driver, or perhaps Mo Win. They will be the ones held accountable.

Confusion drives a bass note thumping deeply in the pit of my belly. Helplessness tingles, it quivers in my palms. Outrage tastes strangely like caramel gone sour; it coats my mouth with a horrible, fermented paste.

I feel the cool metal of the camera, and my finger twitches uncontrollably over the shutter button. I clutch the camera at my chest, hidden under my shawl, but make no move. The truck gains a little speed on us, and Mo Win frantically urges me again to snap a shot of the child soldier. I wait a few moments before lunging with my arm stretched out in the aisle: Click. Click. Click.

I shoot the pictures through the front window beyond the driver where I can still make out the shape of the rifle and the small shoulders of a boy draped in drab, olive green. It's too far away for me to capture on my cheap camera, but I realize it's also far enough away that the soldiers haven't seen me, either. My action is futile like that of an angered child who screams a terrible name at his father after the parent has already walked out and locked the door.

***

Mo Win appears to lose a little respect for me. He seems to take glee at instructing me. I cannot place a gold leaf on the golden rock as he can because I am a woman. He begins to tease me that I am an "old maid," although I seem "very well preserved" for my age. At 42 and still single, the insults seem pointedly insensitive and hurt. The constant smudge on the lenses of his glasses begins to bother me. I know the glasses are not strong enough because he is frequently squinting. I decide I will buy him new spectacles instead of leaving the camera with him. A choice I know in my heart he will not be happy with. A choice I later regret. When I say good-bye to the students, Mo Win is not there. I never see him again. I go back to my hotel to pack and tear out all the pages of notes I took from my notebook, committing them to memory as best I can before running them under the tap. I suspect I will be searched carefully at the departure gate, and I pray that immigration doesn't ask me about the torn-out pages.

***

When my plane lands in Kuala Lumpur, I take dazed steps through the gate, as if coming to from some kind of shock. I blink repeatedly at the bright lights of designer shops and shiny chrome of the modern Malaysian airport. It's the first time I can show a notebook in public. I grab it from my backpack and begin writing furiously, even as I stand on the moving airport sidewalk. Though the belt keeps me in forward motion, everything in my body freezes. I stop, feeling a sudden sense of paralysis. My feet can't move and my

Junta convoy passes bus

mind can't quite alight on any words, while the people mover carries me its full length and I trip abruptly over the firm footing. I drop to my knees, gasping. I feel like I've been swimming under water, holding my breath for 14 days, and I've just come up for air. An airport attendant rushes toward me and picks up my notepad and pen. I only know one word in Malay—*Terima kasih*—thank you. I practically cough it out, a loud whisper, and shoo him away.

The memories of the past two weeks come flooding back. Kneeling beside the boy in the street selling flowers and incense offerings to bestow at the many Buddhas' feet—a girl, the same girl, or a different girl, walks directly toward me, touches my forehead with her hands. I watch things I cannot name pass across her face. No matter how many times she finds me, no matter where I am, her message doesn't change.

"Please, sister, I can no longer bare it."

Then she's gone and I'm unable to follow her.

I remember the hushed tone of the hotel waiter as he leaned into my table, shielding his lips with the menu as he handed it to me.

Golden Rock at sunset

"Thank you for coming to our country," he whispered. "You very courage."

I waited before extending my hand for the menu.

"You must be journalist?" he asked.

"No," I told him.

"I think you are. Why else would you be here?"

He moved in closer to wipe some ancient cigarette ashes from the stained white tablecloth.

"Sister, you must sneak our stories out to your country, like a little gift you might buy at our many wonderful shops." He looked up at the door before imploring, "Please, do not let the world forget us."

***

In Kuala Lumpur I set out to do just that. I thought the best—and safest—way to bring home stories of Burma was to spend time interviewing recent Burmese refugees who had fled to Malaysia and could speak to me with ease now that they were finally free. Or so that is what I thought—I had no idea I would spend the next two years uncovering what their life was like in Malaysia.❖

Karen Zusman is a writer, poet, and multi-media journalist living in New York City, whose coverage of Burma, Burmese refugees in Malaysia, and human trafficking of people from Burma, has been broadcast on World Focus News *(PBS), and published by* The Christian Science Monitor, USAtoday.com, abcnews.com, Witness.org, Worldfocus.org, The Huffington Post, Refugees International, The Democratic Voice of Burma, *and others. In 2009, she wrote, recorded, and produced the feature audio documentary:* Please Don't Say My Name: The plight of Burmese refugees living in Malaysia. *She continues to document the situation for people from Burma living in Malaysia and has just returned from there, where she focused on the stories of Burmese refugee children.*

For more information about her work and how you can help, please go to: www.pleasedontsaymyname.org *Learn more about the author's work with Burmese refugees in Malaysia and how you can help. Listen to excerpts from the one-hour, multi-media documentary, "Please Don't Say My Name: The plight of Burmese refugees in Malaysia" at* www.pleasedontsaymyname.org. *While there, click on "Resources" to find out more information about activism related to Burma.*

The Story Is The Seed
Cultivating New Ground in the BASE Legacy

by Mia Murrietta with J. Tyson Casey

"We're putting you to work in the front office," the woman said to me on my second or third day at Green Gulch Farm as a practice apprentice, a beautiful day in August of 2008.

For well over a year, I had plotted and planned how I was going to leave my desk job at a luxury watch company to move to Green Gulch and become a residential Zen student. I was so certain that I had *changed my life*, I couldn't fully comprehend that I had been assigned the same sort of job I'd left earlier that year.

"She must mean just for now," I thought to myself. "Later they'll move me to the garden, or at least the kitchen."

But soon it became very obvious that I was to work the front office and bookstore for my entire three-month apprenticeship.

"I can't believe this!" I said to the *tanto* when she called me to her room for a practice discussion during morning zazen.

"I can't believe I changed everything for the better only to end up doing the exact same work. Anybody can do office work!"

She shook her head no, definitely not. I was still disappointed. It didn't help that everyone else in the community got to enjoy silent work practice every morning, while the bookstore manager and I had to answer phone calls or talk to visitors. All I'd wanted was to really engage and deepen my practice, but I was still stuck in an office where I'd always been.

Over time I've come to recognize this as a symptom of what I call "The Overachiever's Lament," a belief that if I can get this or that aspect of my life just right, I will have the perfect conditions for transformation. Then, and only then, will I really be able to make some change.

As a consequence of this pattern of thinking, I've never been much of an "activist," at least not in the popular stereotype of that term—one who takes action against the system, someone who goes out and demands the perfect circumstances for a complete transformation of the world. It's bad enough when I lament for myself, but to lament for the wider world seems like a self-defeating prospect.

"The Overachiever's Lament," a belief that if I can get this or that aspect of my life just right, I will have the perfect conditions for transformation.

The other reason I'm not a traditional activist is because of where I come from. I am the granddaughter of migrant farm workers who settled in California as what the United States government calls resident aliens. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, my parents gave me a very clear message: Just being who I am—a Mexican-American girl from California's San Joaquin Valley—and going where I've gone—state-level competitions, a prestigious liberal arts college in New England—was in and of itself an act of social change, and at some level an act against the system.

Even now, my mother reminds me, "To really change the system, you have to get inside of it."

But I can't quite get comfortable with that idea, because I don't trust my ability to see possibilities beyond the system once I've put my efforts into becoming a part of it. Yet, I'm also not comfortable with the idea of being against the system—after all, it's my home, if not my highest or truest one. What I hope for, to borrow a phrase from conciliation and mediation scholar John Paul Lederach, is "something

rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist." As it turns out, what I've wanted is something that looks a lot like the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE).

Plant a seed...

A few months after completing my apprenticeship at Green Gulch, I found a job at The Engage Network, a nonprofit based in Oakland, California. As part of my job, I was researching strategies for integrating the hard external skills of traditional political organizing with the soft internal skills of spiritual or contemplative practice. That's when I discovered BASE on the BPF website. As I read about BASE, I felt I saw a similar spirit—an honoring of knowledge and skill *and* the highly personal processes and stories that germinate them. Those personal processes and stories are the seeds of what I've grown to call wisdom.

BASE is a structure for a practice of encouragement. It is about practicing being together in the world, sharing our stories and the numberless ways we are socially engaged

I was really excited about discovering BASE, and then equally disappointed to read that the program had been discontinued.

A week later I happened to meet the executive director of BPF at that time, Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, at a lecture we were both attending. I was eager to talk to her about BASE, and curious to know why it was currently on hiatus.

"Well, actually, we're hoping to start up BASE again," she told me. "Would you be interested in taking that on?"

I told her I was working full-time at a job I loved, and wouldn't be able to volunteer more than a few hours a week—but Tyson, my fiancé, was just finishing up his first year of graduate study in religious leadership for social change, and was looking for an internship for the following semester. It turned out to be one of those synchronistic moments. In August of 2009 Zenju formally offered us the opportunity to revive the BASE program. Tyson took on the volunteer role of BASE coordinator, and I volunteered as his collaborator. The seed was beginning to germinate.

Spread some rich soil and compost...

Over the course of six months, we dug deep into the history of the BASE program, interviewing many amazing practitioners who had participated in BASE in a variety of ways, and collecting their narratives. Many of the people we met were influential not only to our personal practice, but are also leading figures in the wider movement of socially engaged Buddhism.

The first BASE program dates back to 1993, when a number of BPF members and affiliates were seeking concrete means to integrate Buddhist thought and practice with social change. At the time, there was no widely known program for Buddhists, though there was an interest in the BPF community. Diana Winston submitted a detailed proposal to BPF for what was to become the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement—something she stated was "in the ether, waiting to be born." Winston was hired by BPF and, along with other staff, spent the next six months or so researching "faith-based service communities and programs... and political consciousness-raising and affinity groups." Many socially engaged Buddhists were called upon for wisdom and support. These collective efforts gave rise to a "community-based structure integrating social action and social service with Buddhist practice." By 1995 BASE was born.

The first BASE pilot started in the San Francisco Bay Area, with three local participants and five participants from around the United States, as well as a coordinator, mentor, and facilitator. To paraphrase Diana Winston, the defining BASE experience was people coming together—sitting, practicing, studying, acting when appropriate—to build sustainable communities. This was the ground from which we hoped to grow the new BASE program. But the much harder task proved to be moving from background theory to the actual practice.

Water well and watch it grow.

"What is your purpose?" I was asked during the interview for my current job.

I paused for a moment, a bit overwhelmed by the enormity of the question.

"Encouragement," I said, "I'm here to encourage myself and others."

I continued to reflect on my answer over the past three months helping Tyson launch this BASE pilot. I'm now beginning to understand that what I was really talking about was practice, the daily effort that creates the ground for planting seeds of deep and miraculous connection.

BASE is a structure for a practice of encouragement. It is about practicing being together in the world, sharing our stories and the numberless ways we are socially engaged, so that we may encourage the seeds of connection to flower. In spite of my struggling, it seems I ended up working in the garden after all. Growing a new hybrid of BASE was the collaborative effort of a core group of people who share a commitment to living our practice fully in the world, whether that means speaking out publicly against injustice or caring for ourselves with a blissfully unscheduled day.

This fall our BASE experiment will continue, and in preparation we are contemplating which parts of the program bore the most fruit, and which parts need to be pruned back. It's too soon to say what the next harvest will bring, but we're pretty sure it will start with a story.❖

If you are interested in participating in an upcoming BASE group, please contact Tyson Casey at base@bpf.org. *We will be coordinating another BASE cohort in the fall of 2010. Check the BASE section of the BPF website for updates and more information starting in the middle of June.*

Zazen and Opium

by Chase Twichell

I know what I have to give up.
It's not the flashy green commotion
of leaves this August evening,
garden blackening, drinking,
or the dogs unsettled by thunder
I can't yet hear. It's not the teakettle's
ongoing quarrel with itself,
or the snow's beauty coming from far away
to cover the beauty now ascending.

There's no sense giving up
what will be taken from me anyway,
first youth, now middle age departing,
the eastern woodlands stricken
by acid and blight,
beloved sky blue-blackening,
cedar waxwings swooping
low over the pond, feeding,
fattening for their voyage
to a world devoid of us.

I know what I need to know.
No path lies ahead of me.
Where I go, it follows.
I lead it to the monastery,
where I sit steadfast in the very early hours,
a pure Zen Yankee candle, my flame a vow
to save all sentient beings, beginning with myself.
I also take it into the vast playgrounds
of distraction, confusion, intoxication, desire,
drugged by anxiety and second guesses,
and deep into television's alternative wilderness.
What a beautiful war I wage,
the two poles equal magnets,
perfectly matched, married—
my own perfect paralysis.

Present then absent then present,
I inhabit the moment or do not.
It's one continuous decision.
The waxwings don't decide which insects
to eat tonight, nor wind pause to think before
clouding the mirror of the trees.
They leave no monuments.
Me, I'm always forsaking one place for another,
breaking branches to mark my way home,
taking leave of the tall grasses
heavy with seed-heads I crush underfoot,
birches vivid in storm-light, dogs just groomed,
fearful of thunder under the desk.
I smell garlic. Russell is making a marinade
for the trout he'll grill beneath an umbrella.
I realize, then forget, then realize that mind
is an ax that splits the one continuous moment.
Lightning! Scared dogs! Dinner! Brook music!
My eye goes home to the pond,
the bluestone slates I laid in the low places,
rain-shining their way to the water.

Rethinking Karma: The Dharma of Social Justice

by Jonathan S. Watts, Editor

Silkworm Books, 2009, 260 pages, $24.95, paperback

Reviewed by J. Tyson Casey

The moment I cracked open *Rethinking Karma*, I lost track of time. I have been investigating the topic of socially engaged Buddhism for years and in the process, constantly questioning my own understanding of what socially engaged Buddhism looks like as a practice. When ethics are added to the mix, it's an even more complex puzzle. But after spending a few hours with *Rethinking Karma* I was re-organizing my thoughts on social engagement, rethinking karma, moving it into a more centralized position.

When I read the introduction to *Rethinking Karma*, my hesitation with the karmic viewpoint expressed in many other books on ethics was affirmed. As Watts states, "karma does not mean fortune or the results; it just means action." Watts then leads the reader to arrive at an understanding of karma as "action based on intention."

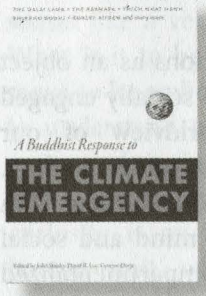
My favorite essay in the collection is "Karma: The Creative Life Force of Human Beings," by Nalin Swaris. An abridged version of a chapter in his book, *The Buddha's Way to Human Liberation,* this essay articulates the importance of collective karma for me in a way that continues to shape my individual actions. Swaris states, "karma is first and foremost the collective action of beings sharing the same species potential." He goes on to state:

> *Humans are not born into a social vacuum. They inherit a world, that is to say, physical and social conditions brought into being by the generations that preceded them. They themselves will leave behind what they inherited either unchanged or significantly changed for the next generation.... Human conditions have conditionally co-arisen, and thus come into being through the action of other beings.... To understand karma as collective action is to understand the necessity of collective action for freedom.*

This is one of many ways to challenge the more common understanding that individual karma is something we carry around, something we are born with, and something we will carry into the next life. This static view of karma is historically Brahminist, not Buddhist, and the Buddha's teachings on non-self, impermanence, and ethics radically transforms this Brahminist understanding. Over time, however, individual karma has been adopted by groups in power as a means of rationalizing oppressive experiences (race, class, caste, gender, ability, etc.). "The law of karma emphasizes personal responsibility and positive action, not passivity to harmful social conventions," writes Mangesh Dahiwale in his essay "An Awakened Vision: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Struggle to Re-ethicize Indian Society." If you are unfamiliar with Ambedkar's work, the Dahiwale essay included in the book is a wonderful introduction.

Rethinking Karma is a critical and comprehensive approach to the historical, social, political, and economic development of karma and the present understanding of the "law of karma." The essays illuminate the extent to which the politics of karma were intricately woven throughout the history of Buddhism and the countries that experienced Buddhism as a state religion. However, the thread of justice that is stitched throughout the book offers many new insights into these conditions.

Over the past few months, I have found myself returning to this book for one reason or another. As time has passed, the insights that I have gained from *Rethinking Karma* have both consolidated and expanded. To quote David Loy's concluding essay, "karma is not something I *have*, it is what I *am*, and what I am changes according to my conscious choices." With this understanding, I can work with others to shape the collective karma that we all experience and influence, based on our individual intended actions.❖



A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency

Edited by John Stanley, David R. Loy, and Gyurme Dorje

Wisdom Publications, 2009, 200 pages, $16.95, paperback

Reviewed by Mia Murrietta

Earlier this year, when the East Coast was slammed with what many called "Snowpocalypse 2010," my Facebook news stream was overwhelmed with photos

and comments about how "global warming" seemed hard to believe. Surprisingly, these comments were not limited to those in my friend list who I knew to be climate change skeptics or deniers. Given this experience, the first thing I appreciated about *A Buddhist Response to The Climate Emergency* is its use of the term *climate emergency*. Clearly the term *global warming* has given people the wrong idea about what is actually happening.

The book is divided into six main sections. The structure is thoughtfully considered but does give the book a certain disjointed quality, despite its symmetry and clearly stated intention to thread a Buddhist viewpoint throughout.

At the center are sections III and IV, perspectives from Asian Buddhist teachers and Western Buddhist teachers, respectively. These sections form the "heart" of the book and could easily function as a stand-alone volume. This "heart" is nested between sections II and V, which focus on the scientific details. Section II reviews the most recent research findings on climate change and its urgency, while section V outlines proposed solutions. The book opens and closes (sections I and VI) with essays from "the two most influential Buddhist teachers of our times: the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, and the Vietnamese master Thich Nhat Hanh."

The idea here is the creation of something new, showing a new way forward that integrates Buddhist teaching and traditions with climate science. I noticed that I read the essays and aspirational prayers in the center sections as a sort of daily Buddhist devotional, whereas the more data- and science-heavy sections invited reading in single sessions in an effort to get at a complete picture, or the most complete picture that existing data can offer.

Reflecting on this, the book functions as an object lesson in the difference between the socially engaged Buddhist worldview and the worldview of our conventional notions of scientific understanding. Despite science becoming ever more congruent with Buddhist understandings about the mind and social structures, the highly specific, compartmentalized knowledge provided by scientific inquiry compels us to seek out more information, more supporting evidence to give us a whole picture. Meanwhile, the Buddhist teachings give us a complete and essential picture, and we realize how ill-equipped we have become to perceive holistic systems.

The editors note their regret that the Asian Buddhist teachers featured in section III do not include other Asian traditions—it seems they are all from one or another Tibetan Buddhist tradition—but felt it was important to have the volume published in 2009, the year of the United Nations Climate Conference in Copenhagen. The hope expressed in the book for the outcome of that conference made me a little wistful; I wondered how deeply alarmed the editors might have been by the way the conference played out.

None of the Asian Buddhist perspectives came from female teachers. Out of nine Western Buddhist teachers included, two are female. And while Diane Stanley is credited as a co-author/editor of part V ("Solutions"), she is not listed as one of the editors on the book cover, and we know only that she is John Stanley's wife thanks to a line in his biography at the end of the book. These choices struck me as curious given that Western Buddhist sanghas have a notably high percentage of women in leadership, and that the grassroots base of many environmental advocacy organizations are also similarly made up of women.

There is a persistent stereotype of environmentalists as strident activists who seek to deny the special anointed position of humankind, to overturn what so many see as the natural order of things and put humankind back in their place, and in our stead prioritize the plant or animal kingdoms—in short, to perpetuate a dualistic relationship between humankind and the Earth. It occurred to me while reading that the Earth (as a body with an elevated temperature) is "working it out," and that putting "Earth first" is just another expression of anthropocentrism. We actually believe we are powerful enough to destroy the boundless miracle that is the Earth. In truth, we aren't. What *is* within our power is to destroy our precious opportunity to have a mutual relationship with the Earth and all other beings.

While at times *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency* can overwhelm with grim predictions, it also offers plenty of hope for our unique abilities as humans to meet what is fundamentally a challenge of our own survival. The book suggests at multiple points that what distinguishes us from the rest of life on this planet is that we are more precisely evolved to conceptualize interdependence and therefore can rapidly learn and transform through mutual response.

In the introduction, the editors write that "new technologies alone cannot save us without a new worldview," and then suggest that traditional Buddhist teachings of awareness and interdependence have much to contribute to that new worldview, supporting us in beginning to see that our individual well-being is indistinguishable from the well-being of so-called "others."

The book demonstrates how science is ineluctably moving towards a clear (and safely secular) "proof" of interdependence and karma—a sort of "butterfly effect." We have no way of accurately predicting the complete and exact effects of our actions, but we know for certain they are inextricably and intricately linked. Through the lens of my personal practice, this interpretation of karma prompts me to rely on my intentions, and to trust that what appears life-giving or life-supporting in my immediate circumstances has more likelihood to carry those effects forward than actions that appear life-denying.

Overall, my appreciation for this book stems from its emphasis on culture—individual and collective—and the power of cultural systems to alienate us from our ability to sensitively perceive karma and interdependence. I am reminded of the Prince Siddhartha encountering old age, sickness, and death, in spite of the carefully maintained culture of the palace. As the Buddha acknowledged those three inevitabilities and sought to address the cultural perception and response to them, so this book encourages us to address our individual and collective roles in the suffering—and health—of our ecosystem.❖

This Is Getting Old: Zen Thoughts on Aging with Humor and Dignity

By Susan Moon

Shambhala, 2010, 176 pages, $14.95, paperback

Reviewed by Jean Selkirk

I first knew Susan Moon as one of the Berkeley Zen Center legends—one of those early Zen students to join Sojun Mel Weitsman after Shunryu Suzuki-roshi asked him to start a practice center in the East Bay in 1967. The years have revealed more of the real Sue to me—down-to-earth, yet idealistic. At one memorable talk given in 2003, she shared sidesplitting quotes from the teacher she created under the pseudonym Tofu Roshi, drawn from the fictional minutes of the mythical practice committee. Her ability to gently, yet precisely, spotlight the humorous in both the silly and the profound revealed her to be the loyal court jester, clearly loving what made her laugh. It's this quality that I particularly appreciate in her most recent book, *This Is Getting Old*—the candor, and of course, the humor, as she reflects on her journey through the years. Along the way she uncovers universal truths in her particular struggles to adapt to the changes of aging, physical and mental, in life and in practice, sometimes resisting, sometimes letting go into acceptance.

"We see other people get old, but we can't believe we'll succumb," Moon writes. We want time to stand still, for particular moments to go on forever, yet endlessly change continues, necessary for anything different to happen, which we also want in those moments when we wish difficult experiences to end. Stillness and movement, presence and time, are the fundamental koans Susan Moon explores in *This Is Getting Old*. She shares stories of her journey, providing on each page the deep intimacy experienced with an old friend over a cup of tea, the kind that satisfies and leaves you wanting more.

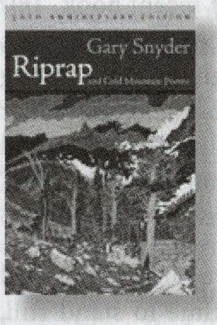
Both ends of life's spectrum meet as her childhood memories weave through her experiences, sweeping back and forth between life's bookend roles: parenting children and being the child; grandmother and grandchild; the lover left and the leaver; the Zen student who is now a Zen teacher. Her perspective widens beyond the topic at hand into the challenges faced by anyone trying to respond fully to what life offers.

One of the fundamental teachings Moon shares with us is curiosity. "I practice curiosity. Curiosity doesn't sound like a very spiritual quality, but I mean it so. What is it to be born a human being? What does it mean to be embodied in your separate skin? ... I want to understand who, if anybody, I am and how I'm connected to the rest of it." This quality of inquiring mind permeates each page. While on the surface curiosity is an alternately endearing and irritating human trait, when deeply motivated by caring it prompts and allows compassionate engagement with life.

In her book, Moon travels, meditates, and celebrates, exploring the continuum of equanimity through injuries of body and mind, revealing myriad ways

to be fully present with life, not to turn away. She plunges below the surface to explore grief, depression, loneliness, and peace, without losing her characteristic wry humor and infectious delight. And in the process, her stories become our stories.❖

Books in Brief



Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems

50th Anniversary Edition

By Gary Snyder

Counterpoint, 2009, 67 pages, $24.00, hardback, with cd

Reviewed by Everett Wilson

Poet, environmentalist, Zen Buddhist, lumberjack, mountain climber, Native American anthropologist, Chinese language scholar, it's impossible to pigeonhole Gary Snyder. But in the world of poetry, *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems* has long stood out as one of the great books of 20th century poetry, perhaps in part because it embraces all of Snyder's many identities in a large way, like Whitman's embrace of this new experiment called American democracy.

But Snyder's verse is less naïve and much more grounded than Whitman's celebration of America:

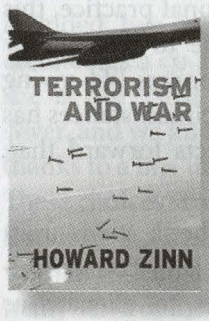
Lay down these words
Before your mind like rocks.

Snyder speaks in metaphor, of course, but he speaks of things first: granite, manzanita, diesel engines, racing down a rocky mountainside dodging a rattlesnake to plunge his head in the creek—"Eyes open aching from the cold and faced a trout." This could be a Buddhist metaphor for awakening, but its beauty lies in the simplicity of its invitation—simply feel the blazing heat of the sun, the cold roar of the creek, and meet the clear-eyed face of a trout.

It's the 21st century now, and Counterpoint has issued a 50th anniversary addition of *Riprap*. It's a beautiful book, hardcover; a full color woodcut by Tom Killion leaps off the dust jacket. The small book has quite a different look and feel from the hand-sewn edition Cid Corman's Origin Press first printed in 1959. But the little book has continued to resonate with readers over the course of many printings and re-issues.

In this 50th anniversary edition Snyder adds an afterword describing the poetics, vision, and life experience that inspired the book, and a footnote addressing some valid criticism of his poem "For a Far-out Friend." The CD tucked into the back cover with Snyder reading all the poems in the collection gives an audible feel to both the timelessness of the book, and the poet. Comparing his contemporary voice with his voice at a 1956 reading at Reed College, I can't help but hear the jagged edges of his 1956 youth smoothed down to a more mature authority, like a boulder in Piute creek.

Riprap has held up well over the past 50 years, and is well worth revisiting, or discovering for the first time.❖



Terrorism and War

By Howard Zinn

Seven Stories Press, 2002, 159 pages, $9.95, paperback

Reviewed by Everett Wilson

Best known for *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn died January 27 this year. He has left behind an immense legacy in the world of progressive thought. Even his relatively little book, *Terrorism and War*, resonates profoundly.

A collection of interviews and talks from September 2001 to January 2002 discussing the lack of dissent against the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the book is hardly current in a world where headlines turn stale after an hour, but in a strangely prescient way, Zinn's book remains deeply relevant to the current state of world affairs. Zinn carefully scrutinizes Bush administration claims that the war in Afghanistan is "making the world a safer place." Citing the failure of the invasion to meet even its own limited objectives: eliminating Al Qaeda, capturing Bin Laden, or destroying the Taliban leadership, Zinn further claims that even these stated objectives are "dubious." By creating a human rights "atrocity," the war can only inflame further terrorism.

That the atrocity has continued to escalate only makes Zinn's words more prophetic. Zinn's 2001 call to the activist community to unite and deliver a stronger, more cohesive imperative against the war is as current as the most recent Google headlines.❖

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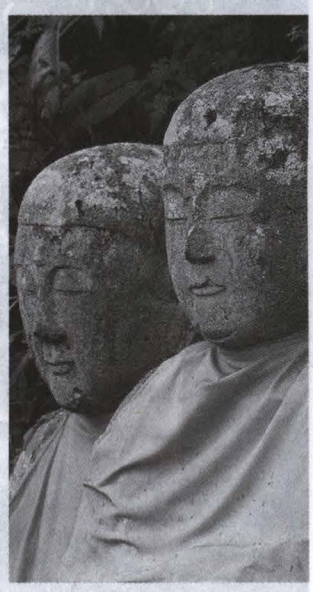

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A Wilderness Ranch and Retreat Center

My Dearest Friend,

You just have to visit Vallecitos Mountain Refuge, a magical 135-acre wilderness ranch and retreat center, because the land is untouched and the natural beauty is simply stunning. Vallecitos is 8,880 feet above sea level in the San Juan Mountains, 50 miles west of Taos, New Mexico. This means the ranch is about three hours away from cell phone service, internet connections, email and city noise, so you can really let go of the daily grind. The lodge amenities are simple, yet modern. Who needs a TV when you can go hiking, horseback riding or swimming in a mountain lake? And the gourmet vegetarian food is fantastic!

When you visit, you will be cradled by the mountains, forests and lakes—and comforted by the night sky that is bursting with star light. This is a place where you can truly get away from it all.

Upcoming retreats that might interest you:

- *July 16-31:* ***Lovingkindness and Mindfulness Meditation Retreat*** *with Steven Smith and Michele McDonald*
- *August 14-20:* ***Insight Meditation Retreat*** *with Trudy Goodman, Wes Nisker and Grove Burnett*
- *August 28-September 3:* ***Fourteenth Annual Meditation Retreat for People of Color*** *with Mushim Ikeda-Nash and Ven. Suhita Dharma*
- *September 24-29:* ***Insight into Nature Meditation Retreat*** *with Wendy Johnson and Grove Burnett*

Vallecitos holds retreats all year for all sorts of groups and interests. Take a look at the web site for a full schedule, registration guidelines, and more gorgeous photos. When you pick a retreat that looks good for you, make sure to register right away because the ranch only holds 30 people at any one time. I look forward to seeing you soon!

Your constant companion,

Inner Peace

Vallecitos Mountain Refuge
A nonprofit 501(c)3 organization founded in 1993
www.vallecitos.org • refuge@vallecitos.org
Phone: (575) 751-9613 • Fax: (575) 751-4038

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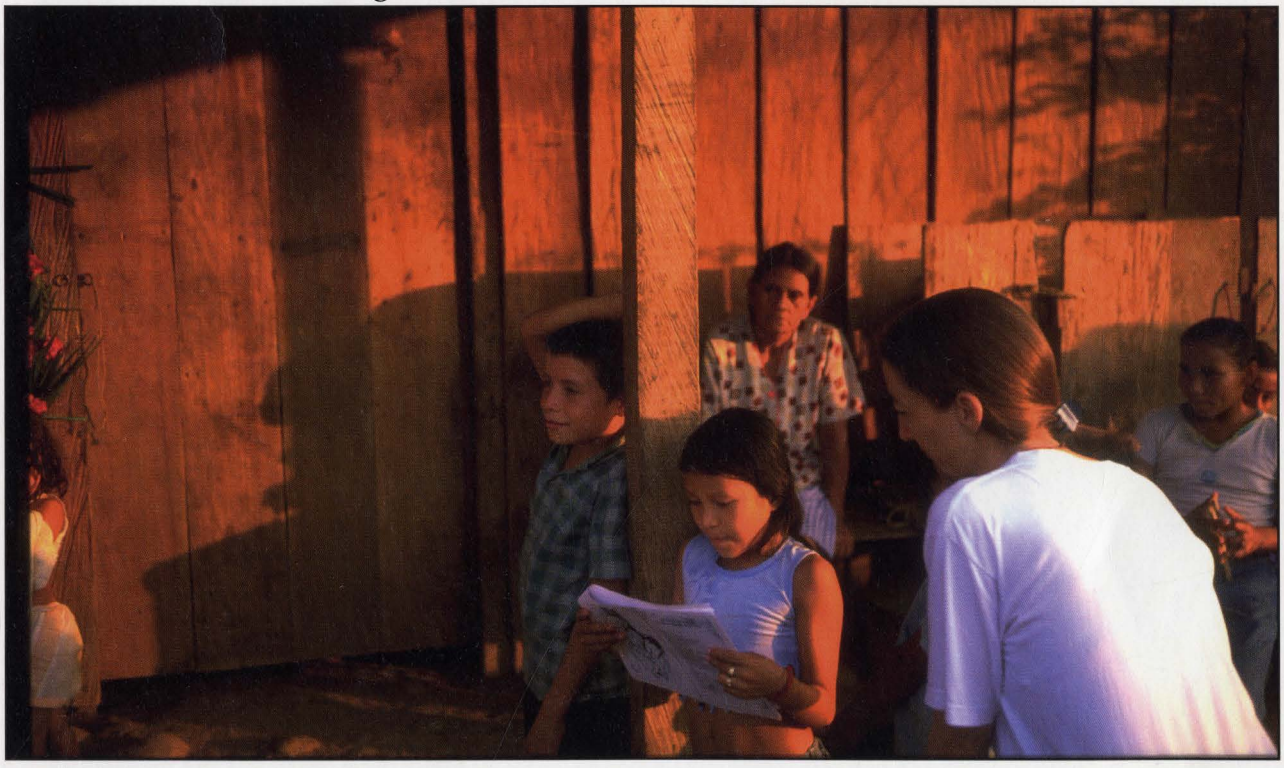
in partnership with the **Fellowship Of Reconciliation Colombia Program**

Dharma In Action Fellowship

Grounding Buddhist Practice in Peace Work for Colombia



The Buddhist Peace Fellowship and FOR are working together to place a Buddhist activist on FOR's peace team in Colombia.

For more information about the Dharma in Action Fellowship (DIAF) please contact:

Liza Smith, Fellowship of Reconciliation, liza@igc.org

To make a donation to support the DIAF, please make checks payable to:

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