

# TURNING WHEEL

*The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism*



## Special Anniversary Issue





# Call for Submissions

## Spring 2009: Women and Buddhist Activism

**Deadline: March 1, 2009**

*Turning Wheel* is looking for personal essays and articles on the topic of Women and Buddhist Activism. From the earliest women who in effect staged a "sit-in" to implore Shakyamuni Buddha to admit them into the sangha, to today's inspirational leaders like Burmese Aung San Suu Kyi, women Buddhists are powerful models of social engagement and dharma practice. *Turning Wheel* invites contributions that tell the stories of Buddhist women who are activists on behalf of their communities; women practitioners who have become activists within Buddhist patriarchal traditions; and practitioners of any gender who are connecting the personal and political with regard to the topic of women and Buddhist activism, both historically and in the present day.

- How have women teachers, activists, and practitioners made a difference to your practice? In your sangha? In your organization's work? In the world?
- Who are the leading women in today's engaged Buddhist movements, and what unique contributions do they bring to practice and activism?
- What is the relationship between feminism and Buddhism in shaping an activist practice?
- How does Buddhism (as a spiritual path, a historical legacy, and a set of institutions) support or hinder female empowerment and activism?
- How do female Buddhist icons or deities relate to real women's lives and practices?
- How have gatherings of women Buddhists inspired you? What are the challenges of such gatherings?
- Which women are represented in our ideas of "women in Buddhism," and which women are left out?
- What role does gender play in our understanding of Buddhist precepts, practices, and philosophy?
- What is the relationship between gender oppression and Buddhist ideas about suffering and non-dualism?
- How do we build and vitalize Buddhist sanghas that are truly inclusive of women practitioners? What would true gender equity look like in a Buddhist context?

Other related topics: specific women leaders (interviews or encounters), female monastic leadership, relationships between male and female traditions in Buddhist societies, Tara practices and other female-centered Buddhist practices as they relate to social engagement, activism on gender-related issues or by women Buddhists on broader social issues.

We prefer that you email your submission to <turningwheel@bpf.org> as a Word document. All submissions should be double-spaced, use 12-point Times font, and have one-inch margins on all sides. The author's name, date of submission, and article title should be placed on the top left corner of the first page. Acceptable word count is 800–2000 words. We are most interested in a writing style that is grounded in your personal experience. We also welcome submissions of artwork and poetry.

Submissions may also be mailed to: Turning Wheel/BPF, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703 (Attn: Submissions).

More detailed submissions guidelines can be found by clicking the *Turning Wheel* link at [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org).

# TURNING WHEEL

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**Cover Design**  
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*The Buddhist Peace Fellowship was founded in 1978 to bring a Buddhist perspective to the peace movement and to bring the peace movement to the Buddhist community.*

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BPF National Office  
P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703  
Tel.: 510/655-6169  
Fax: 510/655-1369  
[www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)

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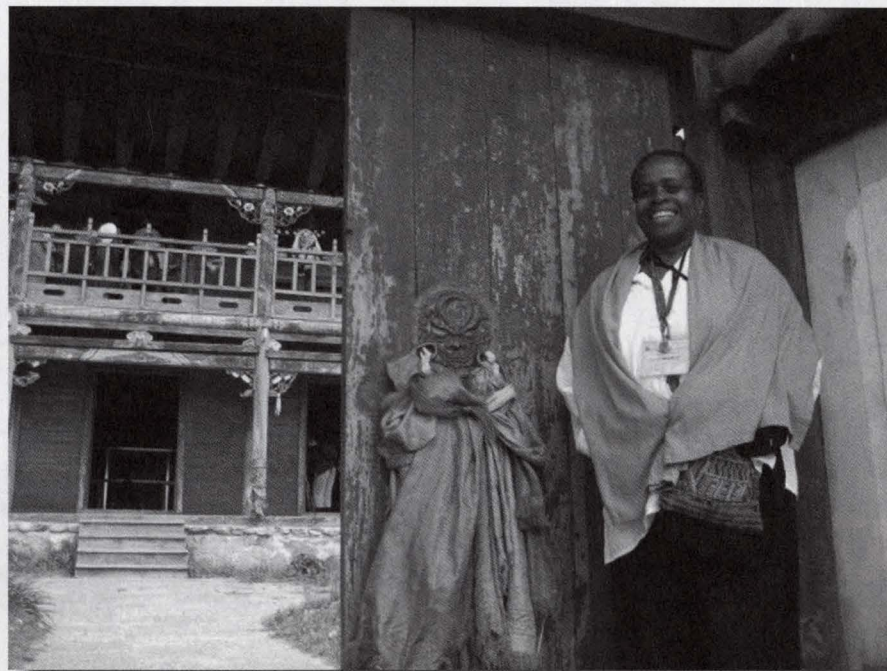
## From the Executive Director

### Dear Friends,

I'm remembering Tamil Nadu, India, December 1995. I removed my sandals near the open space of a temple just outside where the door had been before. Sporting dreadlocks and sweaty brown skin, I stepped inside the ruins and planted my flat, wide feet in the mix of dung and mud. The ancient temple had only one wall standing, and the sky was its ceiling. I wondered what it must have been like a thousand years ago to chant there, to sit in silence listening to cow bells and wooden wagons. I faced a crumbling limestone statue of Shakti, and despite the fact that she had no eyes, no nose, and chipped lips, I could feel the ripples of her presence throughout the centuries. Although I had been practicing Nichiren Buddhism for seven years prior, I felt in that moment, in that temple, a sense that I had been introduced to Dharma, or the teachings of Buddha, a hundred thousand million *kalpas* ago.

Whether that is true or not, I do experience meeting the Dharma as something that you don't do once. It occurs as often as one is awakened to the suffering and joy of life. So it is no surprise that I have arrived at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship to continue the ancient path of Buddha's teachings—to continue this endless process of awakening. BPF is not nearly as old as the temples I visited in India, yet it is filled with the vision of Buddha's teaching of going out into the world to serve—to end suffering by awakening with others.

In this journey, I wonder, how can we bring engaged practice from the margins of Buddhist practice into the center of our silence, our rituals, and our chants? How can we bring to the center of social change the smells and sounds of the Buddha hall? There are



At the  
Manjushri  
Temple in  
Mongolia  
(photo: Ven.  
Lekshe Tsomo)

no simple answers because these are important inquiries to consider if one is to take up the path of a bodhisattva.

Many practitioners throughout the 30 years of BPF's existence have lived with these questions—even as they worked tirelessly to act on behalf of those who are suffering and cannot speak for themselves. We all owe our deepest bow to those who have carried this organization from its beginnings until now, working with the uncertainty of integrating social action with dharma practice. There have been many commendable accomplishments.

I have grown to love the quirkiness of this organization. It has become a place in which to practice openness and vulnerability while remaining in the shock of facing illusions held around social injustices including racism, sexism, homophobia, and the like. BPF is a refuge for those who dare speak out for those whose lives are not valued. One can be afraid of such actions, or one can be afraid but still willing to take part. I am of the latter.

I came to the path of Dharma because it is about freedom and liberation. For the same reason, I work on

behalf of the members of BPF. If you have a vision for an engaged liberated path of practice it is difficult to ignore the call to action.

Recently ordained Soto Zen priest Rev. Marvin Mercer told me early this year, "I never thought to be a member of BPF until I saw and read that card." He was referring to our fund-raising card with a photo of the Rev. Zenkei Blanche Hartman marching down San Francisco's Market Street for the freedom of Burma. Soon after that exchange, Marvin sent in a large donation. Then, in April, he died of a heart attack at the age of 80. I was inspired by his committing to an engaged spiritual practice as if he had all the time in the world.

I say farewell to my brother Marvin and happy birthday to BPF!

In complete peace,

Zenju Earthlyn Manuel  
Executive Director  
Buddhist Peace Fellowship





# FEATURES

## LEGACY

From the historical Buddha, who built a sangha that engaged the most contentious issues of his time (caste, gender, warfare), through a long lineage of teachers and students who spread the Dharma throughout Asia; from Asian and Asian American teachers who first turned the wheel toward Westerners, to their students who adapted ancient teachings to the injustices of modern society, a few of the sources and pioneers of the socially engaged Buddhism movement are honored here.

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# Calendar of Socially Engaged Buddhist Events



Events with the BPF logo are sponsored in full or in part by the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

Please send event listings to <turningwheel@bpf.org>.

## September

September 19–21

### Introduction to Socially Engaged Buddhism

Workshop with Dean Chris Queen, Sensei Eve Myonen Marko, and Sensei Paul Genki Kahn

Maezumi Institute, Montague, Massachusetts

Contact: seiki@zenpeacemakers.org, (413) 367-2080 x3

[www.zenpeacemakers.org/maezumi\\_institute/events](http://www.zenpeacemakers.org/maezumi_institute/events)

## October

October 3–5

### Teen Retreat

with Tempel Smith and Spring Washam  
Hidden Villa, Los Altos, California

Contact: oct.teen@bpf.org

[www.hiddenvilla.com](http://www.hiddenvilla.com)



October 18, 6-8pm

When Silence Is Not Enough: Buddhist Peace

### Fellowship's 30th Anniversary Celebration

with keynote speakers Thulani Davis and David R. Loy  
St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley, California  
[www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)

## December

December 28–January 2

### New Year's Teen Retreat

with Heather Sundberg, Spring Washam, and Tempel Smith  
Land of Medicine Buddha, Santa Cruz, California

Contact: ny.teen@bpf.org

[www.medicinebuddha.org](http://www.medicinebuddha.org)

## February 2009

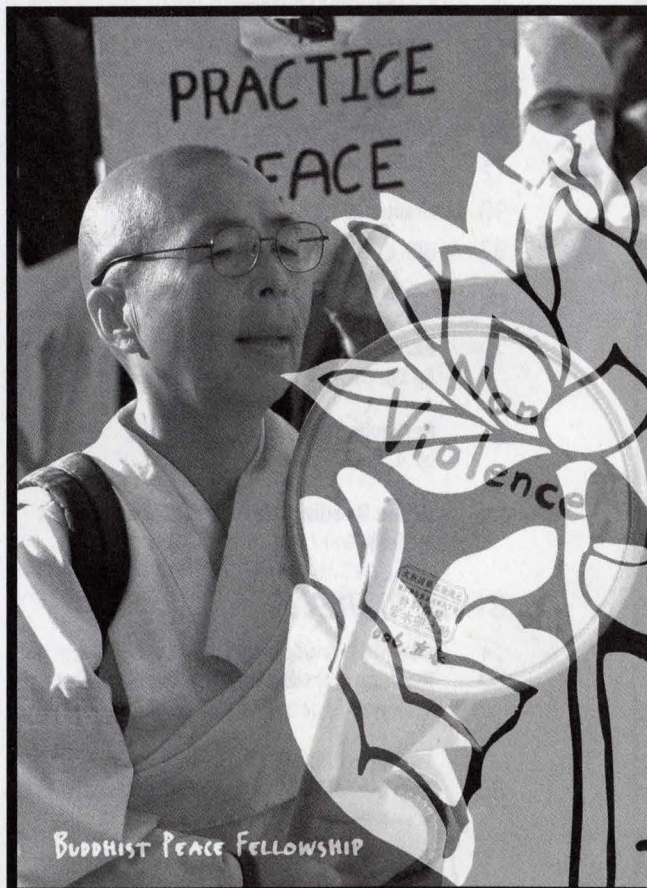
February 26, 2009, through 2011

### Upaya Buddhist Chaplaincy Training Program

with Roshi Joan Halifax, Margaret Wheatley, Fleet Maull,  
Stephen Batchelor, Richard Davidson, and others  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Contact: chaplaincy@upaya.org

[www.upaya.org/training/chaplaincy.php](http://www.upaya.org/training/chaplaincy.php)



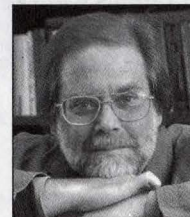
*You are cordially invited to a special event  
celebrating BPF's 50th Anniversary*

## WHEN SILENCE IS NOT ENOUGH

Saturday, October 18th, 2008, 6 - 8 p.m.

Keynote Speakers:

Thulani Davis and David R. Loy



St. John's Presbyterian Church  
2727 College Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705

For more information contact [events@bpf.org](mailto:events@bpf.org)  
or (510) 655-6169 x304

Tickets are \$45, with a limited number of \$50  
low-income tickets available.

Purchase tickets online at [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)



## Letters to the Editor

We welcome your responses to what we print. E-mail letters to <turningwheel@bpf.org>. Letters may be edited.

I'd like to pass on my appreciation for all that your publication and organization does for so many people around the world. I have always been duly impressed and inspired by your spirit and energy. As an incarcerated person in my 27th year behind steel, your generosity, kindness, and words have always meant so much to me. By reading *Turning Wheel* through the years, I have become familiar with Susan Moon, Jarvis Masters, and others.

Thanks again for all that you do and have done. The world is a better place for it.

—Randy J. Ekstrom, Iowa

Thank you so much for the wonderful, sustained work you do. Beautiful! Essential!

A couple of suggestions: perhaps a regular column on "Beginner's Mind"—in which someone who is just starting their contemplative practice/peacework dialogues with an elder about everyday life—and family-practice articles like the ones Mushim Ikeda-Nash wrote that articulate our attempts to love in relations and in social engagements for peace. It is also healing to hear what you as the parent community struggle with.

I know you already do so much, wonderfully. You are a great blessing!

—Luis Morones, California

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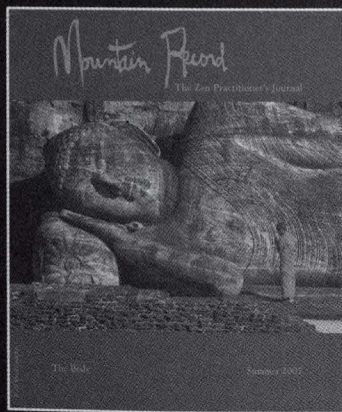
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# Indra's Net

News and stories from the world of socially engaged Buddhism, in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship community and beyond.

## BPF Melbourne Shares Stories from Burma

BPF Melbourne has continued to voice support for the people of Burma and to share their stories, following a BPF delegation to Burma last December. We did not anticipate that it would be a natural disaster like Cyclone Nargis that would expose millions of people to further untold suffering, both as a result of the disaster and the policies of the military regime. The cyclone has exposed to the whole international community the profound disregard that the regime has for its people's suffering through its failure to provide humanitarian assistance. BPF Melbourne has been involved in fund-raising and lobbying for political change in Burma.

BPF hosted meetings for Buddhists and the Australia-Burma Network in March, which were addressed by Ven. U Pannavamsa, president of the International Burmese Monks Organisation. BPF supported his call for an arms embargo as a means of reducing the suffering in Burma.

At our most recent wonderful fund-raising concert for Burma in a suburban community, local and Burmese musicians touched our hearts through their music, expressing solidarity and hope. Kavisha, whose mother is from Burma and who initiated the concert, was joined by a Karen singer and player of the Burmese harp who moved everyone so profoundly, both by his story of great loss of family in Cyclone Nargis and by his beautiful smile.

We have seen a wonderful spontaneous response by local community organizations here in Melbourne and in Burma. Monasteries and churches, individuals, families, and local businesses have been mobilizing a huge and effective relief operation. Funds raised from our concert and from the many donations throughout the year (\$13,000, including \$1,000 from BPF Sydney) are being sent to the following organizations:

*The Australia-Burma Community Development Network:* Donations are being delivered directly to the relief team in Burma, which consists of trusted local partners including a doctor, an actor, and two senior monks. These partners are then distributing aid widely to the communities that are in most need.

*Paung Daw Oo Monastery in Mandalay:* Funds contribute to a "spiritual adoption program" to assist 4,500 children orphaned by Cyclone Nargis, and a longer-term school project that will enable poor children to go to school and provide teacher education and service training. A friend from a small Australian NGO, Asia Peace and Education Foundation, will be shortly taking the funds to Burma directly to the monastery.

*KESAN (Karen Environment and Social Action Network):* Located on the Thai-Burma border at Mae Sot, this organization will print 1,000 copies of a Karen herbal medicine booklet for distribution in the refugee camps and through



Chit Lu and Ehley at BPF Melbourne's concert (photo: Delia McGrath)

backpacker medics. The booklet, written in the Karen language with descriptions of plants and pictures, gives information on family healthcare and offers healing potential in a situation of dislocation and loss for refugees and displaced peoples. Traditional medicine can provide "a thin thread of continuity" and treat a wide range of basic health problems.

—Jill Jameson, for BPF Melbourne

## Nonviolent Training Opportunity

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) North America offers a one-day training in peace skills that is open to the public, as well as a Training for Trainers program that empowers individuals to teach one-day trainings in their own communities.

BPF is one of 90-plus member organizations of Nonviolent Peaceforce, an international organization with six regions including NP North America. NP is a nonpartisan unarmed peacekeeping force composed of trained civilians from around the world. NP members apply proven nonviolent means to protect human rights, deter violence, and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work.

The one-day training in nonviolent conflict intervention is designed to give members of the general public tools for the practice of nonviolence in daily life and to learn "how peace teams do it." Common venues include churches, mosques, synagogues, neighborhood associations, sanghas, and community and peace groups of all stripes.

In addition, NP North America offers a "Training for Trainers" weekend in which people learn how to lead the one-day class for others. Role-plays, discussions, and stimulating interactive exercises prepare volunteer trainers to offer the course at low cost to groups in local communities. NP provides a detailed training manual and follow-up mentoring for trainers.



BPF members and chapters who have taken the training have found numerous ways and situations in which to apply nonviolent conflict intervention skills. Training for Trainers has been offered in Seattle, Boston, and San Francisco in 2008. Two more opportunities to enroll in the program this year are Philadelphia, Oct. 10–12, and Minneapolis, late autumn (dates to be determined). “As a longtime member of BPF, I urge you to participate in nonviolence training and consider joining—even starting—a domestic peace team in your community,” said Delia McGrath, a BPF liaison with NP and NP trainer. “By committing yourself to learning more about and practicing nonviolent conflict intervention, you may experience ‘being peace’ in your own life. You will also contribute to the cultivation of a culture of peace in our communities, our country, indeed in our world.”

For more information, visit [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org) or e-mail <[deliaforpeace@yahoo.com](mailto:deliaforpeace@yahoo.com)>.

### **Facing the Legacy of Slavery: BPF Witness in Richmond, Virginia**

On April 19, the Richmond, Virginia, BPF held a meditation vigil at the Statue of Reconciliation in downtown Richmond at the site of the pre-Civil War slave jails and auction houses. This was the center of the U.S. slave trade from about 1790 to 1860. Before that, since the mid-1600s, it had been one American site of the “Triangle Trade” along with Liverpool, England, and Cotonou, Benin in West Africa. Last year a Statue of Reconciliation created by Liverpool sculptor Stephen Broadbent was erected in Richmond, like the ones now standing in Liverpool and Cotonou, engraved with the dedication, “Acknowledge the past, embrace the present, shape a future of reconciliation and justice.”

This site can be envisioned as a power place because of the intense suffering concentrated here for almost two centuries. For many African Americans today, the site might be likened to Ellis Island for many Euro Americans, the place where their ancestors entered America, or were sold and shipped through to new plantations. In 1808 the importation of slaves from Africa was banned, a move encouraged by the Virginia plantation owners who stood to profit. From then until emancipation, Richmond was the center for the sale and shipment of slaves bred mostly in Virginia and literally “sold down the river,” separated from their families for the long passage down to cotton fields in the Deep South.

Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children were herded from this center of Virginia’s lucrative slave export market. At times, more than 10,000 were shipped from here each month. Individual slaves were sold as healthy field hands for upwards of \$2,000. Women slaves who were healthy and of childbearing age were priced



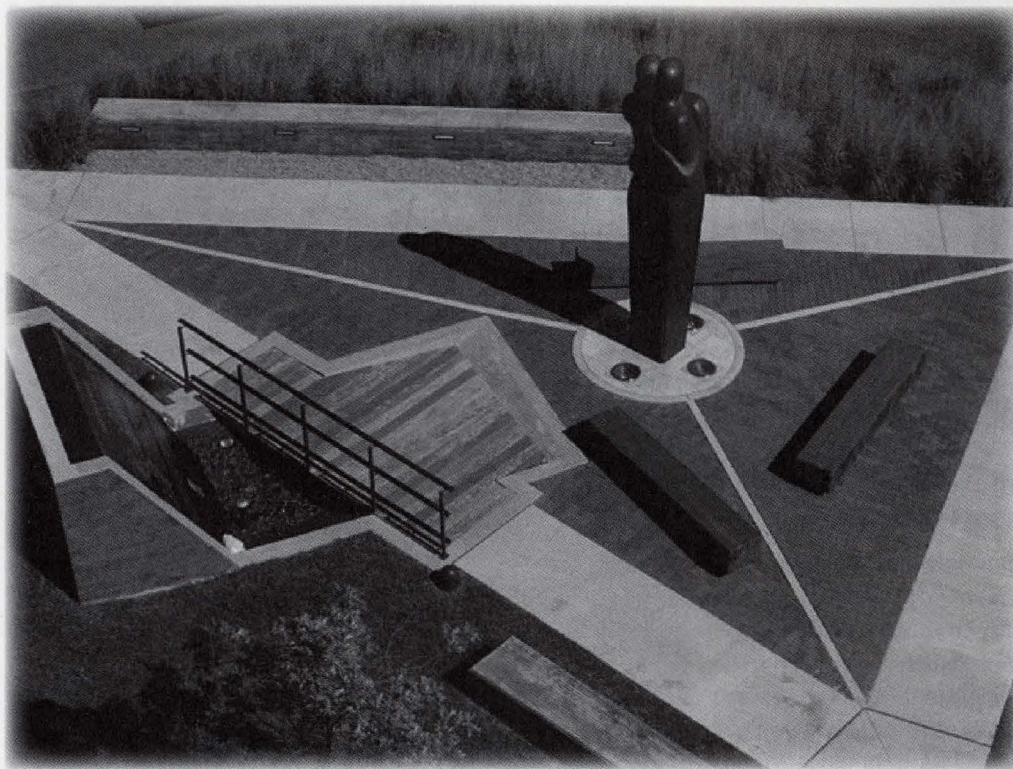
Enslaved Africans were led along this trail from the James River dock to the auction houses and slave jails of downtown Richmond, Virginia.  
(photo: Sharon Russell)

above all but skilled tradesmen. Historical sources from the 1830s to 1865 indicate that more than 3.5 million slaves were bred as part of a statewide industry and were sold and shipped out through Richmond.

Our witness event was not about directing blame. We are all victims; the huge legacy of this place still haunts our whole society in many ways. Reconciliation must be based on acknowledging this painful past, on our willingness to face the reality of our collective karma. We felt this as a sacred space for all Americans, due to the power of what happened here and its ongoing implications for all of us today.

At the beginning of the day we walked the nearly two miles from where the slaves were unloaded on the riverbank, along a wooded trail, and north across the bridge to the site of the auction houses and slave jails, where we then sat and meditated. It is a pleasant walk, now. As I walked I began singing to myself, “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” the old spiritual that was also a guide to the Underground Railroad and to freedom in the North or in Canada. But then I remembered that the African American slaves walked here in leg shackles so they could not run off and head north. And they did so in the middle of the night, because the Richmond citizens did not want to have to view this slave trade.





The slavery memorial in Richmond, Virginia, is part of a Reconciliation Triangle that includes identical statues at slave centers in Liverpool, England, and Cotonou, Benin. (photo: Sharon Russell)

Eighteen people participated in portions of the sitting. We included one Hispanic woman and an Asian American man but no African Americans. Three women who had seen the notice on the BPF website drove from Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, to attend. They spoke of how Harper's Ferry will host the 150th anniversary next year of John Brown's raid there attempting to free the slaves.

We sat in meditation on the grass behind the Statue of Reconciliation, next to a modern parking structure. Almost overhead, a busy highway roared with our current commerce. An elegant old train station was to the east, past the overpass. Visible over the low building to the south remained the three-story brick shell of one of the actual buildings that had housed the slaves awaiting auction. A little way behind us was the site of Lumpkin's Jail, one of the most infamous and brutal slave sites, which after the Civil War became the first African American school.

In my dharma talk mid-morning I spoke of how this legacy still haunts all of us, in the fear and suspicion between the races, in the unconscious privilege bestowed on those of us who are white, and in the approximately 40 percent of young African American men who end up in our penal system and feel little sense of few positive options in their lives. And still, slavery remains alive today in Third World sweatshops. Transformation will require that we acknowledge rather than deny all of these realities. At the end of the morning sitting we chanted the Metta Sutta, the

scripture of lovingkindness, and dedicated our practice to all who had suffered here and the legacy of that pain still pervading our nation and the world. After the end of the afternoon we went around the circle and everyone spoke of the many complex and compelling feelings evoked by facing the suffering of this powerful place. We are hoping to repeat the event next year. Donna Shoshin Chester, one of the practitioners who shared her experience, has written after more reflection:

The idea of bearing witness to something so large was overwhelming for me and I wasn't sure how to engage in the process. But when I arrived at the docks, I decided to remain

open and simply put myself in the place of a slave: walking along in silence with the sangha, looking at the river, wondering where I was going and what of my fate.

Once at the site, I changed my viewpoint and bore witness. Even amongst the city noises, the hot sun beating down, my zazen was a part of it all. It wasn't until the last hour of the day that things began to move for me. I was hearing the cries and screams of families being separated, the snapping of whips, the noises and laughter of the buyers, the chains being dragged. I kept turning from it, several times. But then, I allowed it to enter my heart. It brought me to tears.

When I went home that evening, the feelings of hurt and sorrow came out. Yet at the same time, I could also feel the joy and freedom from facing it. This mix of feelings remained with me for a few days and eventually faded. To me it all felt that the cries and pain I heard were not just from that site of suffering but also my own; perhaps from this whole world. There was no definition of who it belonged to. It was merely pain and suffering.

A few weeks have passed. That day still lingers with me but in a more transformative way. I entered with no expectations. I emerged with so much.

—Taigen Dan Leighton leads the Ancient Dragon Zen Gate in Chicago ([www.ancientdragon.org](http://www.ancientdragon.org)), and teaches annually in Richmond, Virginia. Donna Shoshin Chester practices at the Richmond Zen Group and also at the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mount Tremper, New York.

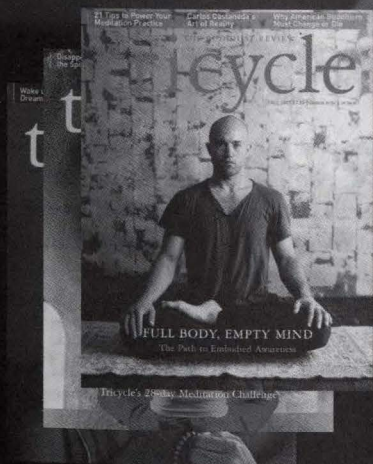


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# The Way of the Sock

by Tofu Roshi

**S**ocially engaged Buddhists are often asked, "If you're engaged, then when is the wedding?" But an engaged Buddhist is engaged to *all* beings, and that's why we don't marry them, because if we did, it would be polygamy in a big way.

In the Zen tradition, we take the bodhisattva vow to save all sentient beings. This is a very big vow, and it's important to get started right away. If you save someone today, then tomorrow morning your vow can be, "I vow to save all sentient beings minus one, the one I saved yesterday." And the next morning, there will be two fewer beings to save. In this way you can actually move towards the completion of your vow.

The time is now. No more contemplating our navels all day while wars are being mongered and corporations are seizing what belongs to all of us. If you sit still too long, you may discover that you owe back rent for the very cushion you're sitting on. Keep in mind that socially engaged Buddhism is the union of the spiritual with the political, dharma with door-to-door, the vow with the vote, prayer wheels with whistle stops, satori with socialism, the ineffable with the effable.

My dharma brother, Robert Aitken Roshi, charges Buddhists with a tendency to be "namby pamby" in our activism. Sure, sit down and do your morning meditation, but don't linger in samadhi like a bather in a hot tub. And when you do get off your duff, don't be too nice. Leap up from your cushion with a bold heart, like a lioness leaping from the limb of a baobab tree, and go forth. A bodhisattva remembers that nobody is free until everybody is free, and nobody is clean until everybody is clean.

When I take the bodhisattva vow to save all beings, I am saying that even in the unlikely event that I get it right and become fully enlightened in this life, I vow to return after death to this realm of dissatisfaction and lost socks (more about this later), instead of passing through the gate to nirvana, where everything is everything and nothing is enough. As they say in AA, I will keep coming back until all the lost socks are found and darned. Bodhisattvas are recyclers, and this is the bodhisattva vow: I vow to recycle myself.

Besides, as my dharma brother Sojun Mel Weitsman has pointed out, you actually can't throw anything away no matter how hard you try. Even if you lob your plastic bags into outer space, they are still there, waiting to mess up the radar on somebody's space shuttle some day.

Socially engaged Buddhism is not a new invention. Buddha sat down under a dead tree in front of his village and fearlessly faced an invading army. The enemy general was so impressed by the Buddha's devotion and courage that he turned his army around and went back home. Later the general came back and destroyed the village anyway, even though Buddha was still sitting there. This is kind of a sad teaching, but the point is, don't give up, even if you don't save what you were trying to save. You'll probably be saving something else, even though you might not know what it is right away. And please always keep two basic SEB precepts in mind: 1) no running in the street, and 2) no pinching.

As you may know, I have a day job as the manager of the Next to Godliness Laundromat. One of the problems that comes up frequently in our Soap Sud Sangha is the problem of lost socks. We have transformed this suffering into an opportunity for community building.

We hold a weekly symposium and sock exchange, and everyone lays their stray socks out on the big table, warm colors on one side and cool colors on the other. While we sort and look for matching pairs, we discuss a social justice issue.

The joining together of a pair of socks is a perfect metaphor for our work in the world: two socks make one pair. At the same time, at the deepest level of nonduality, a pair of socks is "not one, not two." I will speak about this ancient koan another time. Then we write letters to our members of Congress, and we sock it to 'em by inserting our letters into the leftover socks and preparing them for mailing.

We finish the evening with a sock hop. As Robert Thurman puts it, "Think globally; act joyfully." ■

*Tofu Roshi is the abbot of the No Way Zen Center, and you can read more of his wisdom in The Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi (Shambhala, 1988), by Susan Ichi Su Moon.*



# The Adventures of SEB Collie

by Mari Gayatri Stein

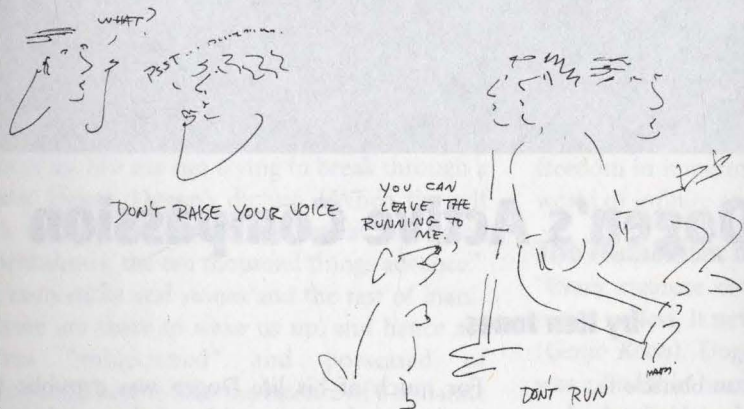


SEB COLLIE TRYING TO KEEP BEINGS IN THE SAFE ZONE

HERE LET ME HELP... AND BY THE WAY, HOW'S YOUR MOTHER?

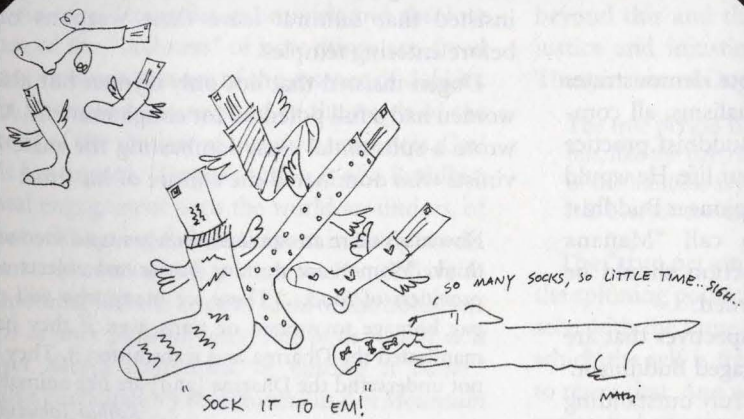


HELP THE "PEACE" OFFICER HANDCUFF YOU.



GRIP? WONT YOU HAVE A FLEUR INSTEAD?

DON'T HIT ANYBODY!



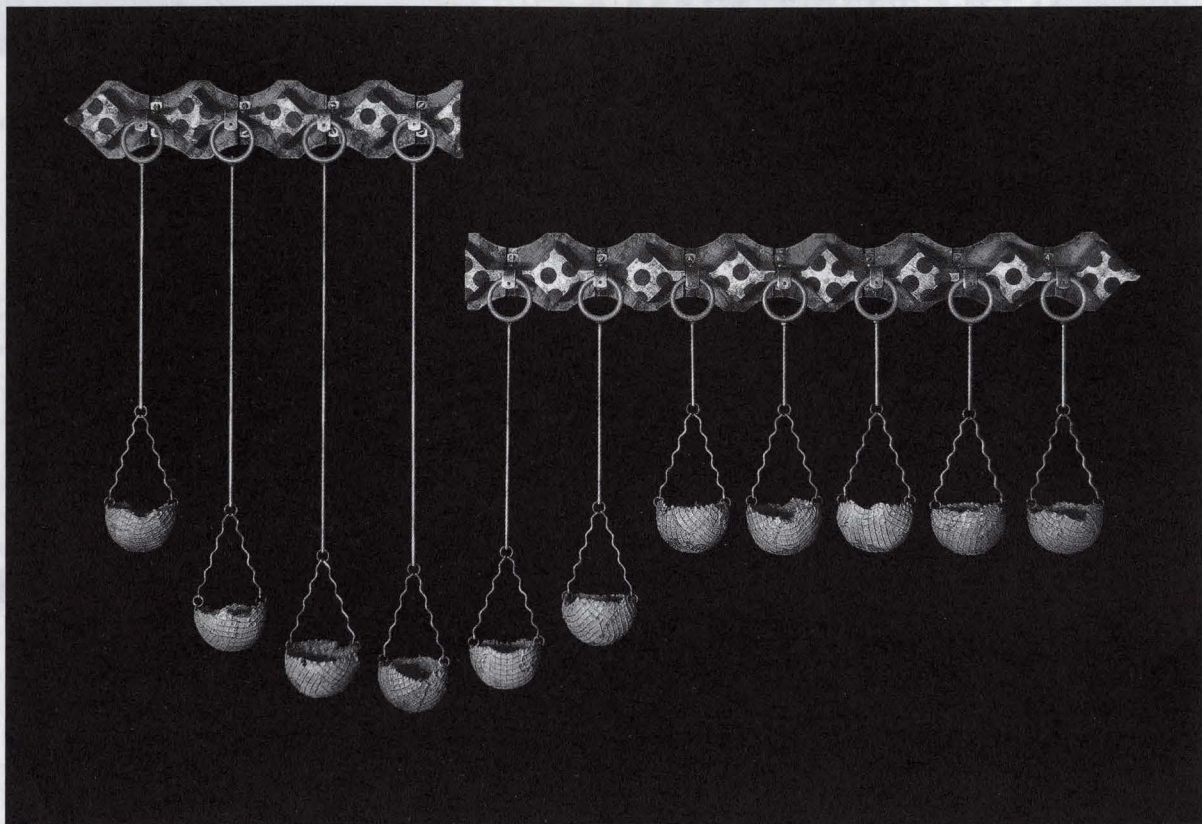
"SOCK IT TO 'EM!"



WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT STILL ON THE GROUND

Mari Gayatri Stein has been a professional writer and illustrator/cartoonist for over 30 years. Visit [www.gypsydogpress.com](http://www.gypsydogpress.com).





"Continuity"  
by Chris Beards  
[www.chrisbeards.com](http://www.chrisbeards.com)

## Zen Master Dogen's Active Compassion

by Ken Jones

Those who regard worldly affairs as an obstacle to their training do not realize that there is nothing such as worldly affairs to be distinguished from the Way.

*Bendowa—Wholehearted Practice*

Eihei Dogen in the above quote demonstrates his concern to dissolve all dualisms, all compartmentalization. For him Buddhist practice is about fully and mindfully living your life. He would surely have been critical of what that pioneer Buddhist activist David Brandon liked to call "Mañana Buddhism"—the view that social action should be delayed until enlightenment had dawned.

This is one of several Dogen perspectives that are particularly relevant to a socially engaged Buddhism.

Dogen (1200–1253) is one of the truly outstanding figures in the history of Buddhism. Founder of the Soto Zen sect, Dogen produced a large body of writing, much of which is, for several reasons, quite demanding. Nonetheless, his influence has continued to grow, both among scholars and practitioners like ourselves.

For much of his life Dogen was a public figure active in a society ravaged by civil war, plague, and destitution. He showed considerable courage in denouncing the excesses of the warlords, and typically insisted that samurai leave their weapons outside before entering temples.

Dogen insisted that not only laymen but also laywomen had a full potential for enlightenment. And he wrote a substantial essay lambasting the male chauvinists who dominated the culture of his time:

Nowadays there are some extremely stupid men who think, 'Women are nothing but sexual objects and providers of food...' There are many who will not pay homage to women or nuns even if they have manifested the Dharma and transmitted it. They do not understand the Dharma [and] are like animals.

*Raihai Tokuzui—*

*Paying Homage and Acquiring the Essence*

### An Inspiring Dharma

It has to be said that, in his later years, as he withdrew more deeply into monasticism, his views appear to have grown more conservative. However, Dogen is



important to contemporary activists more for the inspiring kind of dharma he taught than as an exemplar. For Dogen, this world of space and time is an active and potentially transformative agent of liberating awakening if we can but open ourselves to it. Typically, the fearful self responds to the sense of *lack*, of chronic existential insecurity, by structuring, solidifying, dulling, and narrowing the world as experienced. This self may spend a lifetime raging and rattling the bars of the cage so laboriously constructed, shackled by Blake's "mind-forged manacles." Such is our lifelong, unwinnable lawsuit with reality, as Hubert Benoit so graphically described it. The wonder of the world is thus debased to an egocentric shadow of our wants and fears—political as well as personal. In his *Genjo Koan* Dogen characterized our typically upside-down, inside-out, back-to-front way of experiencing life with the metaphor of the boat and the shore, where it is the latter which we suppose to be moving.

Dogen elaborated and enlarged the contention of predecessors like Hui Neng that all beings have (or rather, *are*) Buddhature. That is to say, we all are intrinsically inwardly at peace and outwardly compassionate but are characteristically too fearful and deluded to be aware that this is so.

And yet the world around us is constantly seeking to enlighten us, like the sun trying to break through a cloudy sky. Hence, Dogen's dictum, "When the self advances, the ten thousand things retreat; but when the self withdraws, the ten thousand things advance."

Thus even sticks and stones and the rest of inanimate nature are there to wake us up, and hence are themselves "enlightened" and possessed of Buddhature. There is here the essence of a dynamic and mutually transformative dharmic ecology.

### A Life of Total Engagement

The way out of suffering lies in heartfelt and absolute acceptance of the "suchness" of how things are, freed of all those evasions that are of the essence of *dukkha*. This then liberates us to respond to the needs of the world, freed of the shadow of our own neediness. Carl Bieldefelt has argued, "Dogen's vision is of a Buddhist life of total engagement with the world around us, of a Buddhist self that is a full participant in the immediate circumstances in which it finds itself.... I have in mind something like the ancient ideal of the bodhisattva *who is at once patiently accepting of the world as it is and yet deeply committed to making it better.*" ("Towards a Participatory Buddhism," in *Zen Mountain Record* 21(1), Fall 2002).

The italics are mine, and such "empowerment through acceptance" refers to the root paradox of socially engaged Buddhism, where "nothing matters; everything matters" (or, philosophically speaking, "form is only emptiness,

emptiness is no other than form").

This paradox is encapsulated in the activists' koan of Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, an influential postwar Japanese teacher, scholar, and activist: "Right now, if nothing you can do is of any avail, what do you do?"

Moreover, for Dogen the world is alive with variant perceptions and possibilities, and hence the bodhisattva spirit of serious playfulness. The Korean scholar Hee-Jin Kim writes in *Eihei Dogen: Mystical Realist* of Dogen's emphasis on *dotoku*—active compassion—as follows:

In Dogen's view, things, events, relations were not just given but were possibilities, projects, and tasks that can be acted out, *expressed, and understood as self-expressions and self-activities of the Buddhature* [my italics-KJ]. This did not imply a complacent acceptance of the given situation but required man's strenuous efforts to transform and transfigure it. Dogen's thought involved this element of transformation, which has been more often than not grossly neglected or dismissed by Dogen students.

Also, the first line of the quotation reminds us that there are "no things as they really are," only liberation from "I see what I am." Neither is there a "pure consciousness," a nirvana where there is security at last from the flux of impermanence and the pit of insubstantiality. On the contrary, the bodhisattva finds true freedom in impermanence and insubstantiality and a world of infinite and wondrous possibilities.

### The Humanism of Suchness

"Every creature covers the ground it stands on, no more, no less. It never falls short of its completeness" (*Genjo Koan*). Dogen was a great humanist. But he was a *Buddhist* humanist. What does this mean?

In the first place, it is an all-embracing humanism, including every star, every atom. Moreover, it is the humanism of "suchness," of "just-how-it-is-ness," beyond this and that, good and bad, rich and poor, justice and injustice, the tyrant and the oppressed. Thus, in one of Dogen's many fine poems:

The true person is not anyone in particular  
but, like the deep blue color  
of the limitless sky,  
it is everyone, everywhere in the world.

The "true person" is not only your friend but also the spinning politician and the Burma arms dealer, all seen with the same eye of this inclusive humanism in which the self is freed of its need to cling to this and to reject that. *And which is therefore liberated into clear seeing and effective action against injustice.* And so:

In the stream  
rushing past  
to the dusty world  
my fleeting form  
casts no reflection.



And shadow neither, so that things may be hopeless but not dispiriting; unjust but not hateful; beautiful but not desirable; loathsome but not rejected.

### Action in Timeless Time

And what of “having no time,” of the crowded diary, and what Thomas Merton called the “frenzy of the [overcommitted] activist?” To fill our deep sense of lack, time is reified and solidified and returns to us as yet another vexatious constraint.

Dogen maintained that “everything exists in the present within yourself” (*Zenki*). So “when you cross the river and climb the mountain, you are time. We cannot be separated from time.... Time appears to be passing, but the past is always contained in the present” (*Uji*). If we *are* time, how then does this radically change our conventional way of living in time? The experience of the past—maybe some ancient injustice—exists only in the present, as memory and record. And the future is no more than an intention conceived in the present. And since the present is gone as soon as it arrives, we therefore live in timeless time. David Loy has likened this to being in the middle of the ocean in a light rubber dinghy that moves as fast as the current that carries it, and hence, in the absence of any fixed point from which to gauge it, gives us no experience of movement at all. Yet we begin to feel thirsty and hungry—time *does* pass.

So here again, how can we live out and embody the paradox of this further version of the Two Truths, of emptiness and form, where timeless time exists at the intersection with that fleeting time that cannot be denied? No longer harassed by the clocks and calendars of fleeting time, we relax in timeless time, simply doing our best “as if we had all the time in the world,” and yet at the same time within the remorseless constraints of fleeting time. To be able to do this wholeheartedly is no easy matter. T. S. Eliot in his *Four Quartets* (“The Dry Salvages”) comments as follows:

Men’s curiosity searches past and future  
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
The point of intersection of the timeless  
With time is an occupation for the saint.

### The Redemption of Morality

Situational versus absolute morality is an important issue, particularly for socially engaged Buddhists, to which Dogen brings some trenchant clarification. Again, from Hee-Jin Kim’s excellent *Eihei Dogen: Mystical Realist* (Wisdom, 2004):

[For Dogen] the moral values of good, evil and neutral do not exist in themselves or for themselves with any independent metaphysical status, because they were nothing more than the temporary configura-

tions resulting from infinitely complex interactions of conditions.

Dogen: *The human mind is neither good nor evil. Good and evil arise with circumstances.*

Dogen: *What is good and what is bad are difficult to determine.*

Dogen: *Good is understood differently in different worlds.*

Thus “a perennial question in Dogen’s thought was ‘What particular course of action am I to choose here and now in this particular situation?’ Dogen himself was acutely aware of the enormous difficulties in answering the question” (222). And so “although ‘not to commit evil’ was the moral as well as the trans-moral sensibility that was intrinsic to enlightenment...this did not imply denial of the human propensity for failure and guilt.... That is why we must constantly repent and be forgiven.... Though it may sound paradoxical, confession is an essential part of enlightenment, not a condition prior to enlightenment” (225–6).

### The Four Ways of a Bodhisattva

This is the title of a writing in Dogen’s *Shobogenzo* collection, dated May 5, 1243.

The first way is that of generosity (*fuse*), which Dogen interpreted broadly to include having “a position in society and to act on behalf of society,” in which he included “politics and industry.” “Supplying a boat or building a bridge are deeds of fuse.”

The second way is *aigo*—kind speech. “When we meet together and talk, we should take care of each other.... We should learn that aigo has great power to change situations.”

Third is *rigyo*—beneficial action—which means that in our concerns and activities “we take care of every kind of person, no matter whether of high or low position.”

Fourth is *doji*—compassion and empathy. “Not to differentiate self from others.... When we know doji, we are at one with ourselves and others.”

“What is most necessary is that we face everything with an open and flexible mind” are Dogen’s concluding words. ■

*The two Dogen poems are from Steven Heine’s Zen Poetry of Dogen (Tuttle, 1997).*

*Ken Jones is a Zen and Ch’an practitioner and teacher of 30 years’ standing. He is a founder of the UK Network of Engaged Buddhists and a member of the International Advisory Committee of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. He is author of The New Social Face of Buddhism (Wisdom Publications, 2003).*



# Excommunication

by **Randy J. Ekstrom**

Art by Marc Lancel



A small wooden bowl hovers,  
inverted, above divested heads,  
balanced precariously in the oppressive heat  
between hands intended for prayer.  
Emptiness tumbles; past ancient stains  
scrubbed invisible by thin, pale fingers.  
Silence roars toward the ground:  
“Alms for the people, alms for the poor.”  
Saffron robes sway rhythmically  
beneath the burnished beggar’s bowl,  
a whispered “Om” escaping monastic lips.  
Burma echoes, circling the edge of the bowl,  
ricocheting from the past.

Far away, in bejeweled uniforms,  
the junta sips from golden chalices  
while plucking rubies from silver bowls.  
Unruffled, a general yawns and orders lunch.  
“Feed the people—fill the bellies of Myanmar.”  
Khaki-clad chefs march obediently to the streets  
serving platters of lead and goblets of blood.  
The world shudders, momentarily,  
as the bowl crashes to the dust,  
shattered.

*Randy J. Ekstrom is in his 27th year of incarceration in  
Newton, Iowa. He wrote this poem after reading about  
Burma in Turning Wheel.*



# Original Visionaries

## BPF Portraits

**I**n these pages we honor four teachers whose strong practice and commitment to social justice were instrumental to the formation of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Their talks, writings, and life work have sustained BPF and its members since the early days.

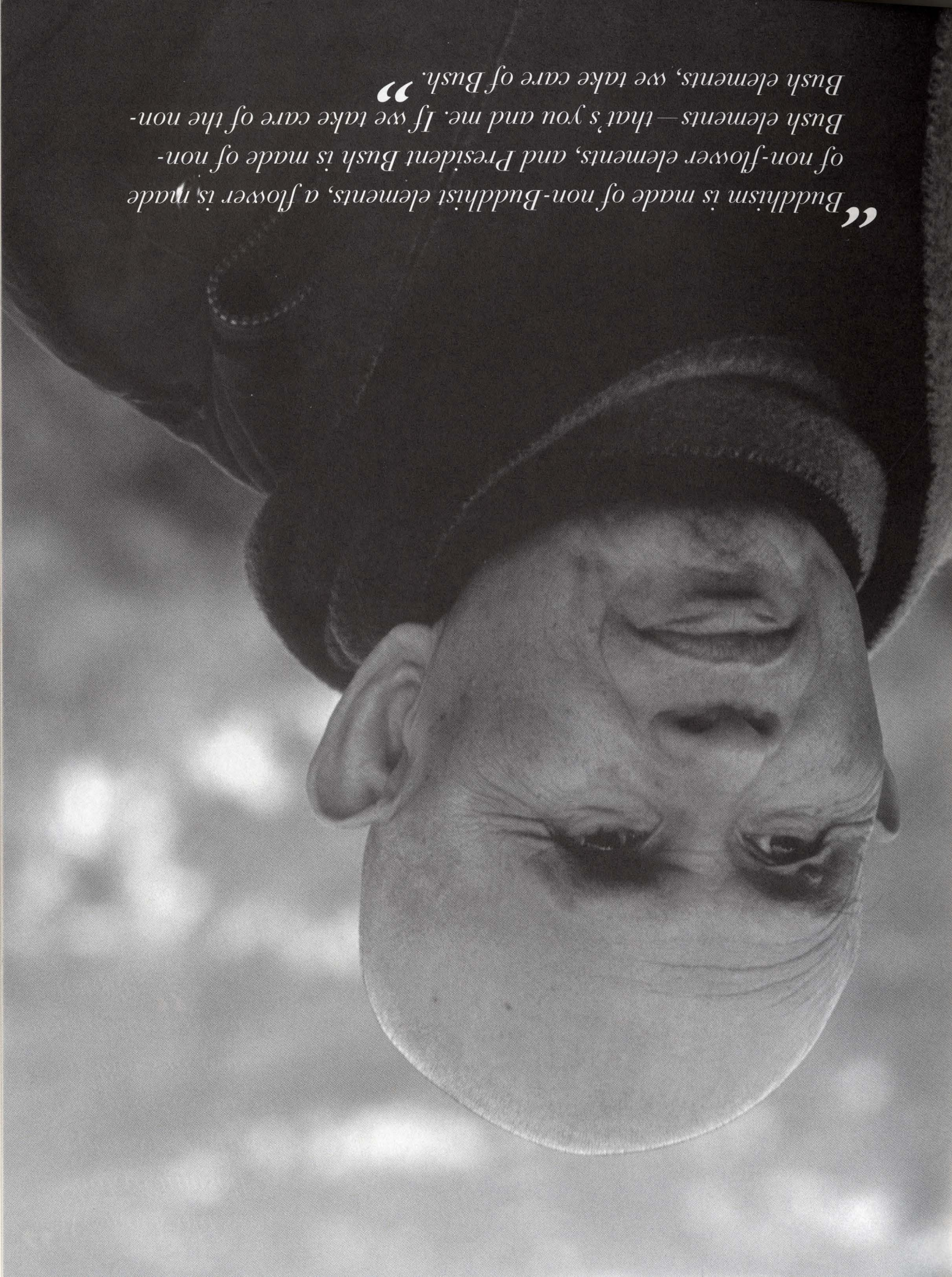
**Thich Nhat Hanh** was a peace activist in his native Vietnam during the U.S. war there, and has lived and taught in exile for nearly 40 years. His first U.S. tour in 1983 stopped at five Buddhist centers, and BPF chapters opened at each location. He is the author of more than 40 books that have inspired decades of engaged practitioners, including the best-selling *Peace Is Every Step* and *Being Peace*. He serves on BPF's International Advisory Board.

(photo: Don Farber)



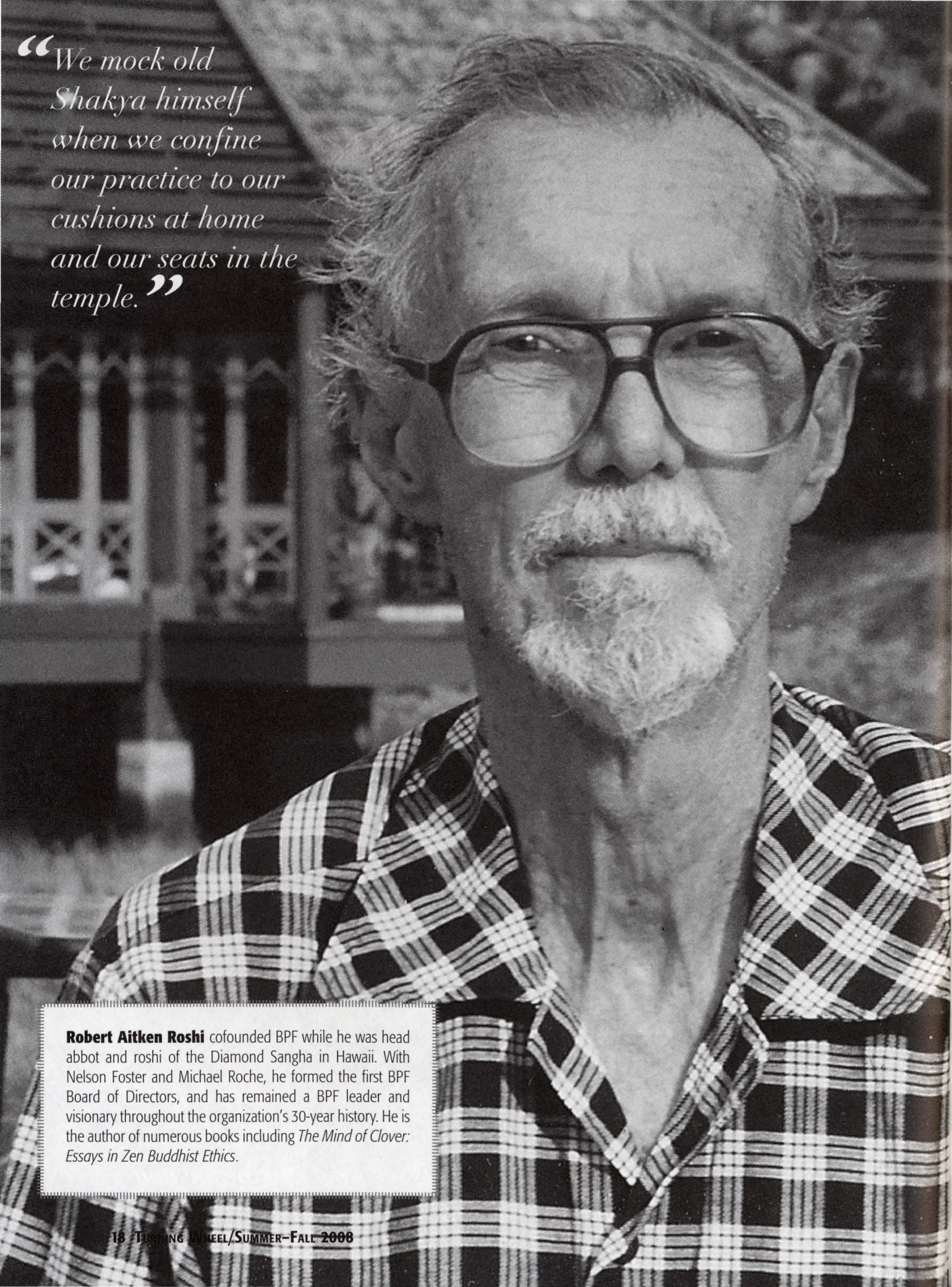


*“Buddhism is made of non-Buddhist elements, a flower is made of non-flower elements, and President Bush is made of non-Bush elements—that’s you and me. If we take care of the non-Bush elements, we take care of Bush.”*





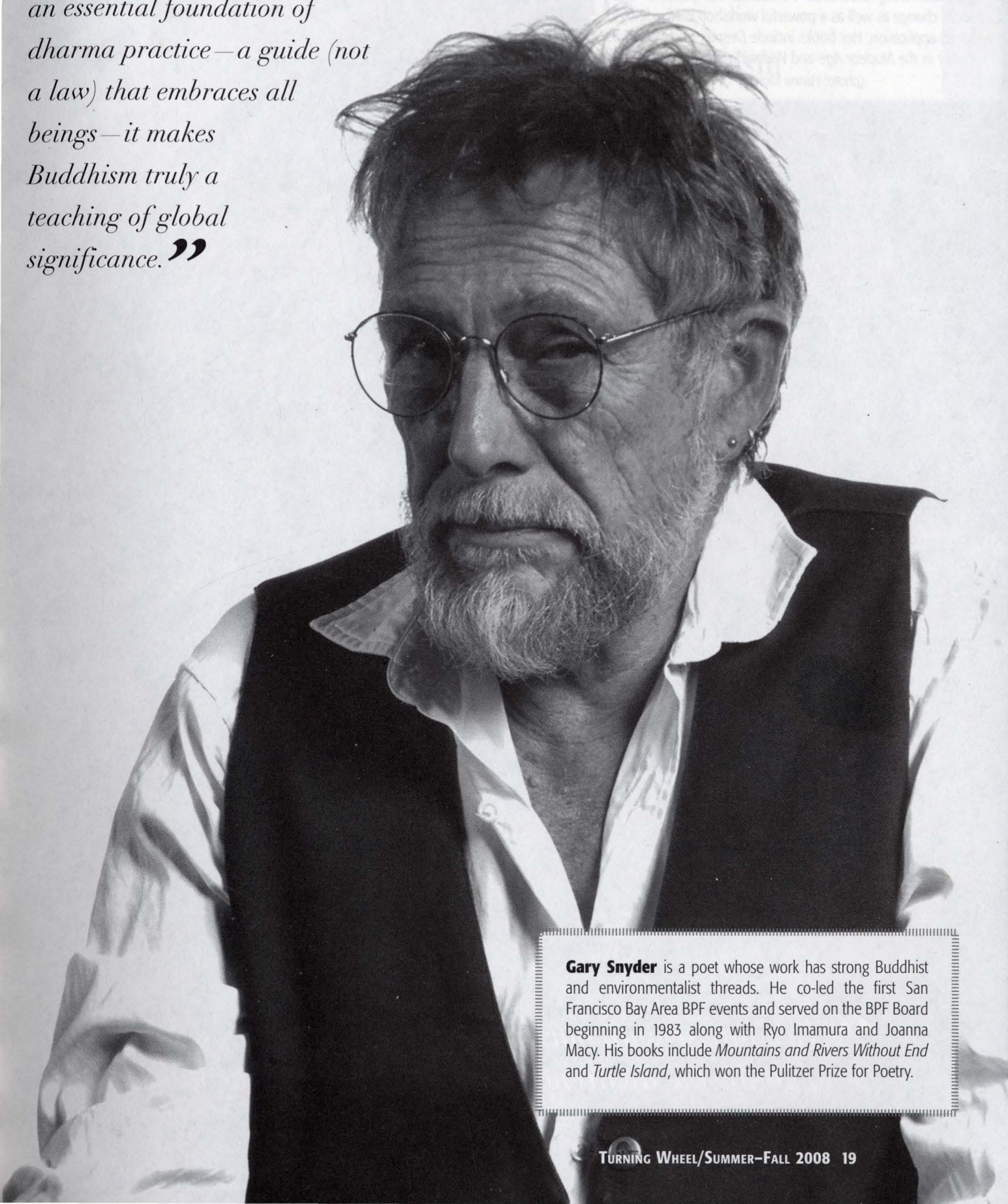
“We mock old  
Shakya himself  
when we confine  
our practice to our  
cushions at home  
and our seats in the  
temple.”



**Robert Aitken Roshi** cofounded BPF while he was head abbot and roshi of the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii. With Nelson Foster and Michael Roche, he formed the first BPF Board of Directors, and has remained a BPF leader and visionary throughout the organization's 30-year history. He is the author of numerous books including *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics*.




“*The First Precept of Buddhist ethics, ahimsa (nonharming), is an essential foundation of dharma practice—a guide (not a law) that embraces all beings—it makes Buddhism truly a teaching of global significance.*”



**Gary Snyder** is a poet whose work has strong Buddhist and environmentalist threads. He co-led the first San Francisco Bay Area BPF events and served on the BPF Board beginning in 1983 along with Ryo Imamura and Joanna Macy. His books include *Mountains and Rivers Without End* and *Turtle Island*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.





**Joanna Macy** is an eco-philosopher and scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, deep ecology, and the nuclear age. Her 1982 U.N. speech on disarmament brought together Buddhist activists from around the country. As an early leader and board member of BPF, she created a groundbreaking theoretical framework for personal and social change as well as a powerful workshop methodology for its application. Her books include *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* and *Widening Circles*.

(photo: Hanna Morjan)

*“We co-arise with our world. No need to escape, but rather to go for the awareness and joy for its self-healing.”*



# Active Visions

## Four Sources of Socially Engaged Buddhism

by Donald Rothberg and Hozan Alan Senauke

What is socially engaged Buddhism? It is dharma practice that flows from the understanding of the complete yet complicated interdependence of all life. It is the practice of the bodhisattva vow to save all beings. It is to know that the liberation of ourselves and the liberation of others are inseparable. It is to transform ourselves as we transform all our relationships and our larger society. It is work at times from the inside out and at times from the outside in, depending on the needs and conditions. It is to see the world through the eye of Dharma and to respond empathically and actively with compassion.

Those of us following this path can draw from many resources in the past. While the history of Buddhism offers many exemplary movements and figures, here we briefly explore four key movements and leaders, identifying how each develops a core intention that can deeply inform our engaged practice today. We begin with the Indian movement of the Untouchables against systemic oppression based on caste, led in the first half of the 20th century by Dr. Ambedkar and continuing to this day. We then explore the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka, founded by Dr. Ariyaratne, guided by a Gandhian vision of intertwining personal and community development based on shared work and practice. Thirdly, we focus on the Vietnamese Buddhist movement during the war and the work of Thich Nhat Hanh, Chan Khong, and others to widen the scope of Buddhist practice, developing a deeply influential understanding of nondual social action and conflict transformation. Finally, we move to North America to examine the work of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), growing from Robert Aitken Roshi's broad notion of decentralized and self-regulated Buddhist communities.

### Responding to Institutionalized Oppression

Bhimrao R. Ambedkar was born in 1891 in central India, what is now Maharashtra. Though his family came from the Hindu Untouchable Mahar caste—subject to intense economic and social discrimination—Ambedkar's father, a noncommissioned officer in the Indian colonial army, found places for his children at the government school. But the reality of discrimination meant that Mahar children were ignored by their teachers and literally compelled to sit outside the classroom. Ambedkar later reflected:

My poor Untouchable brothers live in a condition worse than the slaves. Slaves were at least touched by their lords. Our very touch has been deemed a sin. Not even a British government has been able to do anything for us.

Ambedkar was a brilliant student, and in 1907, he was among the first Untouchable youths to enter the University of Bombay, later receiving a fellowship to study political science at Columbia University in New York. By the time he re-established himself in India, he held PhDs from Columbia and the London School of Economics and had been admitted to the British Bar. But Ambedkar was once again confronted with discrimination; upper-caste lawyers and clerks would not meet with him. However, his reputation among the Untouchables, or Dalits, as they were beginning to call themselves, was growing quickly.

Ambedkar's original public focus was on improving the position of his people with regard to the British colonial system. Over time, however, he came to see that



the entrenched Hindu caste system formed an almost insurmountable social and economic obstacle for Dalits. Despite pious intentions and legal reform, caste was not about to disappear from Hinduism. So Ambedkar began a systematic study of world religions, seeking a spiritual path that would lead to social equality, while also attempting to understand the religious roots of institutional oppression. At a 1935 Mahar rally he said, "I say to you, abandon Hinduism and adopt any other religion which gives you equality of status and treatment."

As India moved towards independence, Ambedkar was often highly critical of Mahatma Gandhi's Congress Party. Ambedkar's views were controversial, but he was an exemplary jurist and scholar. The Congress-led government invited Ambedkar to serve as independent India's first law minister and charged him with writing its new constitution.

By this time, Ambedkar had seriously turned his attention to Buddhism as an egalitarian faith native to India. He found the rigorous dialogue, process, and democratic basis of sangha life described in early Buddhism to be a solid grounding for India's new constitution. On presenting this constitution he wrote:

Democracy's life is based on liberty, equality and fraternity; there is a total lack of equality in India. We have equality in politics, but inequality reigns in the sphere of society and economics. How can a people be divided into thousands of castes and

sub-castes be a nation? The way to grow strong and united is to remove all such barriers.

In 1956, Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, receiving the traditional Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a senior Buddhist monk in a public ceremony. Then Ambedkar offered the refuges and precepts to the nearly 400,000 Dalits in attendance. However, only six weeks following this historic mass conversion, he passed away, three days after he had completed his abiding work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.

His untimely death left a void of leadership among the Dalits that took years to fill. Still, Ambedkar had reframed traditional Buddhism. By emphasizing its social teachings and clarifying karma as moral

opportunity rather than fate, he offered a dharma that would clearly resonate with and uplift the oppressed and dispossessed.

His legacy can be seen in India among multitudes of ex-Untouchables and hundreds of communities and organizations, some highly political and some religious. An impressive nonsectarian network of Buddhist communities across India, called TBMSG (Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana), closely intertwines dharma and social service. TBMSG provides grassroots, indigenously led meditation retreats and Buddhist training for thousands of Dalits, many of whom live in urban slums. Meditation and practice inform TBMSG's social work, which includes childcare, schools, literacy projects, libraries, medical programs, and training for self-sufficiency and livelihood.

After nearly 30 years, a new generation of Dalit leaders is emerging in TBMSG, building new and confident dharma communities in India for the first time since Buddhism's decline there nearly a thousand years ago.

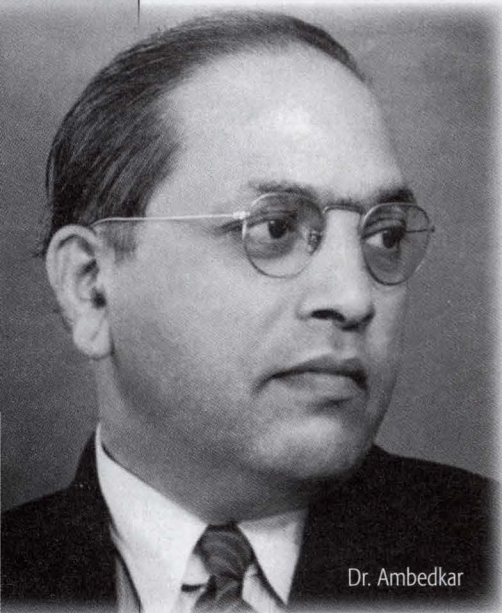
There have also been initial connections between Dalits and Buddhist people of color in the United States and an exchange of experiences and ways of practicing. Much like Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders, Ambedkar saw the inseparability of spirituality and social liberation. His work is a powerful legacy for those of us now working to connect Buddhist practice and attention to various forms of oppression such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

### Community Development

If Ambedkar's vision was about linking spirituality to a movement for the rights of a downtrodden people, then Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya movement point to the importance of what we might call community development.

Dr. Ariyaratne, or Ari, as he is familiarly known, was born in November 1931 in Galle, Sri Lanka. His middle-class family was devoted to education and Buddhism, and the young Ariyaratne advanced through school quickly. In 1956, he was hired as a science teacher at the prestigious Nalanda College.

In that first year, on his own, he surveyed the Rodiya communities of Untouchables living in terrible poverty. The following year he visited rural Gandhian communities across India, meeting and traveling with Gandhi's famed disciple, Vinoba Bhave. Bhave had formed a nonviolent social movement based on giving, particularly giving land, for which he used the Gandhian term *sarvodaya*, meaning "the welfare of all." This combined social-spiritual vision deeply influenced Ariyaratne.



Dr. Ambedkar



Returning to Sri Lanka, Ariyaratne reflected on how these principles might guide a form of communal action that he called *shramadana*, “a gift of labor.” In December 1958, Ariyaratne, along with a group of Nalanda students and teachers, organized the first *shramadana* work camp in the Rodiya village of Kanatoluwa.

The volunteers worked with the villagers to survey the area, assess resources, discuss what needed to be done, and clarify the spiritual principles supporting the project. After the first work camp’s success, requests for *shramadana* camps soon came from numerous impoverished villages. Each camp created new local infrastructures grounded in the empowerment of all involved. Ariyaratne was finding that his amalgam of Buddhist and Gandhian principles and practices was working very well, resulting in roads, clinics, and schools as well as empowerment and cooperation. The workers’ motto was, “We build the road and the road builds us.”

From these seeds, an organization—Sarvodaya—grew to become the largest grassroots development network in Sri Lanka. Today, this network comprises some 15,000 villages and 34 district offices.

Sarvodaya reframes the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, giving it a social interpretation designed to resolve community problems, asking, “What is the problem? What are the roots of the problem? What is the solution? How do we get there?”

The first truth, the truth of suffering and unsatisfactory conditions, translates as the fact of a village in trouble. The scholar George Bond writes, “This concrete form of suffering becomes the focus of mundane awakening. Villagers should recognize the problems in their environment such as poverty, disease, oppression, and disunity.”

Understanding the second truth, the origin of suffering, is to see the role of factors like greed, hatred, and selfishness.

The third truth is that the villagers’ suffering can cease.

The means to solve the problem lies in the fourth truth, the Eightfold Path. This truth encompasses all the shared abilities, wisdom, and efforts of the community, organized for its own liberation. Ariyaratne writes, “The struggle for external liberation is the struggle of internal liberation from greed, hatred, and ignorance, at the same time.”

Sarvodaya has played a vital peacemaking role in the context of the violent civil war in Sri Lanka that erupted starting in 1983. It has carried out the difficult and dangerous work of creating connections across Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamil lines, creating a peace movement based on such connections, despite great risks.

At the first BPF Summer Institute in 1991, Ari told us how Sinhalese nationalists came into his home office one day with guns drawn, ready to kill him. His response was to say, “Well, you can do that if you wish to, but please explain to me how that is going to be a resolution to the suffering you’ve experienced.” They left without harming him or anyone else.

Today more than 100,000 young people are involved in Shanthi Sena, the nonviolent peace brigade responding to religious and communal strife. They have organized huge peace gatherings in the last 10 years; in 2002, some 650,000 people met and meditated together in support of the recently enacted peace accords and ceasefire.

Sarvodaya also played a huge and highly praised role in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami. Tens of thousands of volunteers brought material, psychological, and spiritual help to devastated villages, and are continuing to support their rebuilding.

The work of Dr. Ariyaratne and Sarvodaya has had a significant impact on many Western engaged Buddhists, in part through Ari’s regular visits to BPF and other sanghas in North America. Dharma teacher Joanna Macy, for example, spent a year with Sarvodaya in 1979–80, which deeply impacted her own highly influential work in developing groups, organizations, and communities able to transform the pain of the world, as well as in articulating social interpretations of many core Buddhist teachings.

### **Nondual Action in the Midst of War**

The engaged approach to Buddhism in Vietnam goes back more than 1,000 years. This history is often connected with the defense of the country and the people, and offers many examples of engagement as a place of practice, liberation, and social change. Hence, when a new wave of engaged Buddhism emerged in the 1930s, in large part aiming to end French colonialism (France had invaded Vietnam in 1858), there was considerable historical resonance.

According to Thich Minh Duc, the engaged movement in Vietnam had three broad phases. The first, starting in the 1930s, was called “Buddhism for



Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne



Everybody.” The intention was to bring Buddhist teachings and practices out of the monasteries, to help guide daily life.

The second, starting in the 1950s in the midst of war, was called “Buddhism Goes into the World.” This was expressed especially through service—to meet the basic needs of the people, particularly refugees, for shelter, food, education, and medical care.

The third phase, “Getting Involved,” started after the government crackdown on Buddhism in 1963 and involved explicit activism, intended especially to stop the war and the persecution of Buddhists.

Thich Nhat Hanh, born in 1926, participated in all three phases. After entering the Tu Hieu monastery in Hue at 17, he soon rebelled against the limited monastic curriculum and moved to Saigon, where he could connect traditional Buddhism with the exploration of contemporary literature and philosophy.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, he founded or co-founded a number of organizations, including several centers of Buddhist studies and activism, the School of Youth for Social Service, and the Tiep Hien Order, for practitioners of engaged Buddhism. He also was very involved in speaking and acting against the war.

After his 1966 Western speaking tour—during which he met Thomas Merton and Martin Luther King Jr., influencing significantly King’s decision to speak out against the war in 1967—Thich Nhat Hanh was advised by Buddhist leaders in Vietnam not to return, for fear of assassination or imprisonment. He was forced to begin life in exile.

In the years since then, he and a number of collaborators, particularly Chan Khong, have articulated a highly influential interpretation of engaged Buddhism centered on a nondual approach to transforming conflicts. This approach, on our interpretation, has six basic elements:

*Identifying the dualistic system of conflict:* These Buddhist leaders pointed to the roots of the war as the struggle between apparent polar opposites, communists versus capitalists, a struggle that reflected the projections of the superpowers onto Vietnam. Their intention was to transform

this oppressive system of conflict, which they saw as the source of immense suffering.

*Not taking sides:* Their strategy was to avoid both extremes, pointing beyond the dualistic conflict. They did not posit either side as “enemy” or “oppressor.” According to Thich Nhat Hanh:

The Vietnam War was, first and foremost, an ideological struggle. To ensure our people’s survival, we had to overcome both communist and anticommunist fanaticism and maintain the strictest neutrality. Buddhists tried their best to speak for all the people and not take sides, but we were condemned as “pro-communist neutralists.”

*Grounding in the ethics of nonharming:* Their commitment to nonviolence expressed the basic Buddhist ethical precepts and led to a strategy for peacemaking through ending the cycles of violence.

*Responding to suffering:* Their focus was in large part to respond to suffering—of the people, of the war, and of the two sides. Thich Nhat Hanh comments: “We were able to understand the suffering of both sides, the Communists and the anti-Communists. We tried to be open to both...to be one with them.”

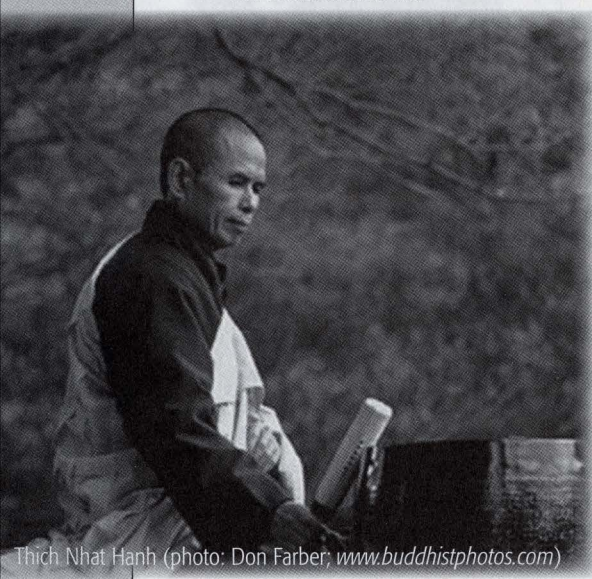
*Not taking sides does not mean not responding:* Through their actions, they showed that nondualism does not mean standing aside. They rebuilt homes and schools, dispensed medical care, set up clinics, helped refugees, and demonstrated to end the conflict.

*The aim is reconciliation, not victory:* Their long-term intention was not defeat of the “enemy” but rather, reconciliation. These efforts required considerable patience. Thich Minh Duc comments, “We did not think that by demonstrating we’d turn things around immediately. Rather, we had to look to the long-term process of practice (*tu*). *Tu* means to transform bad to good—today one inch, tomorrow another inch.... For 100 years, we were controlled by the French. We knew that it would take years to untie the knot.”

## A Network of Communities

BPF was born in 1978 on the back porch of Robert Aitken Roshi’s Maui Zendo. It was a gathering of practitioners who were appalled by American proxy wars in Central America and by the flourishing Cold War arms race. Originally, their idea was to organize a chapter of the nonviolent Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). But FOR, which has separate fellowships for different faiths, suggested that they start a “Buddhist Peace Fellowship.” Cofounders Nelson Foster, Robert and Anne Aitken, and other local Zen friends were soon joined by many Western Buddhists drawn to social engagement, including Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, Jack Kornfield, Tai Unno, Al Bloom, Ryo Imamura, and others.

By the time BPF began, Aitken had been an activist



Thich Nhat Hanh (photo: Don Farber; [www.buddhistphotos.com](http://www.buddhistphotos.com))



for decades, speaking out on labor issues, nuclear disarmament, and opposition to war. For some years he was a tax resister. His Buddhist practice originated during his three years in an internment camp in Japan during World War II. By chance, the well-known teacher and translator R. H. Blyth was interned in the same camp, and in the course of their captivity, Aitken received a vivid introduction to Zen, haiku, and literature in general.

After the war, Aitken took up Zen practice with Nyogen Senzaki in Los Angeles, and he went to Japan to study Zen in the early 1950s. In 1959 Robert and Anne Aitken founded what was to become the Diamond Sangha in their home in Honolulu, which continues to be Koko-An Zendo.

Aitken's study of anarchist writing—Proudhon, Kropotkin, Landauer, Emma Goldman, and many others—reinforced his belief in personal autonomy, decentralization, and spiritual community. These are principles that are also the essence of Buddhist sangha, as he has written:

The traditional Sangha serves as a model for enterprise in this vision. A like-minded group of five can be a Sangha. It can grow to a modest size, split into autonomous groups and then network. As autonomous lay Buddhist associations, these little communities will not be Sanghas in the classical sense, but will be inheritors of the name and of many of the original intentions. They will also be inheritors of the Base Community movements in Latin America and the Philippines—Catholic networks that are inspired by traditional religion and also by 19th-century anarchism.

Aitken's intention for BPF was not the creation of a new mass organization or religious order but a web of like-minded Buddhist activists. In its early years BPF was a loose ecumenical network linked by friendship and common purpose, with members clustered especially in Hawaii and the San Francisco Bay Area. Within three years the network had grown to several hundred members, moved its office to Berkeley, hired a part-time coordinator, formed the first chapters, organized several conferences and meetings, and begun publishing a newsletter that later became this magazine. Local BPF chapters still function with great autonomy, bound by their mutual practice.

This web of sanghas is a small step in the direction of what Aitken calls Buddhist Anarchism, which itself is a small step towards the healthy remaking of society. Aitken frequently cites the old Wobbly (Industrial Workers of the World) motto: "Build the new within the shell of the old."

Aside from addressing the pressing realities of U.S. militarism and the encroachment of an all-devouring corporate capitalism, BPF early on was drawn to matters of religious freedom and human rights in Asia. In

the first BPF newsletters, one reads about the plight of Buddhists in Tibet, Vietnam, and Bangladesh. And just as we are still wrestling with the depredations of militarism and global capitalism, it is interesting to see we have many of the same international concerns today as 30 years ago.

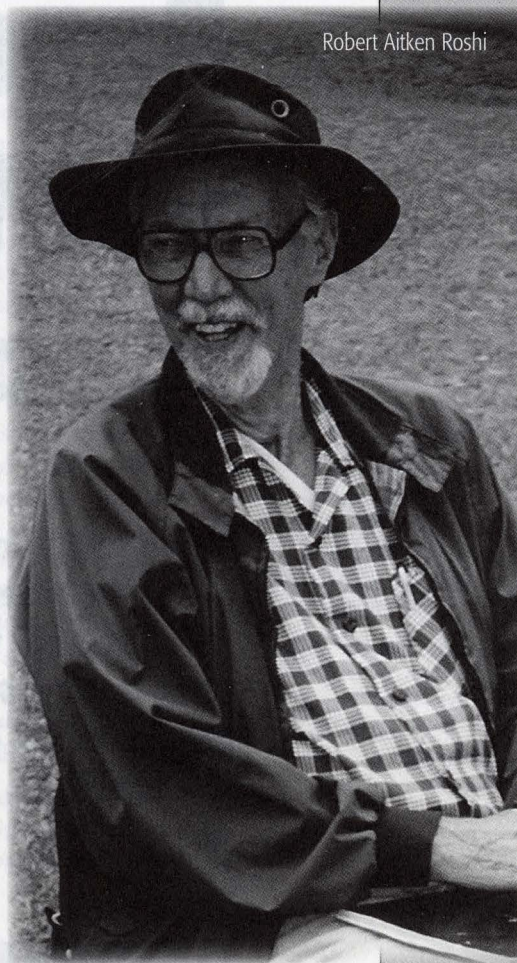
BPF has grown from that initial vision as straight and true as we could manage. The network of decentralized communities remains, and BPF's Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE) program, founded by Diana Winston and named to reflect affinity with the Catholic Base Community movement, has organized or facilitated more than 30 six-month trainings for small autonomous groups of practitioners. BPF's many other projects have included working in prisons, organizing youth, investigating race and diversity, and seeding social activism in countless Buddhist centers and sanghas in America.

BPF draws strength from the history of modern engaged Buddhist communities including those led by Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. Ariyaratne, and Thich Nhat Hanh. Its mission is limitless, like the bodhisattva vows themselves. ■

*Donald Rothberg, a member of the Spirit Rock Teachers Council and the faculty of Saybrook Graduate School, is the author of The Engaged Spiritual Life: A Buddhist Approach to Transforming Ourselves and the World. He directs "The Path of Engagement," a two-year Spirit Rock training program in socially engaged Buddhism.*

*Hozan Alan Senauke is vice-abbot of Berkeley Zen Center, senior advisor to Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and founder of the Clear View Project, which provides Buddhist-based resources for relief and social change. He is a father, musician, writer, and activist.*

*Rothberg and Senauke adapted this essay for Turning Wheel from their presentation at the May 2008 "Path of Engagement" retreat at Spirit Rock Meditation Center.*



Robert Aitken Roshi



# Renewing Our Vows

by Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey  
President, BPF Board of Directors

**I**t's funny to consider that, as the current president of the board of directors, I was born in 1978 – the same year as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. It certainly has been an interesting 30 years for us to grow up in.

I remember watching the news with my mom as the Berlin wall was being pulled down and then, a few months later, as Nelson Mandela breathed through his first few moments of freedom in 27 years. My mother looked at me and said with awe, "You are living through such an incredible time." I was 11. She had no idea what was ahead for the world I would grow up in, but I knew seeing the collapse of the apartheid government in South Africa and watching Nelson Mandela walk freely through Soweto gave her a deep sense of hope.

Now, almost 20 years have passed and we continue to see the signs of profound change in our world. Many are horrifying—the increasingly oppressive grip of





American militarism on the lives of people around the world, a federal government whose growing power loosens itself more fully each day from accountability to its citizens, and a corporatist economic system that manages to hoard more and more wealth into the hands of fewer and fewer people. Of course, we also bear witness to the sometimes faint but even then stunning glimmers of hope on the horizon. Burmese and Tibetan monks and nuns reminded the world of the unequaled transformational power of nonviolent protest. Undoing the environmental impact of human society is at the forefront of most mainstream political discussions. And, of course, it is very likely we are about to be witness to the first Black presidency of the United States.

As we at BPF try to live into the responses demanded by our historical and organizational moment, I find myself imagining back through the 30 years past, as the BPF Board and staff members who preceded us sat together in silence, strategized and philosophized, socialized and prophesized. I know many of their names and only a few of their faces. Some are still in touch. Others have wandered down distant roads. At the very least, we know they had practice. And while all the madness and beauty of the world has blossomed and decayed over and over again for the past 30 years, we know we can meet our predecessors at any moment in the timeless fellowship of this inclination

toward peace, wisdom, and love.

We who are the current BPF Board and staff recognize the beauty and the burden of the inheritance of this powerful lineage of socially engaged Buddhism in America. It is a lineage we are trying to carry forward with integrity—guided by reverence for the Buddha's teachings of liberation of the heart and mind as well as a commitment to the political, social, and economic liberation of the whole of society.

This year, the year of our 30th anniversary, we at BPF are renewing our vows. We are taking up the commitments made by our elders and our ancestors to strive for the liberation of our selves and our world from greed, hatred, delusion, oppression, injustice, and indifference. We are working hard to make this organization a powerful vehicle for liberation in this historical moment for those who are coming to be born, those who are alive, and those who are dying. We know deep in our hearts that BPF is as relevant and necessary as we know it will be 30, 60, 90 years into the future. We hope that you join us in renewing your vows that gather us all in this profound commitment to freedom. We look forward to striving together and sharing the fruits of this fellowship. ■

*Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey is part of the leadership of The Stone House, a center for spiritual life and strategic action in Mebane, North Carolina. His practice is firmly rooted in the Theravada tradition.*

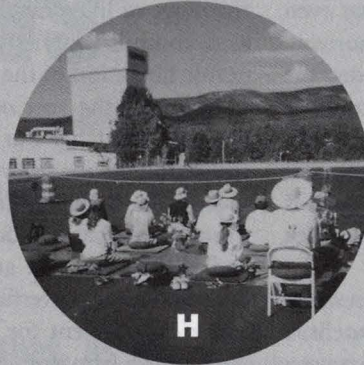
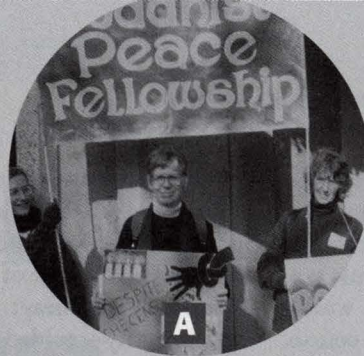


BPF members mark Buddha's birthday by committing civil disobedience at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site in 1994.



# Highlights 30 Years of BPF

Compiled by Anthony Rodgers  
and Hozan Alan Senauke



1978

BPF founded at Maui Zendo in Hawaii by members of the Diamond Sangha, as part of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR).

1979

First BPF newsletter.

1980

First BPF Board established: Robert Aitken, Nelson Foster, Michael Roche.

1981

Michael Roche travels to Bangladesh to initiate BPF's first project—a campaign to stop the persecution of Buddhists in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

1982

Joanna Macy and Thich Nhat Hanh speak at Interreligious Peace Dialogue as part of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in New York City.

First BPF chapters established in Rochester and Honolulu.

Mahasangha conference: Robert Aitken and Gary Snyder lead discussion on political activism and the Dharma.

1987

Sponsoring Hungry Families Project begun, to send medical and other aid to families in Vietnam.

1989

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) begun.

1990

Poster and packet on Buddhist environmentalism created and mailed to over 300 sanghas, to honor the 20th anniversary of Earth Day.

1991

BPF newsletter becomes *Turning Wheel*.  
First weeklong Institute for Engaged Buddhism with Robert Aitken Roshi, A.T. Ariyaratne, Pracha Hutauwatra, Deena Metzger, and others.

1993

Second BPF Summer Institute for Engaged Buddhism, with Joanna Macy, Sulak Sivarakas and others.

Imprisoned Monks and Writers Project started, to work for the release of a number of prisoners in Vietnam. Large demonstration held in San Francisco.

BPF statement on the Gulf War and action packet created and mailed to more than 300 sanghas.

BPF demonstrates against Gulf War. [A]

First BPF-sponsored delegation to Burmese border.

1998

BPF publishes *Safe Harbor: Guidelines, Process, and Resources for Ethics and Right Conduct in Buddhist Communities*.

2001

*Turning Wheel* wins award for Best Spiritual Magazine from *Utne Reader*.

2003

BPF members across the globe take part in demonstrations and civil disobedience to prevent war in Iraq.

2004

*Turning Wheel* anthology edited by Susan Moon, *Not Turning Away: The Practice of Engaged Buddhism*, is published.

Beginning of BPF Prison Project.

BPF holds a "parking lot sangha" during five-day Interfaith Retreat and protest at Los Alamos National Laboratory. [H]

Staff retreat with former Executive Director Maia Duerr. [I]

A gathering of BPF Board members and staff. [G]





1983

1984

1985

1986

Thich Nhat Hanh's first U.S. tour, sponsored by BPF and San Francisco Zen Center, includes a retreat for activists at Tassajara and stops at five Buddhist centers. BPF chapters open at each location.

BPF International Advisory Board established, with Thich Nhat Hanh, Robert Aitken Roshi, Sulak Sivaraksa, Ven. Dharmawara, and Maha Ghosananda.

BPF publishes *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Engaged Buddhism*, edited by Fred Eppsteiner.

First BPF international members meeting held in conjunction with a Thich Nhat Hanh event at the Naropa Institute in Colorado.

1994

1995

1996

1997

BPF organizes a Buddha's birthday gathering and civil disobedience at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site, with Tenshin Reb Anderson, Mayumi Oda, and other speakers.

BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) program launched, in San Francisco Bay Area. **[B, C, D]**

Formation of the BPF/INEB Think Sangha to develop engaged Buddhist theory and social analysis. **[E, F]**

Evening honoring San Quentin prisoner and BPF member Jarvis Masters, with readings from his book by African American men.

Third BPF Summer Institute at Land of Medicine Buddha near Santa Cruz with Nelson Foster, David Grant, Fran Peavey, and Tova Green.

Coordination and sponsorship of Thai Maechi Education Program for nuns.

2005

2006

2007

2008

BPF co-leads Hiroshima Day retreat in Los Alamos, New Mexico, with Joan Halifax and Upaya Zen Center.

BPF hosts "Being Peace in a Time of War" with Robert Thurman and Bhante Suhita Dharma in San Francisco.

Second Buddhist Peace Delegation to Washington, DC; delegates visit members of Congress to ask for de-funding of the war in Iraq. BPF members march in San Francisco **[L, M]** and elsewhere to protest the war.

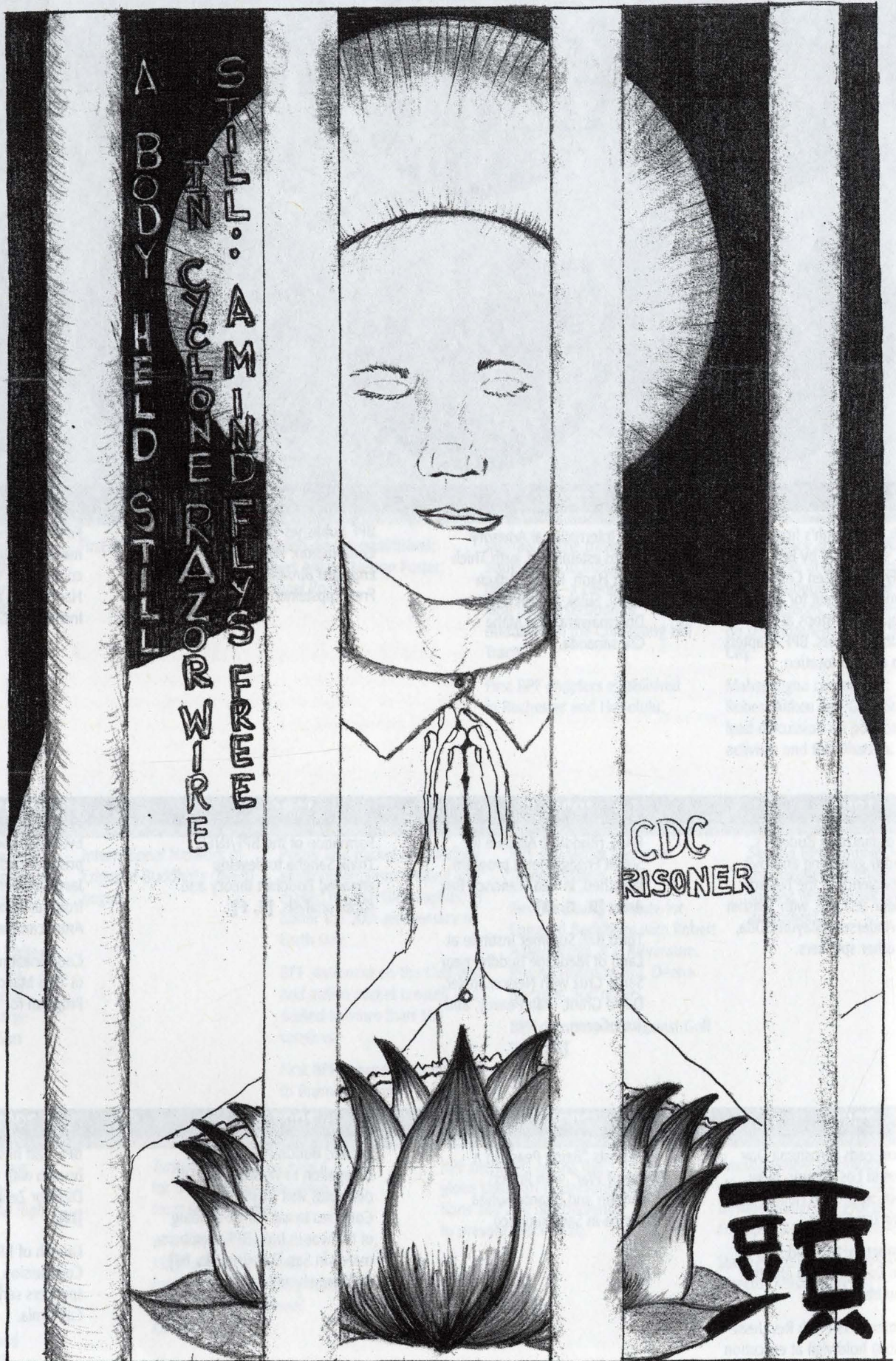
BPF staff hosts major donor brunch with current Executive Director Zenju Earthlyn Manuel. **[N]**

Washington, DC, Buddhist Peace Delegation to end the war in Iraq. **[J]**

BPF members (with Rev. Jesse Jackson) hold vigil at execution of Stanley Tookie Williams at San Quentin. **[K]**

Launch of BPF Conversations on Compassion, a socially engaged speakers series in Berkeley, California.





A BODY HELD STILL  
STILL: A MIND FLIES FREE  
CANDOR IN PRISONER WIRE

CDC  
PRISONER

真

"Prisoner?"  
by Todd Toughill, an  
inmate in the California  
correctional system



# Reflections on the BPF Prison Program

by Diana Lion

*This article is dedicated to all of our incarcerated sisters and brothers, their families, and the rest of us who carry our portable prisons around with us. May we all be truly awake and free.*

The first time I walked through a prison gate, I heard it clang shut behind me. Outside, San Quentin's grounds had looked deceptively pretty. Inside the Education Building, I walked past men pissing, an arm's length away, with no doors between us; we looked away from one another. I sat down in the opening circle for a three-day Alternatives to Violence Project training.

That evening, my partner told me that his daughter, six months pregnant with twins, had just miscarried.

The next day in our opening check-in circle, I spoke about the twins and cried. The whole room went quiet. During the break, many of the guys came up to me. Although most of them had said "I'm fine" during the check-in, now they spoke to me of their own losses, and we looked straight at one another.

At the end of the weekend, one lifer hugged me and handed me a letter for my stepdaughter. He wrote about having killed a man in anger and how he'd have to live with his victim's death. He said that the twins' deaths made him realize the preciousness of all life. He was very sad to hear about my stepdaughter's loss, and although he didn't know if she would accept his condolences, his heart and prayers were with her and her babies.

My stepdaughter kept that letter in her purse for a whole year.

Such experiences of transformation and interconnectedness were among the regular miracles I witnessed in almost eight years of directing BPF's Prison Program.

In 1998, Maylie Scott and others working in prisons invited me to found BPF's Prison Program. We saw people inside as embodying the First Noble Truth of suffering. The system in which they lived also perpetuated that suffering—for prisoners, their families, correctional officers, and staff. In our vision, these elements interacted with the larger societal violence of poverty, racism, sexism, and ignorance. We therefore created a program with five interwoven branches:

- Ministry to interact directly with people inside;
- Advocacy to address the systemic violence;
- Networking to work with other (often interfaith) groups;

- Education and training to raise awareness of issues in the public and to train volunteers;
- Correspondence to respond to the hundreds of letters we received monthly from prisoners.

We wanted to transform the prison system into one based on Buddhist values of compassion and wisdom, and we realized that 20 hours per week of staff time in the face of an entrenched prison-industrial complex would require us to use skillful means and hold a long-term view.

The heart of the program was ministry (through the Prison Meditation Network, co-coordinated with San Francisco Zen Center). Buddhism, unlike many major religions, was not given automatic access to California's prisons. Most prisoners were not Buddhist, but we thought many might benefit from the dharma values of patience, generosity, compassion, wisdom, and perhaps most of all from the ability to uncouple behavior from whatever impulses arise in the mind. Meditation practice could address some of the roots of violence and addiction. We went inside offering dharma and/or stress-reduction classes—whatever a particular administration would tolerate. For volunteers going into the prisons, it was an opportunity to offer our practice in challenging venues where authenticity detectors were sharp. Most volunteers were white and middle class; most prisoners were working class or poor people of color. We assumed we were going in to teach, but we ended up learning far more than we ever taught.

One of my first times inside, a correctional officer was painfully arrogant to several prisoners, and I bristled with anger. One of my friends inside told me to let it go because the prisoners didn't let the guards' behavior get to them. I was the so-called experienced dharma practitioner, but *they* showed *me* that they knew more than I did about patience and tolerance at that moment. We volunteers came to understand that to be truly of service, we needed to go inside as beginners. We could be in charge of a class and at the same time learn from each of our "students."

Our program started out teaching a couple of jail classes. However, demand increased until affiliated groups were teaching hundreds of men and women weekly throughout prisons in Northern California. Meanwhile, our volunteers were corresponding with thousands of prisoners throughout the United States.



Meditation practice is never a quick fix, but as our classes continued, we noticed changes.

I remember M. telling me proudly that when a guy collared him in the yard, instead of reacting, he had paused and stepped back. In doing so, he'd violated the "code" of proving he was a man who could defend his turf at all times. Instead, he had stepped into his real power. He told the other man they'd talk later, then walked away. He later told the man he was not willing to have them both get written up (resulting in their serving more time). He wanted to talk man-to-man about what was on his mind. They did. This fruit of practice came after many months of weekly classes, of learning to pause and notice what was in the mind rather than be enslaved by it.

We also witnessed courage. J. was the most loyal attendee in our meditation and precept classes in the San Francisco jail before being moved to San Quentin. A gang there told him he had to kill someone or be killed. His precepts meant the world to him, but he was also terrified of being killed by this gang. He was new there and had not yet had time to form alliances. He meditated all night long. He finally decided to stick with his precepts even if it cost him his life. After he refused the gang's "invitation," he lived in fear of being stabbed to death and never knowing when it might happen. Fortunately he was transferred to another prison soon afterward. This decision reinforced his faith in practice.

The BPF Prison Program (with BayNVC) also taught weekly Non-Violent Communication (NVC) classes in San Quentin, as well as a four-day workshop in Texas. The San Quentin program continues to thrive through its BayNVC volunteers. During the

Texas prison workshop, one of the men said that he was now able to see his correctional officer as human for the first time. Another man cried about having been molested as a boy by his father. Afterward, you could see the shift in his face and demeanor. Yet another man said that perhaps if he had had NVC skills earlier he would not have committed his crimes or lost access to his children.

As the director, I was not only responsible for my own behavior but also for modeling behavior that rippled through our whole prison program. I tried to be guided by the precepts, even when it was difficult.

Once a friend inside asked me to bring him a body-building supplement that comes in white powder form. It wasn't drugs but was prohibited under prison rules. Prisons don't allow in anything not on a clearance list, even a stick of gum—never mind something that looks like it could be cocaine! It was early in my first year, and I was confused about what to do. I knew what he wanted was innocent, but I would be breaking a prison rule *and* a precept. I knew that if I got caught, the entire prison program could be banned from San Quentin.

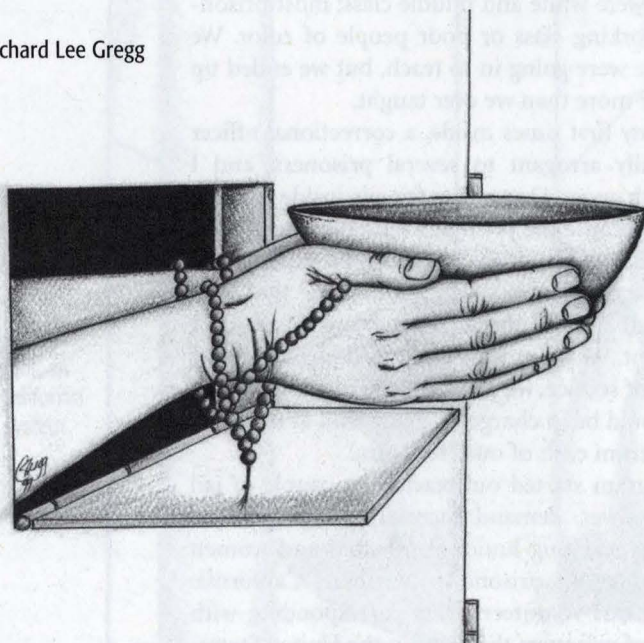
After reflection, I decided that I would not only uphold the precept but also clarify that I was not open to such future requests. I was an ally *and* I was "by the book." I decided to put following prison rules and the precepts ahead of wanting to be liked. This was a turning point in walking the path of leadership and taking my seat fully as director of the prison program.

What made BPF's Prison Program unique was our focus on both service and advocacy. Many dharma practitioners began to teach meditation without any activist interest. However, after spending several months close to the violence inside, their hearts often shifted. They wanted to do something about the horrific system that devoured prisoners, guards, and staff.

In 1999, our prison committee chose ending the death penalty as our main activist focus—it is a First Precept issue. I attended a meeting of the Death Penalty Action Team, which plans the rally at the San Quentin gates for each execution. Although I was not warmly greeted at my first meeting—perhaps I was the first Buddhist activist they had encountered and was pegged as a self-indulgent navel-gazer—the organizers granted my request for space for a group meditation.

At the execution of Jai Siripongs in February 1999, we weathered a driving rainstorm. About 100 meditators sat in several inches of rain until after midnight, while other activists spoke and chanted. Some loud pro-death penalty demonstrators were sent to calm down among us. The media was fascinated by our silence. As a TV commentator on a nearby roof filmed us sitting, I could hear her report, "They're being

Art by Richard Lee Gregg





silent. [She was quiet for some moments.] They're still being silent!"

We earned our credentials that night with the non-dharma activists. After that, whenever a demonstration was being planned, my phone would ring: "Could you please bring the Buddhists?"

One of our proudest moments came when our dharma-informed legal brief contributed to a Supreme Court decision ending the death penalty for juveniles.

Meanwhile, prison correspondence volunteers answered letters, mailed in issues of *Turning Wheel* and meditation books, and set up dharma pen pal relationships—all to encourage prisoners in their practice. We received gut-wrenching accounts of horrific treatment of prisoners by correctional officers, as well as many stories of wrongly convicted inmates. We were asked countless times to advocate for people legally, psychiatrically, and nutritionally. Our lack of capacity led to the creation of our Resource Lists. We were thrown up against inadequacies of time, money, and energy in the face of more than 2 million prisoners in the United States.

The correspondence program continues, now staffed by volunteers full-time.

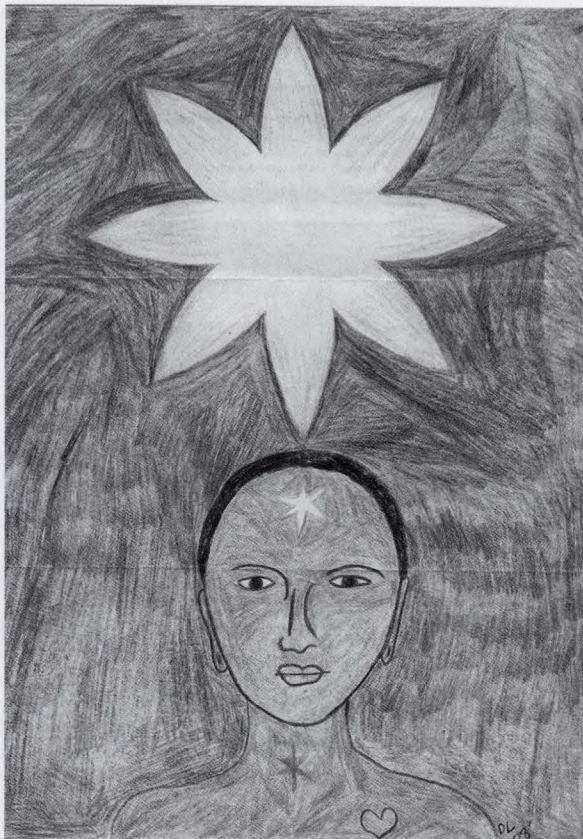
Over time, some of the prisoners we worked with were released. In 2001, members of San Francisco Zen Center, some ex-prisoners, and I cofounded Sangha X for ex-cons to transition to post-release. We modeled it after our classes inside and met for two vivid years.

In Sangha X, some participants' teaching skills blossomed. We watched as C., an ex-con in recovery, taught a court-mandated substance-abuse meditation class. A woman asked whether to scratch an itch while sitting. He said if she could simply stay with the sensations of her itch without scratching and follow them as they shifted, eventually the itch would dissolve. It was exactly like not scratching the itch of addiction. If she practiced while sitting, then she could apply it to her recovery.

Sangha X celebrated birthdays, attended memorials, helped when members relapsed into drug use, and "loaned" the ex-prisoners money. But what volunteers thought was compassionate sometimes helped ex-prisoners' habitual patterns flourish. When those patterns included substance abuse, this led to harmful consequences, not liberation. It sometimes led back to addiction and reincarceration.

Some Sangha X-ers are still in touch; some have died; some are incarcerated. One ex-prisoner runs a youth program in Hawaii now, and lives clean and sober.

The Dalai Lama wrote recently: "Large human movements spring from individual human initiatives.... Each of us can inspire others simply



**One of our proudest moments came when our dharma-informed legal brief contributed to a Supreme Court decision ending the death penalty for juveniles.**

Art by Daniel Lehl, an inmate in an Idaho prison

by working to develop our own altruistic motivations—and engaging the world with a compassion-tempered heart and mind.”

We started BPF's prison program when there were very few prison dharma projects. Now, 10 years later, there are few states without a group doing prison dharma; some cities have many groups. We were in on the ground floor of a movement.

The Dharma tells us that we can find freedom wherever we are; countless people inside are experiencing that truth as a result of people's work in this area. And there is more to be done. ■

*Diana Lion is the founding director of BPF's Prison Program and former associate director of programs for BPF. She left in July 2005 due to illness and has been in self-retreat ever since.*

*Boundless gratitude to Robert Aitken Roshi, Butch Baluyut, Ali Budner, Michael Callahan, Catherine Cascade, Melody Ermachild Chavis, Elizabeth Cheatham, Hong Chingkuang, Pema Chödrön, Kate Crisp, Martha deBarros, Seido deBarros, Chad Hagedorn, Paul Haller, Mushim Ikeda-Nash, Bill Karelis, Connie Kassor, John King, Bhavani Kludt, Pamela Krasney, Lee Lipp, Bo Lozoff, Sita Lozoff, Jarvis Jay Masters, Fleet Maull, Susan Moon, Joi Morton-Wiley, Alisha Musicant, Jim Needles, Maylie Scott, Hozan Alan Senauke, Helen Seward, Pam Siller, Terry Stein, Steve Stucky, Heidi Strupp, Bhante Suhita Dharma, Tracy Thompson, Jacques Verduin, Lewis Woods, and countless interns and volunteers for their work with the prison program over the last decade.*



# Finding Clarity

## Tapping into Places That Were Centers of Pain

by Claude AnShin Thomas

I have a commitment through my monastic duties to go to places of current or past fighting, to go to places that have been the sight of profound anguish: mental institutions, prisons, and the like. When asked by Klaus Schick, a man who was studying with me at the time, if I would consider leading a meditation retreat in a place named the Wewelsburg Castle, I immediately agreed.

Heinrich Himmler, Reichsfuehrer of the Nazi SS, had the vision to build an education and training center for the SS, as well as the center of National Socialist ideology, in this place—a place that would be his domain from which the world would be ruled. So, in the castle known by the same name as the town, Wewelsburg, we held not one but four retreats.

These retreats were held 2003 through 2006. The people who attended were predominantly from Germany and were drawn to

practice here for a myriad of reasons. While there were as many reasons as there were people who attended, 372 in total, I found that generally the people came to learn more about the consequences of a shared experience that was not theirs—an experience that had not been talked about in their families, if at all. Yet it enveloped their lives in a silent heaviness that only secrets can impose. It was an experience that continued to have a profound impact on their lives.

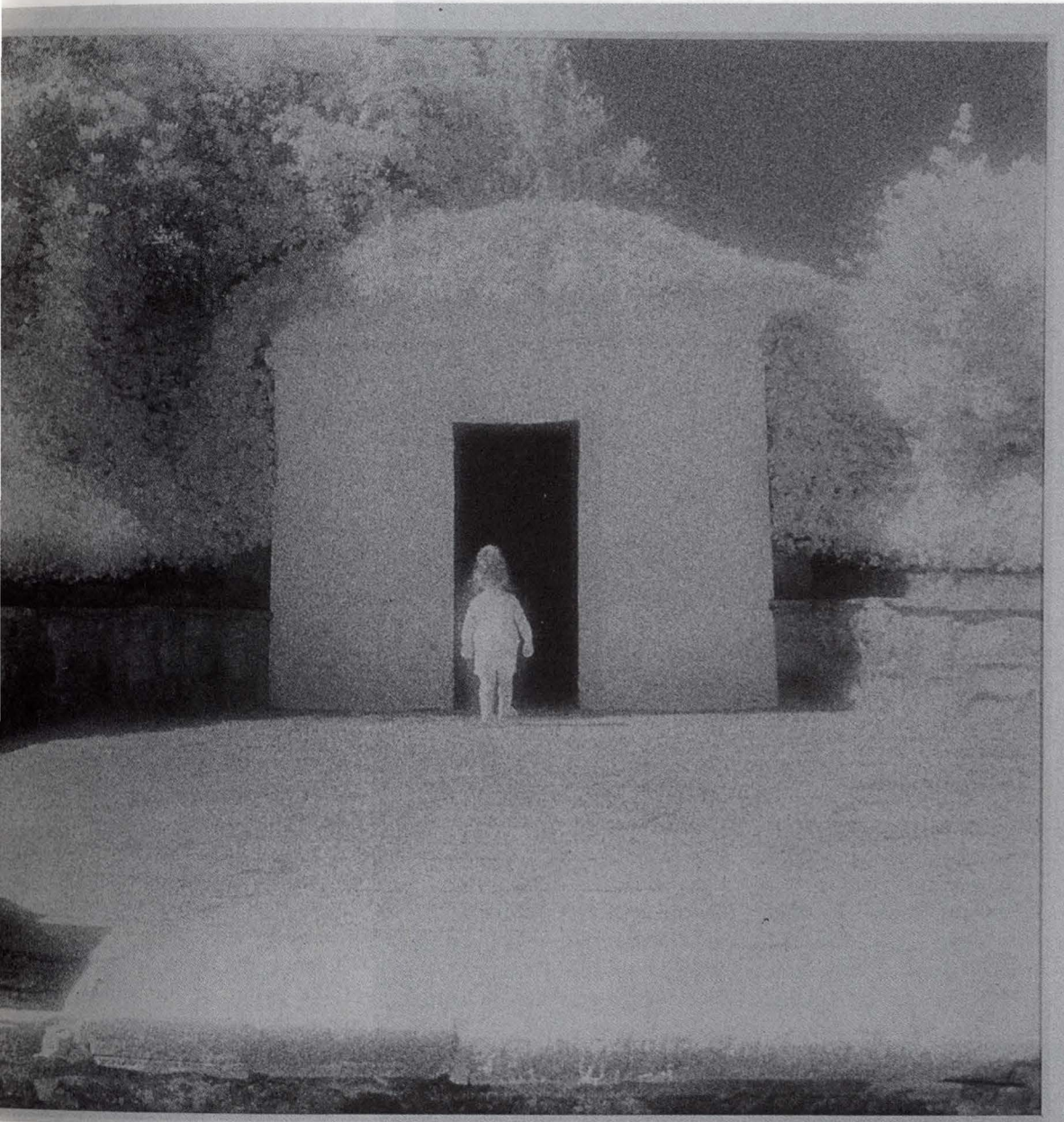
Some people came because they had never been to such a place before, because they were too afraid of what they imagined would be revealed or discovered in such a place. So to be able to come within the context of spiritual practice they felt empowered.

We slept in the castle, which also is a youth hostel and a historical site. We did sitting meditation and ate in the castle, and we did walking meditation inside and out on the grounds.



We had small groups where people would meet and talk about their experiences with (or in) the place. We talked while others listened without comment or question. We were given guided tours to learn more about its history. We learned that since the end of the Second World War the place has been seen as a holy site for the unsacred. It is a pilgrimage place for neo-Fascists, and many come to celebrate what was. We learned that there have been stories of satanic rituals, killings, and acts of





"Luminous Child"  
by Hedi B. Desuyo

abuse committed in the Hall of the Fallen, a place constructed at the direction of Himmler to honor heroes of the SS who had given their lives in the service of National Socialism.

Klaus, my student, was tasked with collecting the names of all those who were held, used as slave labor, and killed there so that in ceremony, they would be remembered by us, out loud.

On the final day of the retreats, we performed a walking meditation from the castle to the site of

the former concentration camp where the prisoners were held, four kilometers east of the castle, in a village called Niederhagen.

Here, prisoners of the SS and the Nazi Party were used as slave labor to construct Himmler's vision—a vision that never came to be. However, in the process of its attempted realization, hundreds upon hundreds died of malnutrition and varied diseases. They also died from torture or were killed outright. Many were simply worked to death.

You would hardly know what the place was if there were not a memorial green and tour guides to show us. Many of the buildings have been torn down, and there are no remnants of the electrified fence that kept prisoners from escaping.

Some buildings still stand: buildings that were once barracks, a kitchen, and the infirmary have been converted into housing. The former entry gate to the camp is now an apartment building. It is recognizable only when shown by





the tour guides, though. Without their description, I don't think I would have known. I cannot help but imagine what it must be like to live in these places.

If you were not looking for it, the memorial for the camp would be easy to miss. The green that holds this memorial plaque, which lies flat on the ground, is where prisoners had to stand for hours in the most terrible of conditions: unbearable heat, rain, snow, winds

that bite like a vampire, and dampness that chills to the bones.

While I stand here, passing out lists of names and preparing for the ceremony, again the thought arises: "Why do I come to these places? Should I, like the people in this village, not talk angrily about the pointlessness of this site and instead press hard to forget?"

The answer to this question has always been that I come to these places to learn more intimately about them.

Knowing these details, standing in the open field where prisoners once stood, I can then imagine being hopeless, soaking wet, bone-cold, and starving. I can imagine each day having to remove dead bodies, wondering when my time will come, and in some way wishing for it, and in another way imagining that I would not succumb but that I would survive to

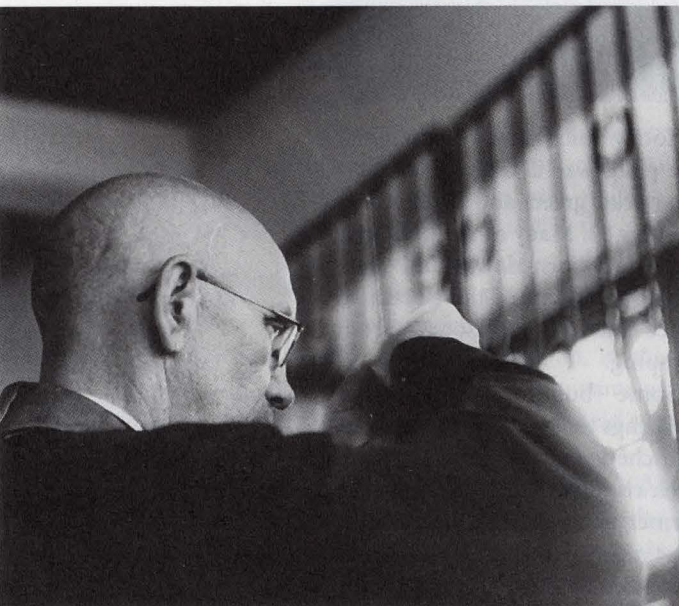
experience again a warm fire, fresh bread, and cheese so sharp that it would make my cheeks draw in and touch the sides of my tongue.

With the information given by the tour guides of this *gedenks-taette* (German for "memorial site"), I also imagine myself a young SS soldier, coming from a small village where there was not enough to eat and the atmosphere was always sad and just a bit pointless. I imagine how it must have felt to be rewarded with each act of cruelty. That with each kick, with each humiliating shout, with each act that took me deeper and deeper into whatever comes through the dehumanization of another, that I was rewarded, even celebrated. I imagine how powerful it is to feel in this way important and cared for. So in the end, why wouldn't I act this way?

I imagine starving, socks shredded, feet blistered, back aching, and capitulating for a glass of milk. Giving up the names of persons with whom I slept, whether they did what I said they did or not, just so that I could have one more day without beatings and perhaps an extra bit of bread.

I dare to put myself in the places of the pastor of the village, the mayor, the shopkeepers who benefited from the presence of so many soldiers and from the commerce of the camp. I imagine I am the young girls who might have been impressed with those fine SS uniforms, and the fathers and mothers who knew better and were afraid to speak up.

I make the effort not to avoid or separate myself from any angle of the truth. I try to fill in the full



*I make the effort not to avoid or separate myself from any angle of the truth.*



experience of the place in relation to my judgments of them, judgments that want to (or maybe can only) hold onto one side of experience at a time and call that complete.

It is here, in this limiting of vision, where I discovered the old and terrible lies that keep cycles of war, violence, and suffering alive. It is in relation with Germany and Germans, with this particularly German experience, that I have been brought to a deeper and more tangible connection to the seductive nature of my own conditioning to violence. How quickly I can give in to wrapping myself in a cloak of slogans and justifications. Or how quickly I can deny my violence by focusing on the hideous and degenerate nature of the other. How could they? It is here, in these places, that I have gained the clarity that it is simply impossible to celebrate life and support war without engaging in intellectual trickery, fooling no one but myself.

Still, with the acceptance of such invitations I must admit that I often wonder if these monastic practices in places like this, or Mauthausen, or Hademar, or Breitenau do any good?

In the end, the conclusion of this inner discourse has always been that to realize good is not the point. The point of these monastic practices is to do them and see what arises, and then work with this.

So I invite others to join me as I come to places like the Wewelsburg Castle, a place that has sat here for more than 500 years, passing from one group to the next only to be rented by Himmler in 1934 to become the SS center of the universe. We sit in meditation together. We eat together. We sleep in the place to discover how it rests in us. We dare to imagine, to explore all of the angles of truth that we can. We open ourselves to the place, and we don't turn away.

On the last retreat at Wewelsburg, after the ceremony at the

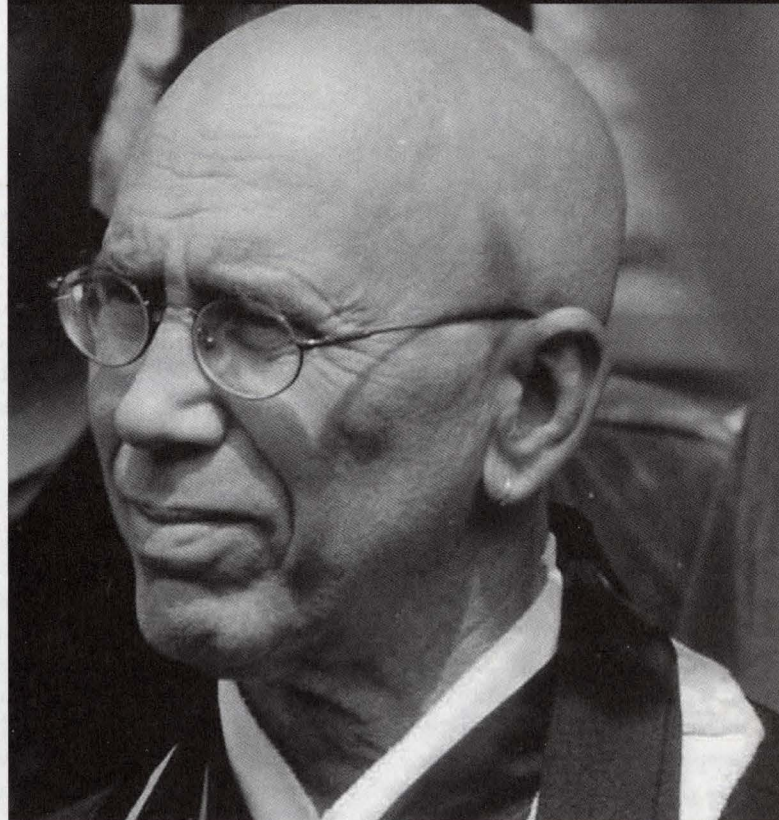
memorial was finished, after the chanting was over and names had been read and the incense burned to ash, the clouds turned gray, and the wind began to blow only as it can in Germany. The rain came, and when it arrived, it came down in sheets blown sideways.

As quickly as it began, it ended, and we walked slowly back to the castle to change our clothes so that we could come together and say goodbye. ■

*Claude AnShin Thomas is an award-winning author and Soto Zen Buddhist monk. He served in Vietnam in 1966–67, and since then has been working to heal his emotional, mental, and spiritual wounds and using these experiences to help others. He is the founder of the Zaltho Foundation Inc., a nonprofit that promotes peace and nonviolence; please visit [www.zaltho.org](http://www.zaltho.org).*



*It is here, in this limiting of vision, where I discovered the old and terrible lies that keep cycles of war, violence, and suffering alive.*



Above: Claude AnShin Thomas on his way to the tower used by the SS Nazis as a ceremonial place.

Left: In the inner courtyard of the Wewelsburg Castle.

Opposing page, top: Leading walking meditation with organizer Klaus Schick.

Opposing page, bottom: Offering incense during the 2003 retreat.

(photos: Timo Kleine-Rueschkamp)



# Healing Our Global Woundedness

by **Ruben L. F. Habito**

Opening our eyes to our global scenario, we clearly see how we all live in a world wracked by violence on so many fronts. Armed conflicts continue in different regions of the world, in wars declared or undeclared, in disputes between groups separated by ethnic, religious, or other differences, or among individuals who bear animosity against other fellow human beings for various reasons. Millions are uprooted from their dwellings due to threats on their lives from political, social, economic, religious, or other factors and live as refugees in dire subhuman conditions. Around 30,000 children die of hunger and malnutrition on a daily basis globally, in a systemic kind of violence that takes a toll on innocent lives. To add to all this, we humans perpetrate violence upon our Earth in various ways through our very lifestyles, bringing about an ever-worsening ecological crisis of global proportions.

In the midst of all this, an earnest question arises from deep within our hearts: is there a way of stopping this violence and conflict on all fronts? Can we

all still live in peace together, toward a sustainable future, in our global community, in our immediate circles of human relations, and within our own selves?

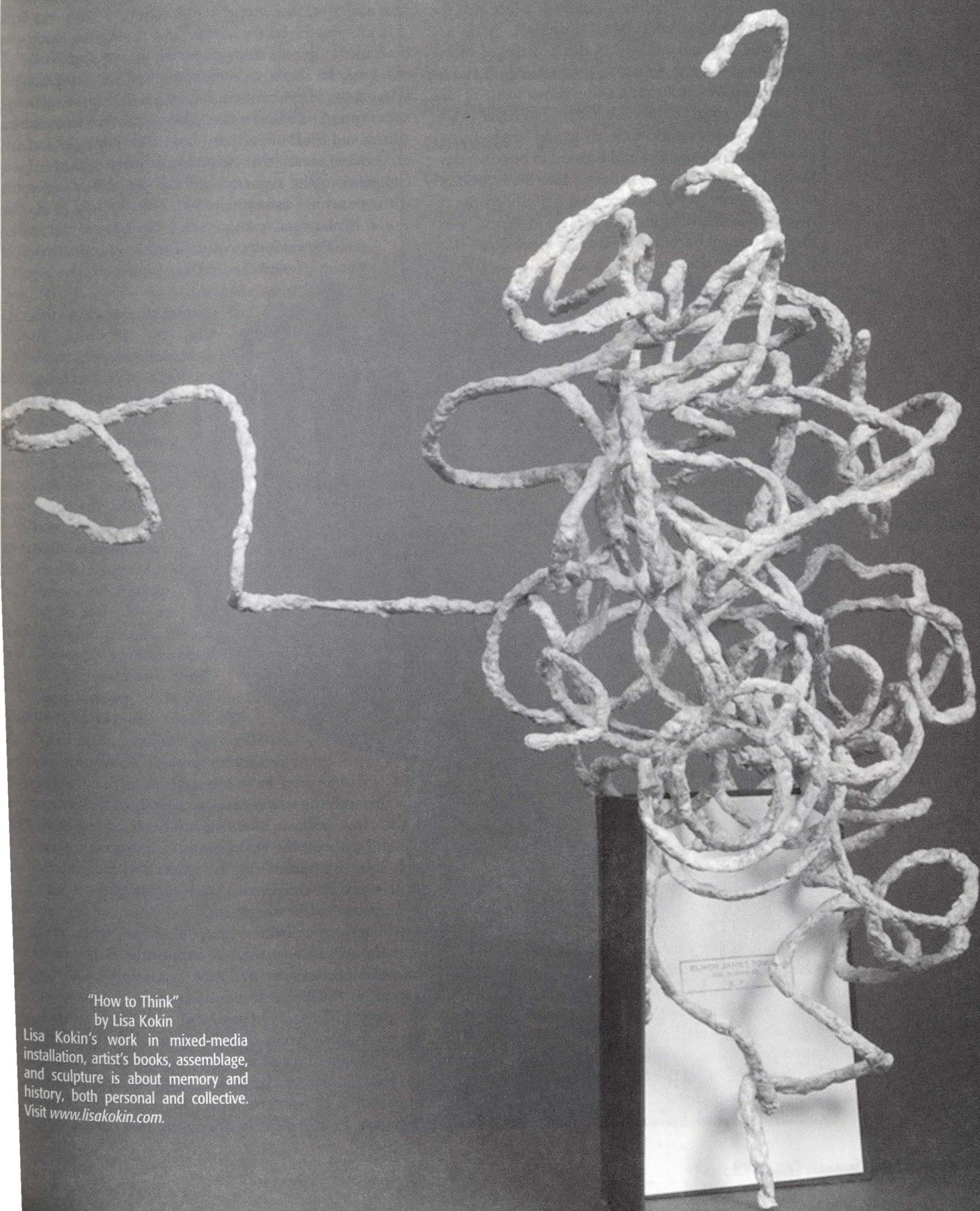
This is a tall order indeed, and we may feel overwhelmed, numbed by a sense of resignation, and consigned to powerlessness.

Those of us who have found that a Buddhist practice nourishes our personal lives ask ourselves: what difference can this practice make in the global scheme of things?

In the practice of meditation, we take a relaxed but attentive seated posture, pay attention to our breathing, and focus our minds on the here and now with each breath. This practice of settling our bodies and silencing our minds opens us to a place of peace, a place that is home.

Some, even among those who have taken up this practice themselves, might point out that this is indeed a fine way of shutting out the noisy sounds of the world and finding for oneself an inner haven of





"How to Think"

by Lisa Kokin

Lisa Kokin's work in mixed-media installation, artist's books, assemblage, and sculpture is about memory and history, both personal and collective. Visit [www.lisakokin.com](http://www.lisakokin.com).



peace and quiet where each can be “protected” from all that conflict “outside.” But this is not what this practice is about—finding a haven of peace just for myself in the midst of a violent world.

Anyone who has engaged in this practice of sitting in silence in earnest, even for a little while, will also be able to acknowledge that settling down to sit in this way, all too often, far from leading us to inner peace, only opens our eyes more clearly to and heightens our awareness of the conflict and turmoil in our own day-to-day lives. Entering more deeply into the recesses of my own inner being, this or that unfulfilled desire, that unhealed wound from the recent or remote past, this resentment harbored against a parent, a sibling, an acquaintance, a co-worker, an employer, an ex-spouse or lover, or a current spouse or lover, can well up and loom large on the horizon of my conscious mind.

In short, in the midst of this silence I may be able to recognize that there is a war right here within me. If I reflect more deeply on the implications of all this, I may also come to realize that this inner war is not separate from but, in fact, intimately connected to the wars going on in the world “out there.”

How can I stop the war within myself, and thereby in some way also be able to help in stopping the war “out there”?

The answer may be found by plunging more deeply into that very silence itself. In the depths of the silence that exposed us to our nakedness, to our frailty and brokenness, to our vulnerability, and to our own inner turmoil, we may be able to discover the balm that will heal our woundedness and bring us to true peace. When we recognize, acknowledge, and accept our brokenness and woundedness, something shifts within us. Recognizing the conflicts within me and acknowledging and accepting my own woundedness, I am able to come to terms with it and come to peace within myself. I find the place of peace within myself, having accepted myself in my own weakness and woundedness and vulnerability. I am also thereby

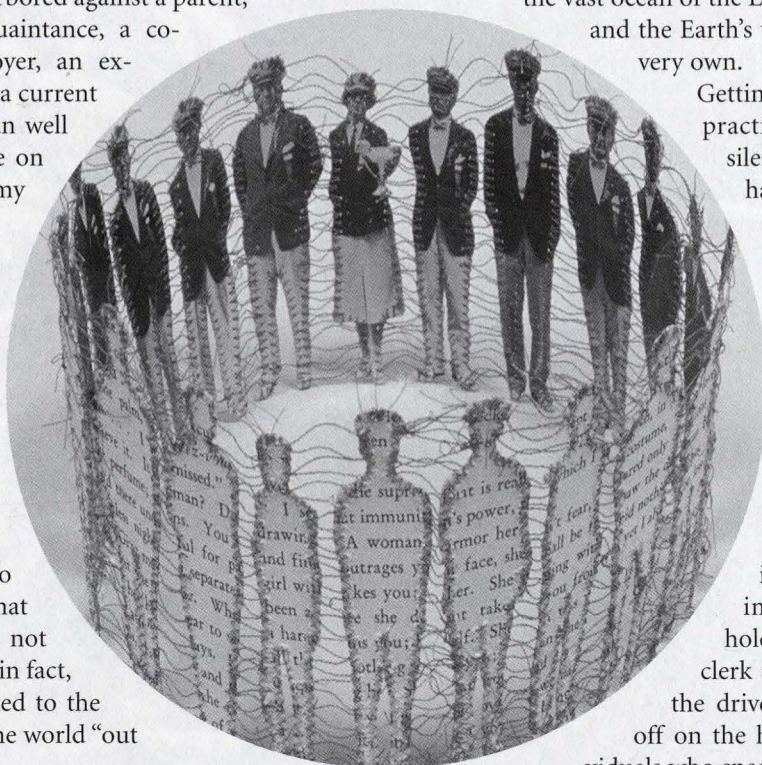
empowered to embrace everyone in this world in my heart, as fellow sentient beings sharing this woundedness each in their own particular ways.

In the depths of the silence, if I listen attentively, beyond the groans and murmurings my own little self, I may be able to hear the sounds of the world, the cries of my fellow sentient beings, in their particular situations of pain and suffering. It is that very woundedness and brokenness that I have acknowledged and accepted in myself that becomes the place of birth of compassion, the capacity and the power to “suffer with,” in my life with others, with everyone else in the world. In short, my own personal wounds are cast in the vast ocean of the Earth’s woundedness, and the Earth’s wounds become my very own.

Getting the knack of this practice of sitting in silence and making a habit of it, our eyes, our minds, and our hearts open to the manifold ways we can make a difference in this world, bringing it closer to becoming a place of peace. Every person I encounter or relate to, be it a member of my immediate household, a co-worker, the clerk at the grocery store, the driver who just cut me off on the highway, those individuals who speak ill of me, or those

who may have betrayed me or hurt me, I am able to recognize as bearing wounds of their own. I can thus embrace them in my heart as my own. When I embrace the world’s wounds as my own, I am able to take responsibility for them, and thus in my little ways be enlightened and empowered to take steps toward addressing them.

Rising from my seat, arising out of the silence, and opening my eyes to what is happening in my own immediate circle, in my local community, in the nation, in the global scene, I am more sensitized to the pain, suffering, violence, and conflict all around me on so many fronts brought about by the greed, ill will, and ignorance of wounded beings like myself. I am able to acknowledge all this as my own pain. I am thus moved in whatever way I am able, in my own little way, to take steps in alleviating that pain. I can



“Trophy”  
by Lisa Kokin



o this by reaching out to a family member or friend in distress or by helping out in a local homeless shelter. I can put my signature on a petition, or join a rally or sit-in against a needless war. I might attend a local interfaith meeting to address community issues or participate in a study or action group on the ecological impact of a coal-burning power plant in a nearby area. Steps to alleviate pain might be signing a letter in solidarity with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, going out and attending a public lecture on peace efforts in the Middle East, or sending a letter to the military rulers of Burma to stop oppressive measures against their own people. The list of things "to do" is endless. Given my own limited time and energy in the midst of my own already busy life, I can only do what I am able, all the while resisting the sense of powerlessness that could engulf me if I focused on the extent and the magnitude of the world's suffering.

The title of Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki's book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* offers a hint: coming home to the silence, with each sit, I take on this "beginner's mind," again and again. With every sit, with every breath in fact, I can begin to stop the war within, and begin to cut through the roots of my own greed, anger, and ignorance, find some healing, and come home to that inner place of peace.

Putting it in this way may make it sound all so splendidly simple, like an all-too-quick fix, to my own, and to the world's problems. But I am not saying, "just sit, be silent, and all will be well." However, if we do give ourselves this opportunity to sit still and truly go deep into this silence, we may taste for ourselves what Thich Nhat Hanh has embodied in his own life: "Peace is every step."

We may discover the key to the Earth's healing and to global peace when we find the source of healing and the place of peace within ourselves. True, we know all too well that this cannot be accomplished in one sit, or in a day, or in a week's silent retreat, or a few months, or even after years and years of this practice. It may not be completed even in a lifetime of practice.

Consider the Chinese proverb that reminds us, "A thousand-mile journey begins with the first step." The journey toward healing our own, and our Earth's brokenness and woundedness, the journey toward genuine global peace, is like a thousand-mile journey. Each one of us begins this long and arduous journey, with every sit, with every step, with every breath. And what joy it is to find companions along the way. ■

*Ruben L. F. Habito is Roshi at the Maria Kannon Zen Center in Dallas. He is author of Healing Breath: Zen for Christians and Buddhists in a Wounded World (Wisdom, 2006) and Experiencing Buddhism: Ways of Wisdom and Compassion (Orbis, 2005).*

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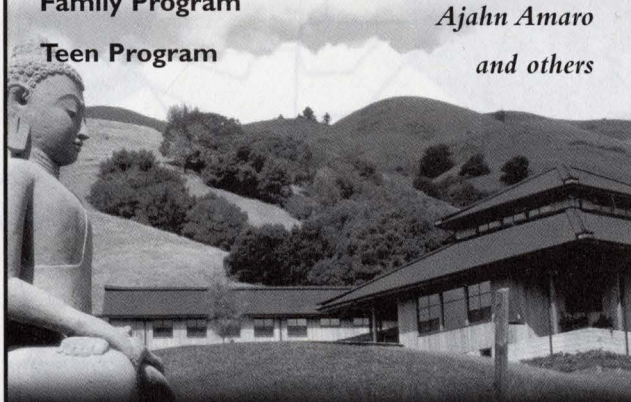
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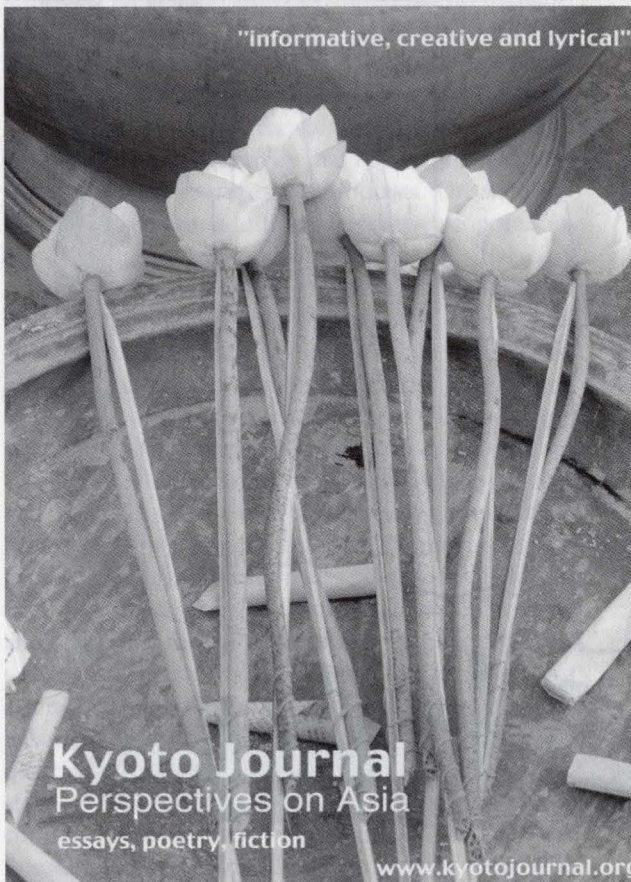
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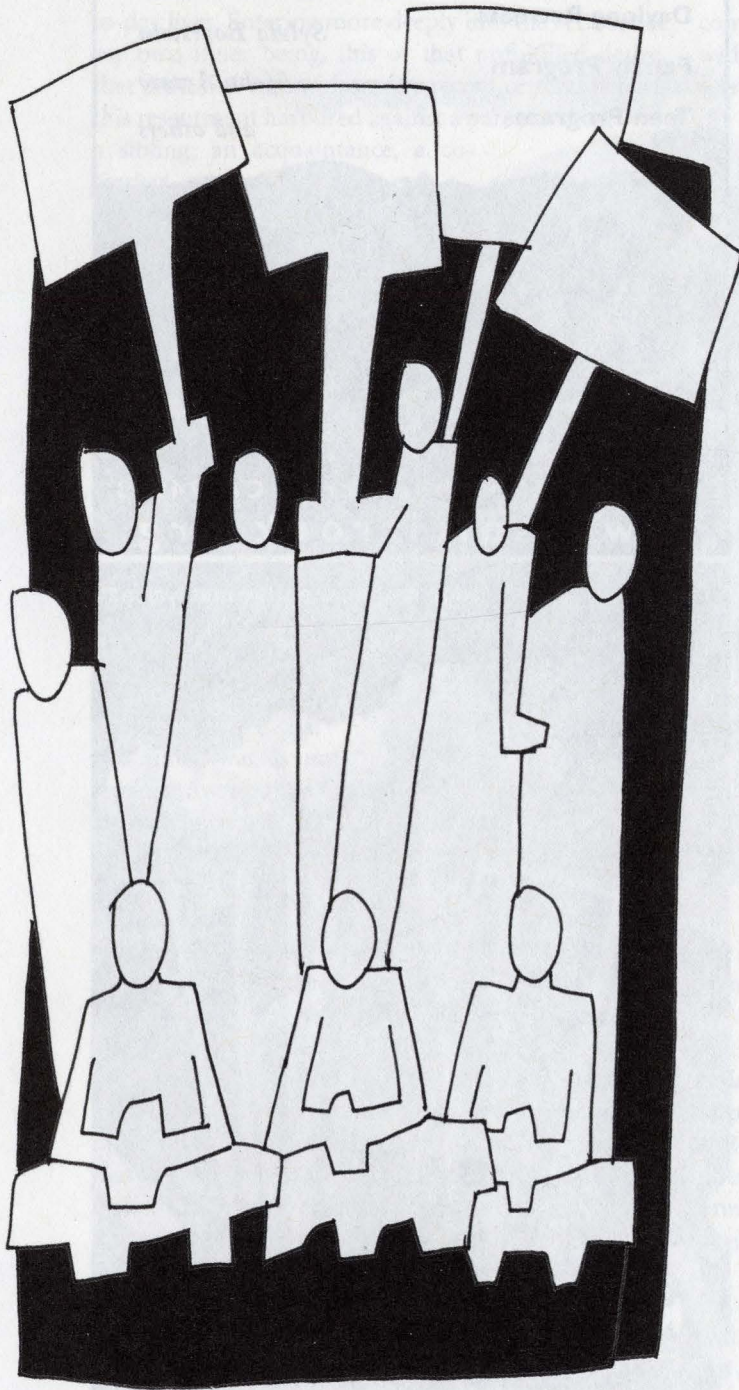
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# Silence at the Root of Activism

## Challenging Prisons and Punishment

by Rima Vesely-Flad



"Protest"  
by Tiffany Sankary

This is not the silence that is the opposite of noise. It is a quality that is intrinsic to us, an inexhaustible energy. It is not an experience that we have now and then. It is inherent fulfillment, which can permeate our lives. We can take it into the world and act from it.

—Larry Rosenberg, *Breath by Breath*

Turning toward silence as a means of creating social justice appears paradoxical. Silence, as a term, evokes a meditating monk dwelling outside of mainstream life, whereas the very notion of activism assumes mass movements, online communication, and policy change. But for those of us who yearn for a middle ground—silence and social change—the uncharted territory of contemplative activism is a path we chart even as we walk it.

For the past 10 years, I have been engaged in anti-prison activism while I have sought solitude and contemplation. In 1998, I returned to the United States from South Africa, where I had been teaching high school students while engaging in research. I wanted to continue working with teenagers and applied for a job leading monthlong wilderness courses for youth on probation. I loved these kids, all from difficult homes, all returning to hostile environments where they felt trapped, isolated, and lost. They expressed themselves in awkward, funny, and often angry ways. Talking with them illuminated the interconnected relationships between family difficulties, depressed rural economies, and a culture of harsh punishment for small infractions.

The smallest amount of kindness went a very long way with them. Tangible changes manifested over the course of time. Those who resisted the requirements of the wilderness program—activities such as hiking—eventually led the group. Those who blew up at others became mediators of conflict. We instructors gave that intangible, irreplaceable gift—attention—as an offering that led to a greater sense of confidence and openness.

When I moved to New York City to begin graduate school, I carried the memories of the young people I had come to know. A few months later, I encountered an article written by men incarcerated at Sing Sing Prison. They talked about their own

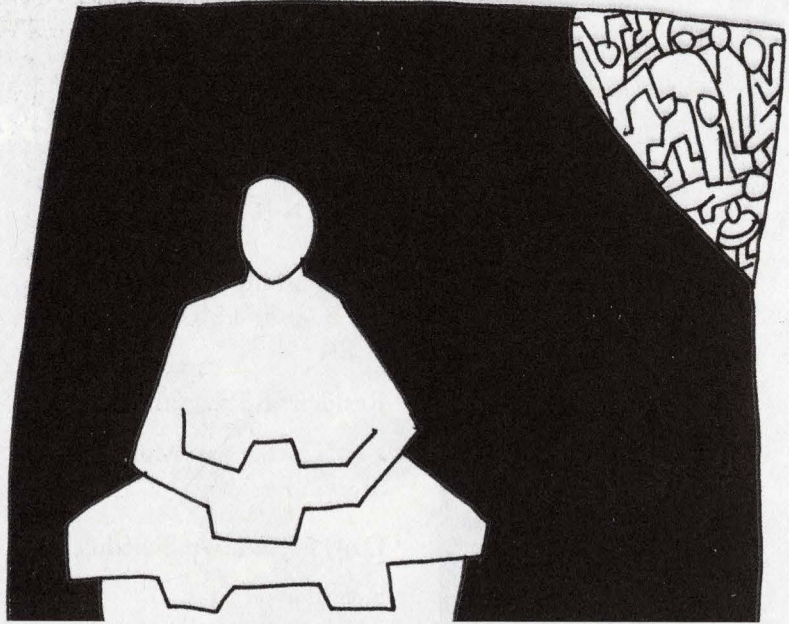


impoverished, violent communities, and they talked about how spiritual practice and identity had enabled them to see the usefulness of their lives despite and because of all they had experienced. Their stories deeply inspired me, and I thought to myself: as an African American woman who has suffered much, I want to learn from—and teach—people who have undergone imprisonment and who have become leaders in their own right.

I envisioned responding to their request that communities of faith receive them upon their release from prison. For two years after graduating, I stumbled about in California, trying to realize such a vision. I did not encounter an organization whose mission or activities engaged communities of faith in criminal justice issues. I wanted to teach higher-education courses in a prison but did not receive a response to the overtures I made. I moved across the country once again, from California back to New York. Everything felt unsettled, and every morning I awoke with my heart jittery and anxious.

Gradually I turned toward meditation. In hindsight, I can see that beginning a sitting practice, albeit without any formal training, was a natural step toward easing this upheaval. Things began to fall into place. I found a higher education program at Sing Sing Prison that needed volunteers. I received a seed grant to initiate a campaign engaging communities of faith in criminal justice policy change. And I learned a great deal more about Buddhism. In December 2004, I went for five days to Green Mountain Monastery, a community in the lineage of Thich Nhat Hanh. The sisters cultivated a profoundly nurturing environment; I felt the absence of judgment and fear, and in their place, a relaxed openness. I let down my guard and absorbed the quiet. After many years of searching for a place in the world, for a way of being rooted in fearlessness and silence, Buddhist teachings on breath meditation, morality, and generosity provided a forward path.

Learning to root my activist commitments in silence opened many doors. As I gained more funding for ICARE (Interfaith Coalition of Advocates for Reentry and Employment), the project I initiated and began to work on full-time, I found people in diverse New York communities responsive to engaging in systemic change from a spiritually grounded approach. Formerly incarcerated and legally trained advocates came on board and joined our fledgling steering committee. I spent a great deal of time reaching out to Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and Buddhist leaders and giving presentations in communities of faith. The campaign gained momentum: in the first year of our campaign, we succeeded in moving legislators in a difficult political context to pass a bill, which the conservative governor signed into law.



The coalescing of forces—spiritual and pragmatic—in a direction that accomplished policy change actualized a vision that many of us had upheld for a long time. At the same time, I found it increasingly difficult to balance my extroverted community engagement with the depth of my need for silence. In the second year of the campaign, I went back to school to have more time for thinking and contemplation. I enjoyed academic work but soon found myself increasingly drained by my schedule. I began to have stress-related health problems. And although I was sitting every day, the minute I arose each day I began a treadmill of activity that moved at a relentless pace despite my attempts to slow down. The state legislature passed four additional legislative proposals on our agenda. And I was exhausted.

In the summer of 2007, I spent nearly a month on retreat at Insight Meditation Society. The silence allowed me to balance my fatigue with focused discernment on how to step back from the hectic speed of daily life. I remembered my love for wilderness and started to contemplate alternatives to my New York City lifestyle. In December of the same year, my spouse and I purchased an old farmhouse in the Catskill Mountains, two hours north of Manhattan, and I began spending as much time as possible in the forests and woods. I am here as I write this essay. The quiet and beauty are renewing the energy that has depleted.

The challenges of how to engage in the movement against prisons and unnecessary punishment while balancing my draw toward contemplative practice are questions I wrestle with every day. Although I have stepped down from the director position of ICARE, I continue to be involved in programmatic work as the founder of the organization. I frequently meet with

*“World in Corner”*  
by Tiffany Sankary  
Tiffany Sankary is a visual  
artist and Feldenkrais  
practitioner who lives in  
Oakland, California. Visit  
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legislators in our state capital, and I work actively as the chair of our board of directors. I speak at conferences and continue to raise funds. And I teach graduate-level classes on the prison-industrial complex in a seminary setting while I continue to take classes.

I am learning, even amidst the activity, that silence sustains the quality of my commitments. Even when I feel that I don't have time, I sit down on my cushion every day. I prioritize meditation as a practice that not only affects my own balance of body and mind but also nourishes others.

One of my former students at Sing Sing recently sent a long letter to me. He wrote: "Soon I hope to be out of here and I want to do everything I can to help my people, our people, in their struggles. Maybe one day I can do for someone what you did for me, teach them how to liberate and appreciate their minds and spirit." His letter reminded me of what it means to teach and be taught, the quietness of mind and heart that it takes to learn something new.

Such learning is both midwifery and reciprocal nurturing, a process of eliciting knowledge that someone already has stored inside him or her, and also being awakened to new possibilities. Being able to learn and teach also means not being consumed in thought or feeling but rather cultivating a spaciousness that grows through silence.

If today I identified my searching, I would say it is the pursuit of silence. But perhaps paradoxically, silence is something that comes to me when I cultivate attention to my breath. The poet Brigitte Frase writes: "As a child exploring/a river bank, I turned a grass blade/over and over, discovering/how attention will coax out the strangeness lurking in all things." I think of that verse often and am starting, through daily practice and discernment, to do less and pay attention more. The adjudicated young people I guided 10 years ago taught me a great deal about the immeasurable value of simply being present and attuned to daily life. And so I have understood: persuading community members and legislators of the need for criminal justice policy change involves a great deal of effort, but equally as important—and, frankly, inseparable—is bringing to activism an energy of peacefulness and quiet determination, an intrinsic quality that can permeate our lives. ■

*Rima Vesely-Flad is the founder of the Interfaith Coalition of Advocates for Reentry and Employment (ICARE), a New York State advocacy project focused on changing legal barriers encountered by people with criminal convictions. A doctoral student in ethics at Union Theological Seminary, Rima holds master's degrees from Union and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. She taught religion courses at Sing Sing Prison from 2004 to 2006.*



# Releasing the House

by A. Potos

Graham crackers cemented  
with white frosting from a can,  
creme of tartar to keep it  
from swaying—  
my daughter spent all her nursery school hours  
decorating this house:  
peppermint orbs and gumdrops,  
nonpareils and baby M&M's,  
Mike & Ikes and marshmallows.  
One lone teddy graham stands  
sentinel on the roof.

Tibetan Buddhist monks  
spend hours, days swirling  
intricate pictures with colored sand,  
then erase them in one  
sure sweep  
like my daughter—here—happily  
smashing in the ceiling,  
breaking down the walls,  
trusting the hand that creates,  
the hand that lets go.

*Andrea Potos's collection of poems Yaya's Cloth was published by Iris Press last year (www.irisbooks.com). Her poems appear widely in journals and anthologies. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband and daughter.*

Art by Nuala Creed  
[www.nualacreed.org](http://www.nualacreed.org)





NO TORCH  
IN TIBET!



Beijing 2008



www.NoTorchInTibet.org

Protest at the Olympic Torch  
relay on April 9, 2008,  
in San Francisco.

(photos: Cara Gardner;

[www.caramiaphotography.com](http://www.caramiaphotography.com))



# Planting Seeds for Change

## Tibet Activism

by Canyon Sam

I arrived at San Francisco's Embarcadero to find a solid sea of people for several blocks in each direction, the elegant Beaux Arts clock tower of the Ferry Building piercing a bright blue sky, and the palm trees, esplanade, and arching bridge in the short distance offering a scenic backdrop. The dense crowds of mostly Chinese supporters, many holding pro-Olympics or pro-China signs, included a dozen on a tiny stage vigorously and conspicuously waving oversized red China flags over the crowd, like a re-creation of Tiananmen Square. A gigantic stage with a two-story multimedia screen looked like something from the Olympic ceremonies themselves.

I wiggled my way to the front of the seven-person-deep crowd to get some photographs. From there I could see the off-limits area where uniformed police stood along rows of metal barricades, keeping the path clear for the torch procession that was due any minute. Far beyond the barricades, on the other side of the light-rail tracks, a large contingent of People's Republic of China (PRC) supporters and their flapping red flags stood waiting for the torch.

Then out of nowhere another large contingent marched northward toward them: a platoon of Tibetan flags waved in the air: red, yellow, blue, and white. The flag—a mountain peak under a magnificent ball of sun flanked by snow lions on either side, and illegal in Tibet itself—fluttered high and free in San Francisco.

How different, I thought, from the first demonstration we had for Tibet 20 years ago in San Francisco's Civic Center. The swollen gray skies threatened rain that day. A small group of us had been trying to rally support and interest for months. Labor leaders, church ministers, and a couple others had promised to speak and to try to turn out their members. We expected, if we were lucky, about a hundred people.

As the starting time of the rally drew near, it began to drizzle. We ran across the plaza to a phone booth more than once to get updates from our liaison at Congressman Tom Lantos's office. Some of the speakers had called to say they may

cancel due to the weather, and we had to decide whether to cancel the rally or go forth. The drizzle turned to rain and then a downpour.

In the end, maybe two other people showed up; there were only about eight of us standing there drenched, with our wilted signs in the vacant plaza. We felt dejected and disheartened. The scene—its false hopes, false promises, and miserable luck—came to symbolize the lack of interest and the uphill battle we faced.

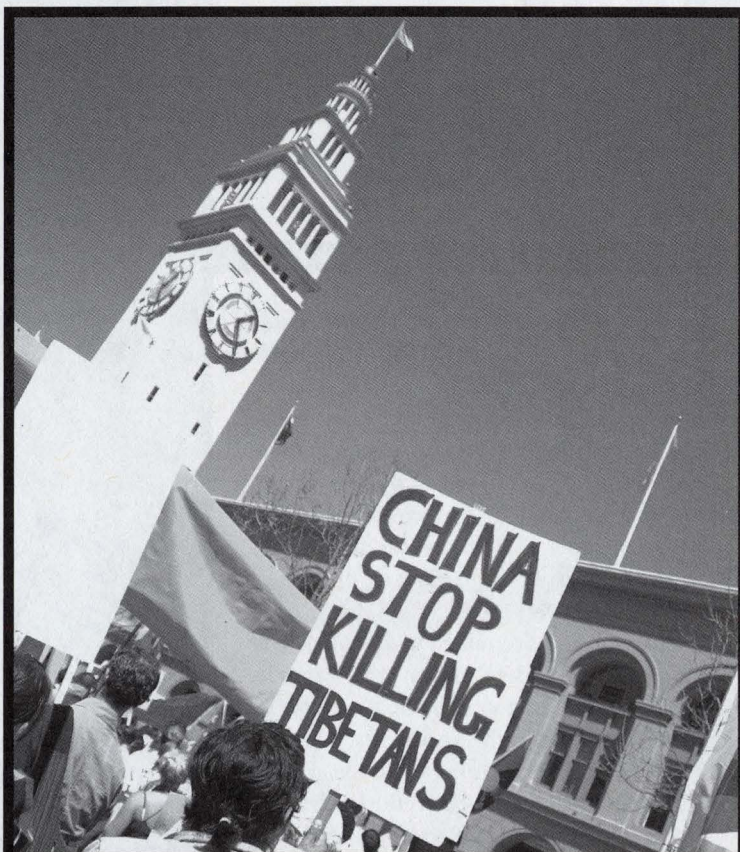
In those days, when we talked to people about Tibetan independence, they'd listen with a quizzical look on their face that grew increasingly more blank after a few seconds, then break in: "Where is Tibet?" The State Department, under Henry Kissinger, part of the George H. W. Bush administration, took a hard line: Tibet was part of China. End of discussion.

We couldn't get any media attention. The mainstream papers wouldn't return our calls, although after a few months one reporter did manage to tell me that the *San Francisco Chronicle* would only take a story if it had a local angle. China itself was just starting to be in the news, let alone some peripheral issue like Tibet. Articles invariably depicted China in a rosy light, made up of information hand-fed to reporters by the press wing of the PRC government. Even the "progressive" Bay Area media wouldn't give us air time, assuming that we were just anti-Communist red baiters.

Still, a small cadre of us—some moved by personal experience traveling in Tibet for extended times—tried every avenue we could to create grassroots support for Tibetan independence. Meanwhile, our East Coast colleagues worked the Hill to garner support in Congress. We took the anti-apartheid movement of the time as a model: colleges, city councils, and celebrities were all holding protests, while activists pressured institutions to divest themselves of financial holdings. That struggle gained frequent and sympathetic media exposure. That's what we need, we thought. And we don't have much time.

One colleague and I were especially engaged. We started our day making 6:00 AM calls to our





*The Tibet issue was not sexy, she declared.  
It would never catch fire in the States.*

East Coast colleagues and ended it staying up at night wracking our brains with the question, How can we make Tibet a household word? What will it take?

Even when we meditated, we prayed for Tibet. When His Holiness gave the Kalachakra Initiation for the first time in the United States, throughout his teaching—even when we were supposed to be generating *bodhicitta*—we were planning the activists' meeting set for the lunch breaks. She and I had both spent significant time in Tibet and Tibetan communities—I'd been there for a year, and she for a year and a half. We knew the conditions, we knew real people and their lives and what had happened to them, the circumstances under which they lived. And we knew what was coming down the pike, because China had broadcast its five-year plan for Tibet. The government was intent on "developing" Tibet in every area—hydroelectricity, manufacturing, tourism, population transfer, natural resources, political repression, and more. "Developing" was code for Sinocizing the region without any regard for Tibetan society or culture.

I remember vividly a long-anticipated meeting between

about a half-dozen of us and a high-powered United Nations lobbyist. We filed into her dark wood-paneled Edwardian living room, taking seats on in the floor on red-and-black Turkish cushions. We poured out our hearts. We pleaded for help. We asked for hints of a strategy, based on her years of experience.

She listened intently for a long time, then she spoke: Tibet would *never* be a household word, she said flatly. It would never be what El Salvador or Nicaragua were a few years back, or what South Africa was now. It would never capture the imagination of the West as those countries had done. It was too far away—not geographically close like the Latin American countries. It had no oil or coffee, no sugar or bananas, no rain forest that could stir the conscience of the American public.

Instead, Tibet evoked images of remote icy mountains and solitary, celibate monks. It was not sexy, she declared. It would never catch fire in the States.

We walked away somber, deeply disappointed, more disheartened than ever. We knew we needed a miracle to have any chance of helping Tibet.

In the summer of 1989, the miracle appeared: Tiananmen Square. The tragedy that chillingly unveiled to the international public the true nature of the Chinese government virtually handed His Holiness the Dalai Lama the Nobel Peace Prize a few months later. (He had been short-listed for years, but the government's firing on prodemocracy demonstrators clinched it.) The decade following brought a phenomenal groundswell of interest in Tibet, propelling it onto the world stage in a way we never dreamed possible. Tibet was the subject of Brad Pitt movies, *Newsweek* features, rock concerts, Apple Computer ads, and even a plug from the stage of the Academy Awards. It grew commonplace to see cars bearing "Free Tibet" bumper stickers, where before when we saw one, we personally knew the driver.

Sometime in the late 1990s—I was no longer working as a Tibet political activist, having turned my attention to performing and writing—I met a Tibetan who lived in Washington, DC. He was a lobbyist for Tibetan rights. We were both staying with a mutual friend back east. One day while we were all out on a drive with our friend, he commented about how deeply committed he found the support for Tibet wherever he traveled in the United States, even through the Midwest and politically conservative regions. The same in Congress: Tibet's allies, spanning both sides of the aisle, were stalwart, fierce. He was impressed that it wasn't just lip service, that people really knew the issues. I remember looking out the car window as he spoke, a vista of dogwood trees on the Blue Ridge foothills sweeping by the Virginia landscape.

"That's because of the work people did in the early



dears," he continued. "It laid the foundation. People who did the grassroots work years ago...before...you and others like you."

That was the first time I felt that maybe all of our early effort and time wasn't wasted. In 1987, when I first returned to the United States from Tibet and Pharamsala, a prominent philanthropist had offered me advice on raising funds for what became the Tibetan Nuns Project: "Just rent the Sheraton." He argued that it would be most efficient to have a once-a-year \$100-a-plate gala dinner.

"No," I had retorted. "I'm not going to do that. I don't just want their money. I want them to *know*." I created a slideshow of my year in Tibet and narrated every presentation. Instead of \$100 a plate, I was taking \$10 a head, and instead of one night a year of fund-raising, I trotted around all year long for three years showing my slides, reaching people 20 at a time, or 30, or 60.

Listening to the Tibetan in the car so many years later, I was able for the first time to see a link between all the work we'd done and the way the issue had reached people's hearts. I don't know that it would have happened if Tiananmen Square and the subsequent Nobel Prize hadn't occurred. But maybe it wasn't just the cachet of the prize, I thought.

It brought up for me the dissonance between two warring schools of thought—that of being an activist and that of being a spiritual being. My activist training was to be fully engaged, to be proactive. The Western mind teaches us to believe we can create change, we can make things happen, we are agents of change.

But this led to a lot of stress and anxiety for us, especially given the stakes involved, when we failed to achieve the outcome the issue needed 20 years ago—when it was still possible, we thought then, to have some effect on events fast unfolding in Tibet.

In hindsight, the situation required a lot more dwelling in the other school of thought: letting go. That's a hard thing to do when you're working day and night for something, but looking back I could see that the situation unfolded in its own time, of its own accord, and on its own terms. And although we could act and have some effect, it was not always what we wanted, when we wanted it, or what was needed.

Being very much in the present moment of urgent need and working from a place of wanting to realize a vision of compassion—tenets I followed very consciously at the time as a new student of Thich Nhat Hanh—also made it impossible to see what I would be able to see later with the perspective of history. What I am able to see now is that the little things do matter. The failed, soggy demonstrations do matter in some way, because although no one except our small band of organizers attended, we had told many people about it.

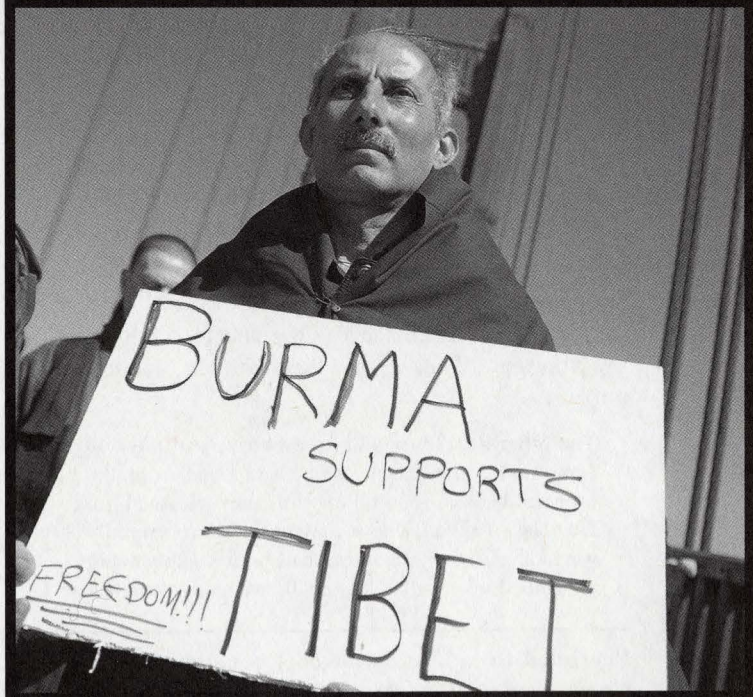
We had announced it and publicized it; we had planted the seeds. And over time they were watered.

We couldn't save Tibet from being flooded with ethnic Chinese, from the imprisonment and torture of its dissidents, the razing of its remaining traditional buildings, or the tide of insensitive policies that pick away at the Tibetan culture, land, society, and ways of life. But I think that although we weren't the agents of change we had hoped and thought we needed to be, I think now that we were also *more* than we ever believed we could be.

Gandhi said, "Whatever you do, it will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it." Twenty years ago, I followed my teacher's precept very closely—"Choose a vocation that helps you realize your vision of compassion"—but a few years ago, I read a proverb from Ghana, I believe, that resonated much more with my burned-out activist self: "Choose a vocation that makes you happy." ■

*Canyon Sam is the author of the forthcoming book, Sky Train: A Journey to Tell the Unheard Stories of Tibetan Women (University of Washington Press). In the 1990s, she spoke at a congressional hearing on Tiananmen Square on the subject of Tibetan human rights, and she earned national acclaim as a performance artist with The Dissident, her one-woman show about a Buddhist nun in Tibet. Her website is [www.canyonsam.com](http://www.canyonsam.com).*

*The Western mind teaches us to believe we can create change, we can make things happen, we are agents of change.*





# Iraq

## A Soldier's Koan

by Aidan Delgado



The faces of the prisoners shuffle past me into the central holding area, drained of vitality, led by young guards whose faces seem equally grim and lifeless. A bitter taste rises in the back of my throat. It all seems so pedestrian and unheroic, nothing at all like Army commercials or those brilliantly colored war movies. This is just bureaucracy. The world around me seems to have no color at all: gray walls blending seamlessly into gray dust, populated with the ashen figures of prisoners squatting amid razor wire. This is not at all the way it's supposed to be. But what was I expecting? I wrap the radio around my neck and begin a letter to Amy.

I'm writing to you from one of the destroyed and abandoned offices that the military has claimed for its own use.... I'm sitting here, terribly bored, and suddenly very lonely. Maybe it's the sight of all these prisoners: ragged, dirty, half-starved, with looks of utter bewilderment and confusion on their faces. I watch them being herded into barbed-wire cages and I can't help but feel terribly sorry for them, no matter who they are or were.... I just feel this deep, abiding sorrow for them. They seem so utterly wasted and defeated.

I set down my pen for a moment. My handwriting has become erratic as I scribble the words as fast as I can, trying to match the volume and forcefulness of my thought. The words flow out in a torrent, unplanned:

The other day, I was told, a seventeen-year-old boy came in [to the prison camp] and cried from the moment he was led in till the time they released him. He was a civilian whose parents and entire family were killed in the war, and he had been walking along with his donkey when I guess he wandered into the

wrong place and time. He was arrested and taken to our prisoner camp. He wept so bitterly because he thought he was being taken to a death camp. One of our chaplains, a Christian who spoke no Arabic, sat down with the boy and comforted him, even cried with him....

It occurs to me that I'm no longer writing to Amy at all, I'm writing to myself. On the window next to me there are thousands of dead insects crammed into every cavity. Dried-out husks of moths and beetles litter the windowsill and the floor, and ants cart these forms away to cannibalize them. Just over my head, tilting lazily under the ceiling fan, is a strip of putrid yellow paper coated in glue, on which a dozen insects are held fast in varying degrees of slow death. Some still struggle, and their feeble attempts to free themselves make the flypaper ripple like a spider's web. I fixate on their tiny, delicate legs, the armored shells twinkling like shards of reflective glass. The moths look as soft as feathers, covered in pale down, stuck fast to the brittle yellow paper. They fight impossibly hard, ripping their bodies to pieces and tearing holes in their soft paper wings to be free. They want so badly to live.

I'm too soft for this business, the sight of defeated enemies depresses me and fills me with pity and loathing.... Even in this room, there's a strip of flypaper hanging from a window and on it a moth is helplessly stuck, its antennae waving feebly. When I look at it I want to cry. A trapped and dying insect moves me almost to tears and here I am in this great and victorious war. I'm supposed to be a soldier, some kind of tough guy and here I am writing about a poor moth. I hate it. I hate seeing any living thing suffer, I can't stand it, it's like needles in me and the worst thing of all is to be surrounded by pain and unable to do anything. I feel wretched and hypocritical. I can honestly say that I am the worst Buddhist in the world....

Here, writing atop one of the empty crates in a dusty corner of the old sports stadium, I am hopeless. I despair. The Way seems so impossibly distant, an

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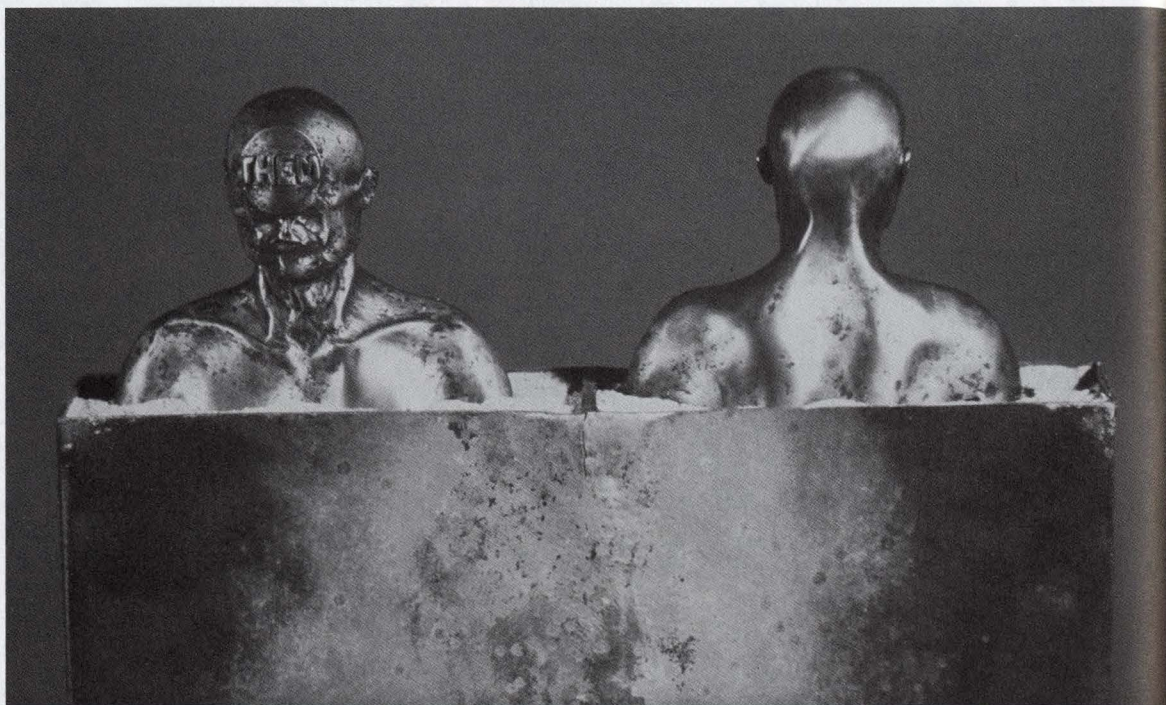




"One and the Same"

by Marc Lancet, coauthor of *Japanese Wood-Fired Ceramics* and a professor at Solano Community College





Art by  
Marc Lancet

unreachable dream. Reading the sutras makes me feel almost physically ill, so far am I from the ideal. I feel like there is nothing Buddhist about me, except that word, hovering over me like a badge of hypocrisy. Compassion ... Loving-Kindness ... Although I call myself a Buddhist, I know that I am no follower of the Way, soldier and jailer that I am. How did I ever come to be here? A Buddhist ... can I even call myself that? I have come so far from what I wanted to be.

My practice is weak and irregular, my will is deficient and lazy and I have gotten myself into a situation where, far from preventing suffering, I am actually adding to it. I had not realized how important to my identity it was to think of myself as a Buddhist, and now I feel that I cannot honestly claim that. I am a dissolute and irreligious man. I know what I want to do and be, but I can't muster my strength enough to do it. I am irrelevant as a human being and as a Buddhist. I can't even master my body enough to sit upright and meditate for a few minutes. Without the truth that Buddhism represents for me, my entire life is meaningless and sinful, and my every pretense at Buddhism that much more laughable and deceptive. I can't even bear to read a word out of the Buddhist bible [Dwight Goddard's *A Buddhist Bible*, originally published in 1932] I brought because it only drives home to me how far I am from sincere, how Buddhism is still so intellectual for me and not natural or spiritual. What a waste my life has been.... I can't see how my frail, undisciplined self will ever advance along that path into the kind of man I want to be. I can keep the Precepts, but the actions have no value without the mind-set that goes with them.

This letter has gone on too long already. What will

she think when she reads it? It will be weeks before my next letter arrives and she'll be worried about me. I shake out my hand, which is burning from the fatigue of nonstop writing, and draw in a long, slow breath.

Breathe in, breathe out. You're okay, you're in control. I pick up the pen again and close the letter with words of affection and longing.

The act of writing the letter leaves me drained. I know what I believe. What am I going to *do* about it? In the days to come I will spend countless hours sitting on my bed, working underneath trucks, or staring out into the sunset thinking about this question. I will agonize over it and burn for it, night after night. I will speak with my sergeants, my friends, and my superiors about it; it will not go away. In Zen, the koan is a puzzle, a paradox; "like a ball of red-hot iron in your throat," you can neither swallow it nor disgorge it. My question is like that, a koan: I live with it; I cannot push it out of my mind. *What are you going to do about it?* It dangles like the sword of Damocles over every night I spend in Iraq, every page I thumb through in my Buddhist texts. This question, and my answer to it, will become the defining spirit of my deployment, of my Iraq war ... and like all great questions it begins with something small, as tiny and inconsequential as a strip of flypaper. ■

*Aidan Delgado served with the U.S. Army Reserve in Iraq and was granted Conscientious Objector status as a Buddhist. Delgado was present at Abu Ghraib when the prisoner torture scandal broke. The scene above takes place earlier in his Iraq tour, at a prison camp at Tallil.*



# International Network of Engaged Buddhists

## Grassroots Dharma Activism Around the World

by Jonathan Watts



INEB 1993 (photos  
courtesy of Hozan  
Alan Senauke)

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) began in February 1989 in Thailand at a conference of 36 clergy and laypeople from 11 countries. The goals set by this group were:

- To develop the perspective of engaged Buddhism;
- To promote inter-Buddhist and interreligious understanding and cooperation;
- To provide information on Buddhist and other socially active groups;
- To develop workshops and trainings in INEB's areas of concern.

Looking back, 16 years later, we can say that these goals remain intact. Although many people have come and gone through the center of the INEB circle, the commitment to sentient and human relationship has stood at the center of all the work.

This focus on relationship is what makes INEB unique and at times difficult to understand. Most organizations build themselves around policies, administrative structures, and budgets. For better or for worse, INEB has focused more on the shared interests and activities of socially engaged *kalyanamitra* (spiritual friends) than on building itself as an organization. Therefore, it has often been hard to show newcomers exactly what INEB is or what it does. However, when we shift our attention, we can begin to see an extensive network of relationships and shared initiatives that have developed through the forum of INEB over the years.

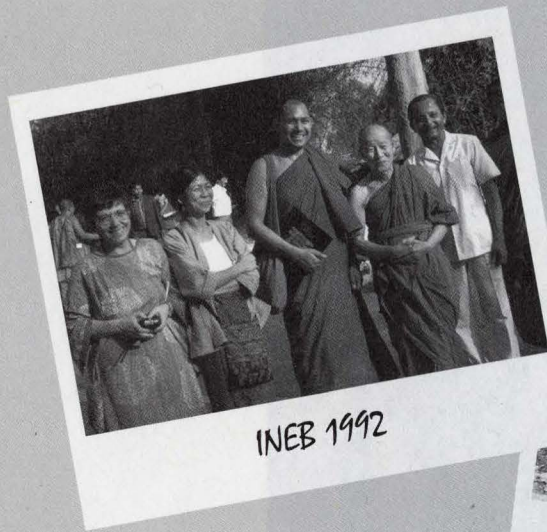
### The Early Years (1989–1997)

The great agitator, initiator, and energizer behind INEB has been Sulak Sivaraksa. In the early years, he worked closely with a small group of radical and dedicated Japanese priests led by the Rev. Teruo Maruyama to develop and support the organizational structure of INEB. With Sulak and his myriad Thai organizations providing office and logistical support, and INEB Japan lending major financial support, the network was able to develop its foundations. INEB nurtured affiliates in key countries: Sri Lanka (Dhammavedi Institute), Cambodia (Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation), Nepal (INEB Nepal), Bangladesh (especially Chakma Buddhists), and Burma (various refugee groups). Through the focused efforts of the network, especially of INEB Japan and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship USA, INEB acted as a link to international aid and support organizations.

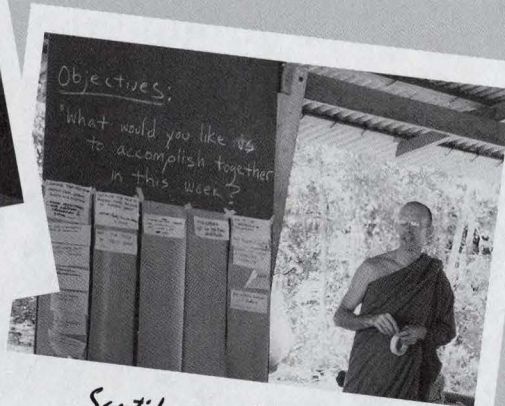
This was and remains vital work since there are numerous marginalized Buddhist communities in South and Southeast Asia that remain isolated and neglected by secular development agencies, relief agencies sponsored by other religions, and, most conspicuously, economically well-off Buddhists around the world with a very poor awareness of their dharma brothers and sisters in other countries. The 2005 conference in the heartland of the Ambedkarite movement in India, with significant participation from new Korean and Taiwanese members, marked the fruition of the commitment initialized by INEB founders.

The other important early work was to develop

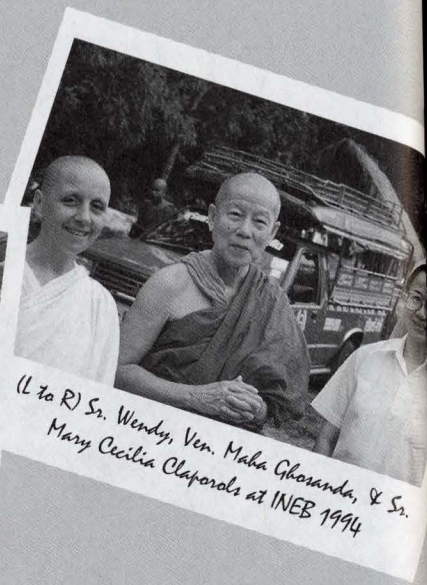




INEB 1992



Santikaro at INEB 1994



(L to R) Sr. Wendy, Ven. Maha Ghosananda, & Sr. Mary Cecilia Cleporals at INEB 1994

workshops and qualified trainers at the grassroots level in various regions. INEB has sponsored and helped organize numerous workshops and activities in South and Southeast Asian countries, empowering Buddhists and others suffering social, political, and economic duress. Supporting leaders at a local level skilled in nonviolent change, alternative economics, ecology, and spiritual development, INEB has helped communities solve their own problems toward the creation of wholesome societies. Our effort over the last several years has been to decentralize and to encourage local and regional INEB members to develop their own forms of training, with advice and support from other members.

In 1991, for example, in coordination with the Dhammavedi Institute, and in the face of fundamentalist resistance, INEB courageously implemented a conflict-resolution program based in Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, including a six-week workshop in Thailand for Sri Lankan monks. INEB continues to support the Institute's work while diversifying and expanding its network in Sri Lanka to stem the tide of violent fundamentalist Buddhism that supports the civil war in Sri Lanka.

In 1992, through the sustained efforts of volunteer Jeffrey Sager, INEB worked closely with Phra Alongkot Dikkapanyo of Wat Phrabatnampu to establish the first Buddhist AIDS hospice in Thailand. This was courageous work at the time because Thais did not see the temple as a place to house and care for these social outcasts. The Dhammaraksaniwet Hospice became the model upon which numerous other Buddhist hospices have been created in Thailand and

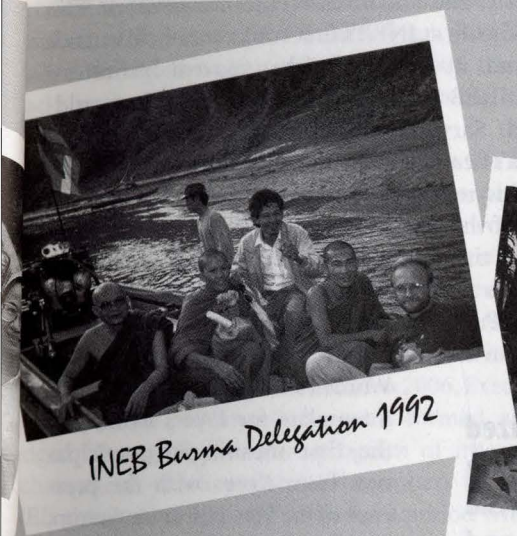
has influenced Buddhists concerned about AIDS around the world.

Also in 1992, in coordination with the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation and Maha Ghosananda, INEB began a series of workshops on conflict resolution, active nonviolence, dharma instruction, and alternative development for Cambodian clergy and laypeople. These culminated in Maha Ghosananda's initiation of annual Dharma Walks (*dhammayatra*) within Cambodia, landmark events for peace in Cambodia, that have been adapted by Buddhists elsewhere, especially the Japanese Nipponzan Myohoji's international peace pilgrimages.

From these early seminal experiences, INEB began to develop a core group of individuals skilled in running various kinds of workshops from the basis of Buddhist teaching and practice. Learning and sharing with concerned individuals from other traditions, specifically our many Quaker friends in the United States, this pool of trainers has grown. Workshops have covered such areas as gender, youth, environment and deep ecology, alternative politics, alternative education, nonviolence, human rights, development, and the integration of spirituality and activism. In this way, INEB has realized its goal to develop a unique Buddhist praxis for confronting the modern world, renewing the ancient Buddhist pedagogy of the Four Noble Truths and the Three Practices—acting ethically (*sila*), training the heart/mind (*samadhi*), and developing understanding and wisdom (*panna*)—to confront the modern world.

The final aspect of INEB's early work was disseminating information on urgent action and human

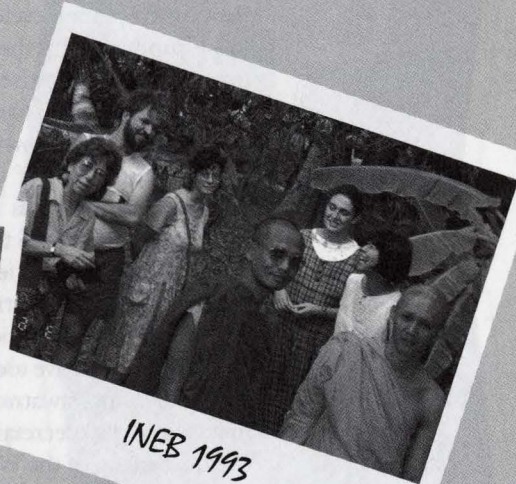




INEB Burma Delegation 1992



INEB 1993



INEB 1993

Sights campaigns. The early years were very intense and active ones for the INEB Secretariat in Bangkok as it sought to survive the frequent coup d'états in Thailand and the persecution and exile of Sulak. Further, the secretariat did its best to disseminate timely insider information on the situation inside Burma. Human rights abuses in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Tibet, and Vietnam were also key areas of concern. Unfortunately, due to the vast scope of the Buddhist world and the lack of emphasis on building a strong institutional core, INEB has not been able to fully realize its goal of acting as a major archive and conduit of information on the great variety of issues that concern socially engaged Buddhists.

At the same time, again through the efforts and patronage of Sulak, INEB has been able to sponsor various publications, most significantly our magazine *Seeds of Peace*, which publishes three times a year. Other publishing highlights have been:

*Radical Conservatism* (1990), a collection of essays in honor of the late Ven. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, which have led to three other major compendiums of collected essays, *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium* (1999), *Santi Pracha Dhamma* (2001), and *Socially Engaged Spirituality* (2003).

*Dr. Ambedkar: The Liberator* (1991), commemorating the centenary of Ambedkar's birth.

*Mindful Meditation: A Handbook for Buddhist Peacemakers* (1990), by John McConnell.

*Entering the Realm of Reality: Towards Dhammic Societies* (1997)—a collection of essays that led to the creation of *Think Sangha Journal* (1998, 1999, 2002, 2004).

*Rethinking Karma: The Dharma of Social Justice* (2004)—first published as *Think Sangha Journal* No. 4, to be republished in expanded form in 2009 by Silkworm Books.

### Diversity and Dispersion (1997–2002)

Since the beginning, the INEB conference has been the core institutional structure. From 1989 to 1995, INEB held its international meeting where new members were welcomed and old members renewed their commitments. By 1996 the number of interested people and the demands for programs had grown, yet INEB did not have enough material resources to take on this increasing workload. Most INEB members did not come from mainstream sanghas with significant financial backing; securing financial backing from a major funder might have compromised the network's nonsectarian and independent identity; and the core membership had always felt that the network must be sustained first by relationships and second by material resources.

In the end, it was decided that the annual conference would be changed to every two years to lessen the strain and allow the secretariat to focus on a core program of activities related to key issues. During alternate years, the executive committee, elected at each conference, would meet to address institutional and program issues. In this way, INEB developed a new institutional structure that would be less dependent on the early seminal efforts of Sulak and INEB Japan. Instead of the secretariat being supported by Sulak and a local Thai working committee, it was decided that the INEB Secretariat would be run more independently by the executive committee and the



new executive secretary, longtime member Martin Petrich. With the development of e-mail, Petrich was to be supported by the international executive committee, which comprised members in North America, Europe, Thailand, Japan, and other parts of Asia.

In this way, the growth and diversification of INEB led to a dispersion of the original core membership. Although at times this was a painful process, one can look back and see the tremendous fruit that has been borne from the activities initiated in this period.

Sulak started the Alternatives to Consumerism project and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), the latter of which is still active today.

Pracha Hutauwatra, INEB's first executive secretary, took over leadership of the Wongsanit Ashram outside of Bangkok. Besides working with SEM, he began extending activities he had begun in INEB: deep ecology walks connected with indigenous people's issues, alternative politics, and developing a network of spiritual trainers in Burma. He continues this work today.

Santikaro Bhikkhu, an original INEB member, and other monks in southern Thailand used the Cambodian *dhammayatra* model to develop a series of annual walks to raise awareness and activism for environmental problems around Lake Songkhla.

Ouyporn Khuankaew and Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (the now Ven. Dhammananda) began developing the INEB Women's Project, which has now grown into its own organization called the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP).

After working in the secretariat for two years, I began coordinating a group called Think Sangha, to develop socially engaged Buddhist perspectives on issues such as consumerism, development, globalization, and violence.

These are just a few examples of seeds that INEB planted that have sprouted in new places. Although these groups are run independently, relationships in many cases remain strong, and various collaborative efforts have taken place. For example, Think Sangha and Sulak coordinated efforts in 1998, 1999, and 2003 to participate as the Buddhist representatives in the World Developments Dialogue with religious leaders and the World Bank. Think Sangha also collaborated with IWP for its meetings in 2003 and 2005. Further, Sulak has offered his continued support to the bhikkuni movement in Thailand being headed by the Ven. Dhammananda.

With dispersion of the original core, there was space

for new faces and initiatives to enter the network. This was fully shown at INEB's first conference held outside of Thailand, in 1999. The Dhammavedi Institute, longtime INEB member, co-hosted with the world renowned Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement at Sarvodaya's headquarters, just outside of Colombo, Sri Lanka. This meeting represented the fullest coming together of the old and new INEB. Before the main conference, there was a short Think Sangha meeting; a nonviolence training workshop by longtime INEB members Paula Green (USA) and Stella Tamang (Nepal); the first major training program by the INEB

Women's Project, which became a template for IWP's work; and the first meaningful participation from Korea with the presence of the Ven. Pomnyun Sunim, who would help host the next INEB meeting in Seoul, South Korea, in 2003.

This was a transition moment for the network. Petrich stepped down and the network sagged under the failure to find a long-term replacement for him and the continued difficulties of supporting the secretariat with a dispersed international executive

committee. With old members immersed in new independent projects, and new members not fully acquainted with the way the network functioned, INEB went through two years of inactivity during 2000 and 2001.

### Renewal? (2002–present)

In February 2002, a special executive committee meeting was convened at the Wongsanit Ashram to plot a new course. Most of the early core leaders attended: Sulak; the Revs. Teruo Maruyama and Ryowa Suzuki of INEB Japan; Raja Dharmapala of Dhammavedi Institute; the Ven. Sumanalankar of Buddhist Peace Fellowship Bangladesh; Jill Jameson of Buddhist Peace Fellowship Australia; Ouyporn Khuankaew of the Women's Project/IWP; Hkun Okker of INEB Burma; and myself representing Buddhist Peace Fellowship USA. It was decided that INEB would reestablish itself on the original model of strong affiliation and support from Sulak's groups in Thailand, with continuing backing from INEB Japan. A new executive committee was elected, with some senior members deciding to take a step back from central involvement and others continuing.

In this phase, Sulak, David Chappell, and others worked on developing interreligious dialogue under INEB auspices. Through connections with Chandra

**Numerous marginalized Buddhist communities in South and Southeast Asia remain isolated and neglected by secular development agencies, relief agencies sponsored by other religions, and, most conspicuously, economically well-off Buddhists around the world.**



Thiszaffar in Malaysia and Abduraman Wahid, former president of Indonesia, INEB helped run Buddhist-Muslim dialogues in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the beginning of the second Gulf War in Iraq.

Sri Sulak's shared initiative with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Ariyavinaya project in 2000 has spawned a unique interreligious and inter-Buddhist network of young activists. First established as the Interbuddy Network at the 2001 Ariyavinaya meeting, this initiative has grown through numerous trainings, including a one-week INEB Youth Ashram in India in 2005 and a five-week training in Thailand in 2006. Executive Secretary Anne Supamanta has now formed a full-fledged "Young Bodhisattva" program of internship exchanges, in which young staff members from one INEB group go to live and work for a period with another INEB group in a different country.

With a new organizational structure and executive secretary, INEB has experienced renewed vigor in the past five years. Much of this has come from the influx of new members in South Korea, Taiwan, and India, each of which has hosted an INEB conference. These groups are clearly coming to the forefront of a new INEB leadership.

New vigor also comes from reintegration of groups that dispersed in the late 1990s, which is part of a vital process of moving INEB forward while keeping it firmly grounded in its roots. The 2007 conference in Taiwan welcomed back Hozan Alan Senauke, former director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship USA, and Ouyporn Khuankaew, former director of the INEB Women's Project. The conference saw significant turnover in the executive committee with the emergence of a new generation of young leaders from India, Cambodia, Burma, Indonesia, Korea, and Taiwan, many of whom represent affiliates whose senior leaders had previously served.

The present challenge is to consolidate this young core and its sense of ownership in the INEB process. The past year has seen encouraging signs in this direction. As the new leaders are much more computer literate, they have been more active and responsive in communicating via the Internet. The new executive committee, along with a number of old INEB friends, has been active in sharing and disseminating information about major hot spots of turmoil such as Tibet and Burma, as well as coordinating and encouraging social action and protest campaigns in their home countries. Especially concerning Burma, there has been extensive networking and coordination for activism, aid, and education among INEB friends in Japan and the USA, Sulak's SEM group, other Thai INEB members, and the new international Burmese monks organization, Sasana Moli.

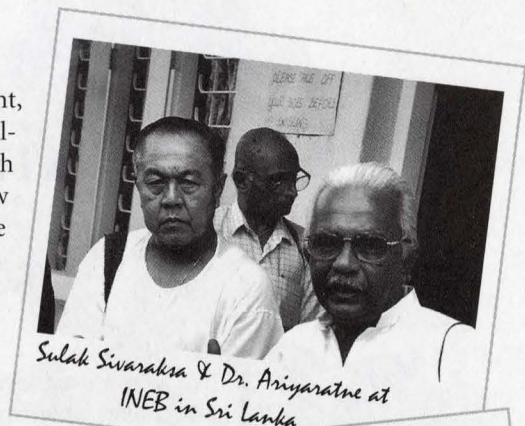
While INEB's future looks bright, there are still numerous key challenges as INEB approaches its 20th anniversary in 2009. The new executive committee needs to be further nurtured and empowered, all the more so because Sulak has begun his own process of retirement from his various Thai organizations. Although Sulak may never retire from being active and engaged, his stepping back from the center of his organizations creates a new challenge of collective leadership for INEB.

Furthermore, it is clear that socially engaged Buddhism has greatly matured over the last 20 years, both as an idea and as practice. When INEB began, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi were just coming to be known to the world, and "engaged Buddhism" was a term that brought puzzled expressions from non-Buddhists and often downright condemnation from mainstream Buddhists who viewed social justice as none of their business. Progressive Buddhist social action, rather than politicized or fundamentalist Buddhist social action, has never been more globally prominent than in the past year with the courageous peace marches of the Burmese sangha and the Dalai Lama's strenuous efforts to maintain nonviolence in the Tibetan struggle.

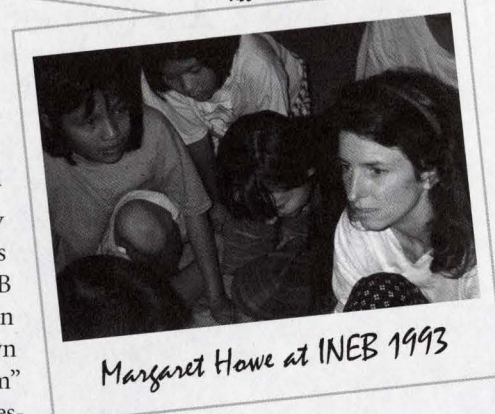
Now that socially engaged Buddhism is coming into the limelight, the challenges are even greater for groups like INEB to maintain their core values and, more essentially, their core methodologies. INEB has always eschewed wealthy patrons and bureaucratic organizational structures, instead emphasizing human relationship and a belief in dharmic process that stays focused on wholesome present intentions, not eye-catching activities run by "professionalized" staff.

While INEB should not be fundamentalist in remaining understaffed and underfunded, it needs to chart a way forward that increases the breadth and depth of its work even as it stays rooted in its fundamental methodologies. INEB's 20th anniversary conference in Thailand in November 2009, when a wide variety of events spanning an entire month are scheduled, will be an opportune time for beginning this next phase of engagement. ❧

*Jonathan Watts worked in the INEB Secretariat from 1990 to 1993, has served on the executive committee in 1997-99 and again since 2005, and has coordinated Think Sangha since 1997.*



*Sulak Sivaraksa & Dr. Ariyaratne at INEB in Sri Lanka*



*Margaret Howe at INEB 1993*



# Not Killing, but Cherishing Life

by Tova Green

I first committed civil disobedience by climbing over a fence at an army base in upstate New York in 1983. I was not alone. Hundreds of women climbed the fence that morning as part of the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment. The army base stored nuclear weapons before shipping them to England and Germany. We climbed the fence in solidarity with our sisters at Greenham Common in England, who camped outside an army base for several years, protesting the storage of nuclear weapons there. While we scaled the fence we sang,

And when I rise  
Let me rise up  
Like a bird  
Gracefully  
And when I fall  
Let me fall down  
Like a leaf  
Without regret  
Joyfully.

We landed on the grass of the army base. Police handcuffed us, took us to a local jail, and later released us. I had been a peace activist since the late 1950s, when, as a student at Antioch College, I first learned about the antinuclear movement. But the action at Seneca was the first time I'd put my body on the line, and it was exhilarating.

When I returned home to Cambridge, Massachusetts, I missed the intensity of the week of camping with other women who felt as passionately as I did about the need to abolish nuclear weapons. I was angry with my friends who hadn't gone to Seneca. How could they not make this issue their top priority, I wondered, rather self-righteously. I felt alone and alienated.

My concern about nuclear weapons continues to this day, and I still appreciate the value of civil disobedience. However, my Zen practice, receiving the precepts, and being ordained as a priest have altered the orientation and mind-set I bring to peace activism.

Recently, I have been studying the Bodhisattva Precepts again and teaching a class called "Living the Precepts" at San Francisco Zen Center. The first grave precept is about not harming.

One version of it reads, "A disciple of Buddha does

not kill, but cherishes life." What does it mean to cherish all life, including my own and the lives of everyone I encounter?

It is the awareness of our interconnectedness that informs our deep desire not to harm. "The fundamental fact is that I cannot survive unless you do," writes Robert Aitken Roshi, one of the founders of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

This awareness leads me to a commitment to treat myself and all beings with respect. We kill not only with weapons but also with our thoughts and our words.

For example, when I am extremely self-critical, sometimes relentlessly so, I am not nurturing my life. When I cared deeply enough about peace to commit civil disobedience but did not take care of my relationships with my friends, I was not cherishing life.

We kill life by not appreciating and not supporting according to Reb Anderson, a senior dharma teacher at San Francisco Zen Center. The converse of this is that we cherish life by appreciation and support, can guide us in our relationships.

Even though I feel respect for others, my words and actions may not always convey that. I may be unaware of the impact of my actions, particularly with people whose cultural background, race, physical ability, age, or social class is different from mine.

When I visit a friend who uses a wheelchair and I move a chair to join her at the table, she has had to remind me to move it back before I leave because she cannot do it herself. She is teaching me to be mindful and giving me a glimpse into her everyday reality. We are fortunate when our friends bear with us and let us know when we make mistakes.

Practicing with the precepts has changed my approach to activism. Aitken Roshi says, "Compassion and peace are a practice, on cushions in the *dojo* within the family, on the job, and at political forums. Not killing includes doing what we can to prevent nuclear war. It also applies to the intimate moments of our lives. ■"

*Tova Green served on the board of BPF from 1982 to 1987 and was associate director in 1998-99. She practices at San Francisco Zen Center, where she was ordained as a priest by Eijun Linda-Ruth Cutts in 2003.*

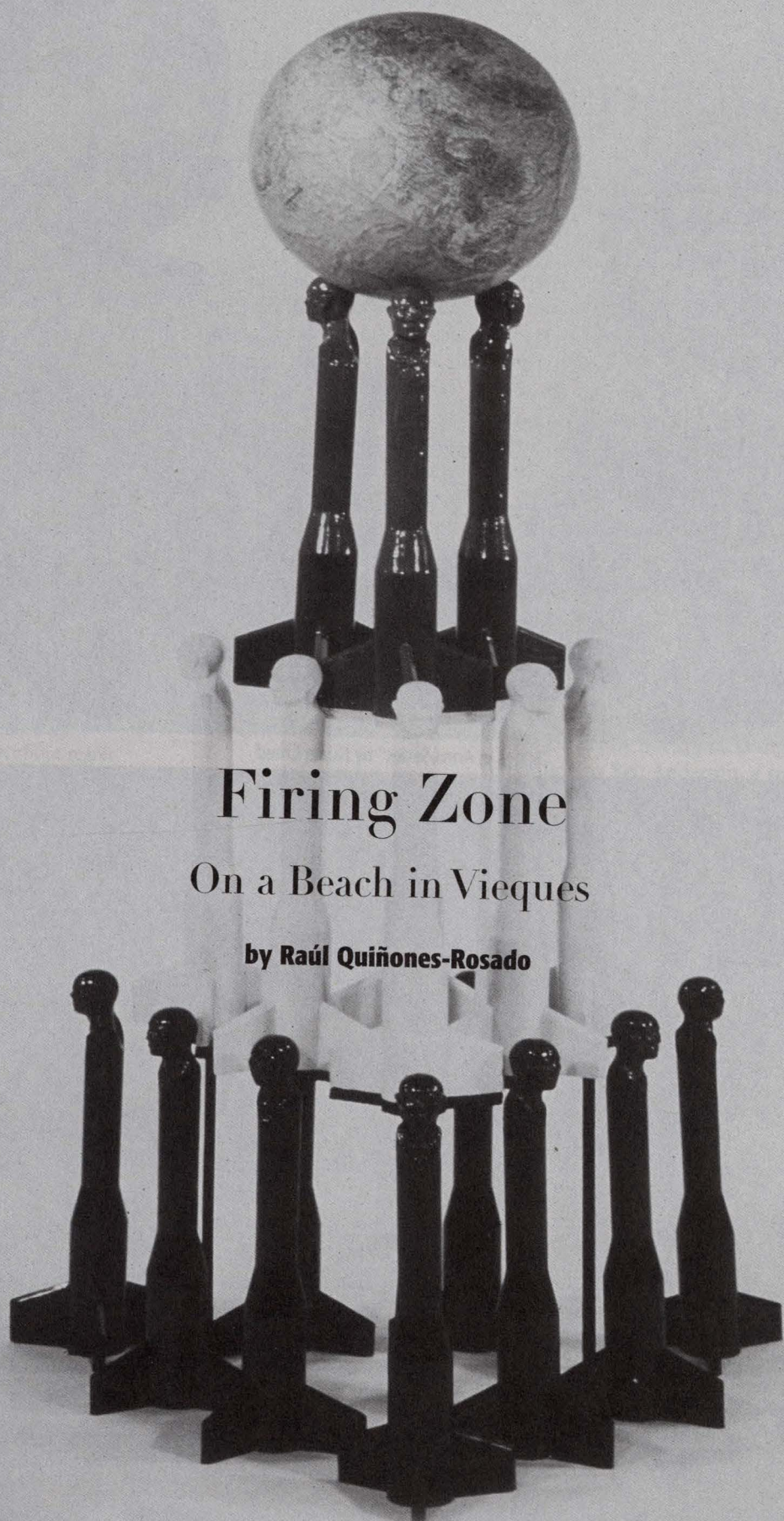




"Babes in Arms Series" by Nuala Creed







# Firing Zone

On a Beach in Vieques

by Raúl Quiñones-Rosado

"Peace Through S  
by Marc Lan



Day. I could feel the warm sand on my feet even through my beat-up sneakers. A few hours later in the day that sand would be a lot hotter, dangerously so. But at 8:00 in the morning, it felt nice, pleasant, relaxing even.

Funny how I was calm, not very nervous at all, even though I knew that any minute I'd be surrounded by men—white, black, and brown—dressed in camouflage, armed with automatic weapons designed to tear to human flesh and bone with total detachment. They were there to protect what they believed to be theirs. How would they know that soldiers and sailors three generations before had come to clear out the property their government had stolen from the people of Vieques? These men, these sailors and Marines recruited off the streets of New York, out of the high schools of DC, off the unemployment lines right here in Puerto Rico, were just following orders: "Arrest any civilian respassers on this base."

Standing there in the sand, writing my simple yet clear message, in letters 10 feet tall—?...A...Z—I was at peace. It was like any other meditation: walking, writing in the sand, soaking in the morning sun, soothed by the breeze and breaking waves.

I focused on the beauty of it all while I prepared to be grabbed up and put away for God knows how many days, weeks, or months. I concentrated on the quiet of the moment before jet fighters would come swooping down to drop their loads of bullets and bombs into now-imaginary enemy targets, soon to be very real ones in places far from this once-upon-a-time Caribbean paradise. I stayed present to the moment to avoid thinking of what could happen to me there, alone, separated from the many other civil disobedients, and consciousness obedient, demanding respect for freedom, for health, for peace. How could I know if I would have the same fate as Ángel Rodríguez Cristobal, who, twenty years earlier on those same beaches, had been arrested and later murdered in his federal prison cell? How could I know if I'd ever see my son or my partner again?

Yet when the soldiers came, I was at peace. When they handcuffed me and searched my body, I was at peace. When they locked me in a cage, and later 10, 20 others—180 peaceful warriors of conscience—I was at peace.

And while at peace in my mind, I was keenly aware of the quake deep in my soul, the tremor strong in my

**And while at peace in my mind, I was keenly aware of the quake deep in my soul, the tremor strong in my heart that reminded me that my peace would never be complete while soldiers and sailors roam, while bombs and bullets fall.**

heart that reminded me that my peace would never be complete while soldiers and sailors roam, while bombs and bullets fall, while cannons blast and projectiles explode, while the planet's most powerful military force continues to impose its will upon those of this tiny nation, the will of a people who merely want what we all want: health, justice, peace.

One year later, many are still imprisoned while the U.S. Navy insists on exercising its might. "One more year," they say, trying to appease us, as if anyone in his right mind could actually consent to such violent abuse for even one more minute. It remains to be seen just how many more people, how many more nonviolent reoccupations of the live-fire range it will take before peace finally comes to the people of Vieques.

Meanwhile, my own search for peace requires daily practice, as I write, now not in the sand, but on the page, or on the computer screen.

I seek this peace when I speak the truth of our struggle to a group, or as I try to convey the power of our vision to just one other person. Or as I sit, alone, in silence, bearing witness to the beauty of the world and its people, wondering when this realization may also be enjoyed by those

in Vieques and by those in uniform...and those in Washington...and those on Wall Street...and in Jerusalem and Gaza...Delhi and Karachi...Beirut...Bogotá...Kabul...Baghdad...

*¡Paz!*

NOTE: On May 1, 2003, almost one year after these events, the U.S. Navy officially closed its base at Camp García in Vieques. In effect, persistent nonviolent civil disobedience overcame the largest, most powerful military force in history. Having obtained the demilitarization of this island-municipality of Puerto Rico, the people of Vieques continue their struggle for the land's decontamination, its devolution to local residents, and the sustainable economic development of its community. Meanwhile, the people of Puerto Rico continue their centuries-old struggle against colonialism and for self-determination and national sovereignty. ■

*Raúl Quiñones-Rosado, PhD, author of Consciousness-in-Action: Toward an Integral Psychology of Liberation and Transformation, teaches, counsels, and trains others in the principles and practices of this approach. He is cofounder of ilé: Organizers for Consciousness-in-Action, and is a mentor for the Social Justice Program of the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society, Northampton, Massachusetts.*





(photo: Jennie D. Brown)

## Finding Community with Thulani Davis

Featured speaker at BPF's 30th anniversary

Thulani Davis took her Zulu first name—which she translates as “an invitation to be peaceful”—when she lived in a community with several South African exiles based in San Francisco during the apartheid era. In 1981 she began practicing Buddhism, and in 1990 she was ordained in the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Church in Kyoto. That same year, Davis cofounded the Brooklyn Buddhist Association, a dharma discussion group that later became a temple. She now leads an Internet-based sangha called the Three Refuges. (To subscribe, send an e-mail to <temne2@earthlink.net> and type “Gimme Dharma” in the subject field.) Davis is the author of numerous books, including the recently published *My Confederate Kinfolk: A Twenty-First Century Freedwoman Discovers Her Roots* (Basic Books, 2007). She sat down with BEANDREA DAVIS (no relation), a member of the Turning Wheel editorial committee, to reflect on her experience with socially engaged Buddhism over the last three decades.

**You've been practicing Buddhism almost 30 years. What are some of the most significant ways your practice has enriched and transformed your life?**

Buddhism has changed my life in increments, in ways that sneak up on me sometimes. It has saved my life when I've lived through periods of sustained despair.

At the same time, it's helped me just to calm down. It's given me patience, which I've never had much of. It has not made me a better human being, but it's definitely in some way encouraging me to act like one. It's affected my writing, my friendships. It's given me global community that I'm still discovering. It's had a tremendous cumulative effect on my life.

**You've written about the need for more cultural diversity in Buddhist sanghas in the United States. Would you say more about the significance of this?**

I think it's incredibly ironic. Buddhism came to these



shores by way of ministers who came to serve immigrant communities. They and their practice were pretty much isolated from mainstream culture for all these years. And now I find all these sanghas who can't find an Asian, who are having trouble finding a person of color and inviting them in.... I am astounded there are so many organizations that don't seem to be able to invite in people of color. I think it's because they themselves don't have people of color in their own lives. This country is still very, very segregated. There are all these separate communities, and Buddhism suffers the problems of the country in that way. There are many Buddhist temples still in communities of color where a language barrier keeps them from communicating with organizations that are putting out magazines that you could find in an airport or a bookstore, which is the face of Buddhism in America today.

It has to do with having your own experience of knowing different people and bringing that to your spiritual practice. And a lot of people live in an apartheid community.

American Buddhism has a long way to go even just to join all of its spokes. There are so many spokes on that wheel that aren't talking to each other that in a way that's a place to begin—to invite people in who don't have a tradition of Buddhist practice within their cultural history. That requires talking to them about the cultural history that they do have.

**You've been involved with several Buddhist communities in New York City. Tell us about some of your efforts to build a diverse sangha.**

In our sangha in Brooklyn, we were in a neighborhood that was Arab and white. We had people who were Black, Arab, white, Latino, and Asian American. We had an amazing array of people coming through the door.

One of the things we made a priority was to make it OK to mention [our culture]. You could just talk about it. Sometimes there would be a resistance among various people to bowing and if that would interfere with the religious practice they had when they came in the door. What does it mean for me to bow, to pay respect? We had to allow people to find their way into comfort, into accepting or not accepting some part of what they were learning in our space.

It's been important for me to be able to speak frankly about race, about rage, about issues that confront women, and to make that part of everyday conversation. If I can't do that about my own life as an African American woman, it will shut down part of how I practice Buddhism in daily life. It shuts down

part of how Buddhism helps me, and being able to share how it helps me.

This culture is very much allergic to discussing all of those issues and people's discomforts one-on-one. I think it's important for all the people to speak frankly, to feel comfortable. That's something you have to work on, but you don't do it by setting up a weekend in which you discuss difference but by doing it everyday.

I feel like a lot of people who are interested in Buddhism will not come to mainstream organized [events] because brown people don't feel welcome. They never see teachers who are brown. The public face of Buddhism in America is very wealthy, white, educated. It's part of an elite fraction of the country. I'm amazed at the number of people of color who *are* Buddhist, particularly black people, because it means they've overcome that intimidating public face of Buddhism.

In New York, after 9/11, a group of Buddhist ministers across all different language groups got together. They brought people to vigils. We would chant—people from Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Japanese American temples, and our sangha, which was very mixed—we all came together. It was totally clear what we were doing even when we couldn't understand each other. We couldn't chat with each other necessarily, but we were chanting in Pali. So there was a lingua franca. I began to realize the face of Buddhism is Asian, but it's invisible in this culture. It's invisible on television, in magazines, in newspapers. When I've had conversations with people at magazines about Buddhism, I've discovered there's a chic Buddhism and there's an un-chic Buddhism. All those temples in the Korean communities in Queens, they are not chic. There's something being marketed as Buddhism, and then there's a much simpler practice that goes on every day in communities. There's a huge separation between them. Tibetan Buddhism is fashionable. Zen is fashionable. There's a failure to connect with the Buddhist practice that really enriches people's lives. For me, there's a richness to daily practice. I don't have to be famous or wealthy to experience it.

**What's the relationship between living Buddhism in daily life and transforming society?**

On the microlevel, practicing compassion absolutely will change the world. I believe that's going on. At the same time, at least in the very wealthy countries of the world, we've lost a sense of how to be in a community. We don't really know how to create community amongst ourselves. Whenever I had a speaking engagement, I would say, "If you've ever lived in a community, raise your hand." It would take a long time for the

**There are aspects of empowerment that Buddhism is already teaching: you are powerful, and what you do matters. Every action you take ripples out far and wide.**



hands to come in the air. I would notice that people of color had their hands up, and a few white people. In small groups, I would say, "How do you know you've lived in community?" They would say things like: "The little old ladies in church tell me my skirt is too short" and "Anybody on my block can tell me my mother wants me."

The majority of people in my classrooms felt they had never lived in a community. That's another issue we face in terms of engaged Buddhism. It's easy to go out and organize around a giant elephant in the room like a war. It's not easy work, but it's easy to raise the subject. It's much harder to create community when people have never [been part of a] community.

Yet we're all seeking that. To, first of all, build a sense of community and then to look at what is injustice and how does it affect all of us. How does injustice against one affect even those who are remotely located from where that injustice is taking place. There's injustice next door, and there's injustice across the globe. When people really begin to feel interdependence, they really feel genuinely that if an injustice is done to another it immediately affects them.

There are aspects of empowerment that Buddhism is already teaching: you are powerful, and what you do matters. Every action you take ripples out around you and affects people and things far and wide.

**What does socially engaged Buddhism mean to you personally? What inspires you to be engaged?**

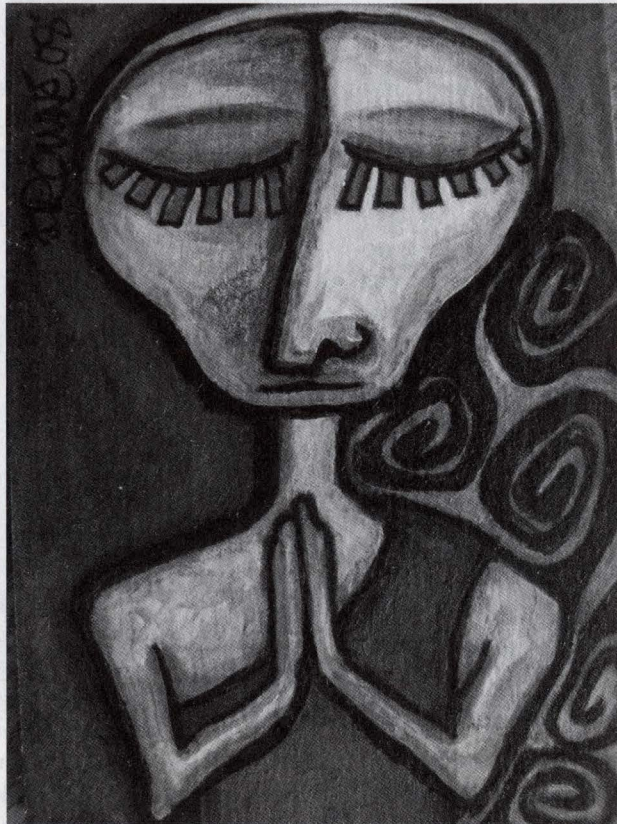
I grew up in the Civil Rights era, in the South. Everybody in the African American community in my hometown got engaged in the 1950s and '60s. There's an expectation on my part that if people work together change is possible and they can do anything.

Whatever your spiritual practice, learning compassion could lead to engagement. It makes sense to be engaged. Engagement is a great antidote to a whole

array of forms of despair and paralysis that we suffer. It's an antidote for very personal problems that we may be coming to Buddhism for in the first place. Engagement changes the personal perspective and brings one into a larger view and group of people. Engagement also expresses love. It's impossible to be among so many people expressing love without experiencing total joy, experiencing yourself not as a suffering individual but as a creature of love, of joy. It's a very powerful life tool.

**What unique contributions does Buddhism make to building a spiritual activist movement?**

I find Buddhists very creative. They've been able to set an interesting example in this country in terms of engagement. One of the advantages of Buddhist communities is they are not in the middle of this traditional Christian dialogue that has gone on for hundreds of years in this country. Even though we may individually carry the baggage of it, Buddhism does not. Buddhists are coming from the margin into the center of the culture and saying, "Well, look at it this way," and bringing people together. There were some Buddhist monks who decided to have a walk




Art by Bret Brown

to the slave trade sites on the East Coast of the U.S. There was this thought to acknowledge the history of slavery in this country.

Buddhist practice itself is not in a sense burdened by the requirements that people change that sometimes are part of the mainstream notion of spiritual practice: "Have you been born again?" "Have you found Jesus?" "Do you speak my exact language?" Buddhism helps you to know the self and lose the attachment to the self. Knowing the self opens you up to the universe. It doesn't matter what your previous practice was. You can come into an understanding of your relationship to life itself. ■

*Beandrea Davis is a writer, teacher, and spiritual being who is thrilled to live in Oakland, California. Her blog is at [www.joyfullybea.com](http://www.joyfullybea.com).*





# Notes for a Buddhist Revolution

by David R. Loy

Featured speaker at BPF's 30th anniversary event

**W**hat should socially engaged Buddhists focus on? There are so many problems that we don't know where to start.

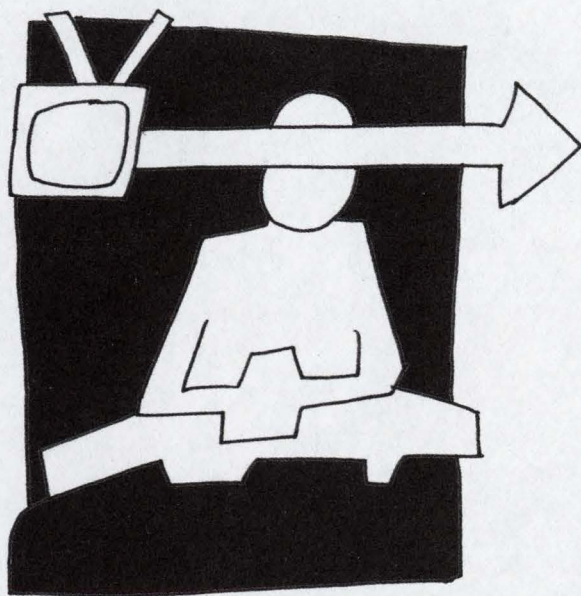
Whenever we try to address one, we soon realize that it is only one aspect of a larger set of issues. The absurdity of drug ads on television and in magazines ("Ask your doctor to prescribe...") is connected with other distortions introduced into medical practice by pharmaceutical companies, which in turn cannot be understood apart from the outrageous price of many medications, which contributes to the ridiculous cost of medical care, which is in large part a consequence of our disgraceful lack of a national health care system, which is certainly related to the lobbying power of insurance and pharmaceuticals companies, which is one example of the more general problem of corporate influence on government, and so forth.

Another obvious chain or constellation that comes to mind includes poor public transport, addiction to oil, global warming, weapons manufacturers, military aggression leading to more hatred and more terrorism, unprecedented federal deficits that affect all other funding, etc. A constellation that starts with consumerism could cover many pages.

All these relationships can be discouraging, insofar as they reinforce each other. However, not all linkages are equal, and some factors are more important than others, which encourages us to look for the heart of the problem. The heart is a relatively small organ, but if it stops beating then what the rest of the body does makes no difference....

"Unearthing"  
by Lisa Kokin





"TV Arrow Scan"  
by Tiffany Sankary

Of course, the most important issue of all, and the context for all others, is ecological: global climate-change along with many less obvious human impacts on the biosphere that sustains us.... We are now collectively at the point where everyone knows the direction we need to move in. The question is whether there is the political and economic will to do so.

Because of the widespread and palpable suffering it involves, and all its other deplorable repercussions, it is also essential that those of us living in the United States find ways to challenge American militarism in general, and our Middle East foreign policy in particular. Since the political system has become so corrupt, perhaps the best place to direct our energies is military personnel themselves, to inform them about Buddhism and nonviolence, including non-cooperation with the war machine. We also need to challenge recruitment practices, especially in schools. Such programs would draw on our strength: education, reflection, perhaps instruction in meditation for those who ask for it.

Members of the military—especially those in the lower ranks—already know a lot about the first noble truth. During the Vietnam War, draft resistance and other forms of nonviolent but illegal protest played an important role in eventually ending the war. Similar actions may again become appropriate, or necessary.

Despite the importance of confronting militarism and ecological breakdown, however, I wonder if it would be better for socially engaged Buddhism to place top priority on something else, which would indirectly address those other two issues as well.

According to Buddhist teachings the solution to *dukkha* involves liberating one's awareness from the places it gets stuck. If the same is true socially—if our

collective *dukkha* is due to our collective attachments—Buddhism may have a distinctive role to play in emphasizing the places where our collective awareness has become trapped, and showing how to liberate our awareness from those traps....

Perhaps the most influential example, and certainly the most pervasive, is advertising and public relations, which in the last century or so have evolved into a very sophisticated science of opinion- and desire-manipulation. Advertising is now so pervasive that we can hardly imagine a world without it. Yet several states—Hawaii, Alaska, Vermont, Maine, and Rhode Island—have banned new outdoor billboards, which helps to explain much of their beauty and attractiveness to tourists. Would our own minds become more beautiful and attractive without all the other forms of advertising that infect us from inside? Can we imagine a culture that did not accept the kinds of psychic manipulation now taken for granted? Alcohol and tobacco commercials are now strictly limited—why stop with them? A world in which most forms of advertising were reduced and restricted is no more unthinkable than prohibiting tobacco smoke in public places only a generation ago.

The difference is that excluding tobacco consumption from most public locations has a very small effect on the economy; addicts go outside to smoke. Severe curbs on advertising would have enormous repercussions for all of society, because consumerism depends upon it. That is why it *can't* be done (it would require restructuring the whole economy) and why it *must* be done (if our consumption patterns are not natural but induced in such a fashion, the argument that they increase our happiness collapses). The Gross National Product could no longer be confused with our Gross National Happiness.

The fact that any such movement would be resisted tooth and nail points to the heart of the problem: the influence of major corporations, not only on the economy but also on the government and on our ways of thinking. U.S. militarism and foreign policy over the last century or so cannot be comprehended without noticing how they have served the interests of big American companies rather than the American people. Our public priorities make little sense (attacking Iraq? enormous military expenditures? no national health system? the growing gap between rich and poor? etc.) without understanding the role of corporate media in capturing our attention and molding our opinions. In a country that prides itself on its democratic traditions, they are the means by which self-serving elites have gained control over national priorities. They are probably the best (worst?) example of institutionalized *lack* that has assumed a life of its own, with goals (profit, stock price, market share)



hat can never be satisfied. The belief that those goals work to the benefit of everyone has been indoctrinated into the social fabric, as a truism that no reputable public figure is allowed to question. In reality the future will be grim unless we can find ways to rein in corporate power.

Corporations are not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution and in the early years of the republic they were viewed warily and their activities restricted. They were incorporated only for the public good: what they could do and how long they could do it were limited. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, corporations (with a little help from corrupt legislatures and judges) began to rewrite the laws that control them, and today the power of major corporations has become truly formidable, of course.

Nevertheless, they have an Achilles heel: the legal obligation to be chartered by governmental authorities makes them accessible to democratic control. The political and economic revolution that we most need, I suspect, is a mass movement to rewrite corporate charters, to subordinate them once again to the public good. Instead of companies being incorporated for an indefinite period, why not require the charters of large corporations to be renewed every decade or so? These could involve public hearings during which they must defend their activities. Companies that do not serve the public interest should be wound up and sold off. Every corporate board could also be required to have a labor representative and a publicly appointed member to evaluate the ecological consequences of major decisions....

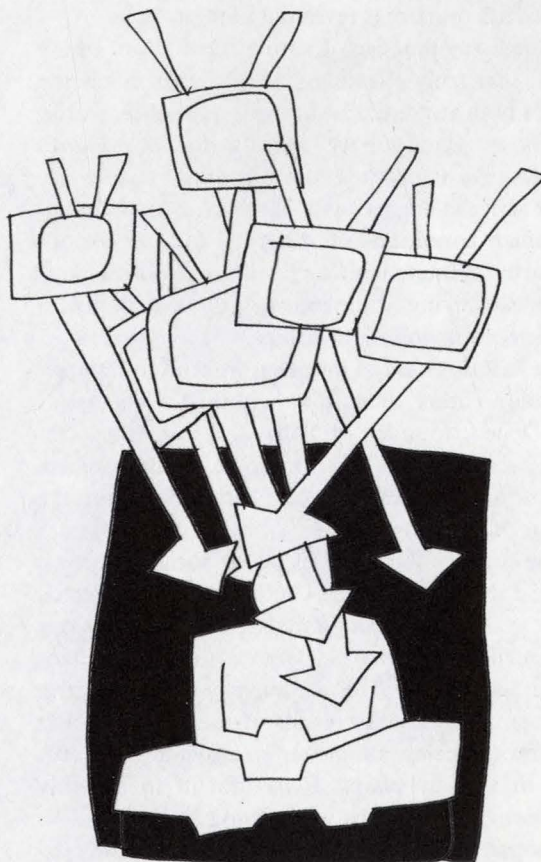
Is a reformed capitalism consistent with a dharmic society, or do we need altogether different kinds of economic institutions? How can our world de-militarize? Should representative democracy be revitalized by stricter controls on campaigns and lobbying, or do we need a more participatory and decentralized political system? Should newspapers and television networks be better regulated or non-profit? What should be done about advertising, which continues to colonize our collective consciousness? Can the United Nations be transformed into the kind of international organization the world needs, or does an emerging global community call for something different?

I do not think that Buddhism has the answers to these questions. We should hesitate before deriving any particular economic or political system from its various teachings. Different aspects of the Dharma can be used to support capitalism, socialism, anarchism, and (a favorite of mine) Georgism, a social and economic philosophy popularized by Henry George at the end of the nineteenth century. The basic limitation of all such arguments is that Buddhism is really about awakening and liberating

our awareness, rather than prescribing new institutional structures for that awareness. We cannot predetermine what awakened awareness should or will decide when applied to the problem of social *dukkha*. There is no magic formula to be invoked. That no one else has such a formula either, so far as I can see, means that solutions to our collective *dukkha* cannot be derived from any ideology. They must be worked out together.

This is a challenging task yet not an insuperable one, if men and women of good will can find ways to work together without the deformations of pressure groups defending special privileges. Needless to say, that is not an easy condition to achieve, and it brings us back to the priority of personal practice, which works to develop men and women of good will. This also suggests the role of socially engaged Buddhism: not to form a new movement but, along with other forms of engaged spirituality, to add a valuable dimension to existing movements already working for peace, social justice, and ecological responsibility. ■

*David Loy teaches at Xavier University and is a founding member of the Cincinnati BPF group. This article is excerpted from Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution, with permission from Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm St., Somerville, MA, 02144 (www.wisdompubs.org).*



"TV Influence"  
by Tiffany Sankary



# The Intimacy of Engaging with Suffering

by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel

As naturally compassionate beings, we want to take action on behalf of those suffering in as many ways as possible. In doing so, we may feel we have not satisfied our mission. However, what may appear unsuccessful is not always so, and what may appear successful is not always so. We may never know for sure how our actions will impact others, or whom we will affect.

Many of us in the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and in the larger Buddhist community find ourselves somewhere along a continuum of ideas and actions. Recently, I have been in a dialogue with BPF members about what is right action: marching in demonstrations or setting up soup kitchens in your local neighborhood. Some might say one action has more impact than the other. Some might say the answer is that both are right actions.

Yet the answer is not so simple. Instead of pondering what is the right action, I find that exploring the practice of social engagement through my own life and dharma practice is revealing in many ways.

Through my practice of sitting meditation, I have learned that truly effective social engagement is the result of both awareness *and* intimacy. In other words, there is an evolutionary process that starts with awareness but then must move into intimacy before we can arrive at engagement. Many of us are aware of the human conditions of suffering, but we are not necessarily intimate with such suffering. To me, intimacy means living in the midst of the suffering with which we are intending to engage.

If we lack this kind of intimacy, we tend to act *upon* a situation rather than from within it. Zen master Eihei Dogen, founder of Soto Zen, uses the term *shinzo*, which means "ever intimate." When we are ever intimate, we experience liberation within the tensions of suffering.

Many of the public actions of the socially engaged Buddhist movement in the United States are directed outside our own environments. Often we express our engagement through solidarity or through philanthropic actions. As a result, we may feel ineffective and frustrated with the results of these actions, and sometimes hopeless about our engagement with suffering in faraway places. It is difficult to be truly socially engaged in India while living in Chicago. We can sympathize politically to some extent, but we cannot elect officials in a land in which we are not

citizens. We can write and talk about suffering brought to us in images through the media, but it is difficult to directly know the experience of a child who has lost her leg in the midst of war. We can only imagine.

Social engagement is not a practice or action outside of where I live and breathe; it comes up through a deep intimacy with the suffering around me. I ask myself, What am I aware of right in my own environment? What am I intimate with in terms of feeling, seeing, touching, and hearing all that is suffering right in front of me, in my own neighborhood? If I can experience the answers to those questions, then practicing social engagement means that I am responding to suffering with body, mind, and speech.

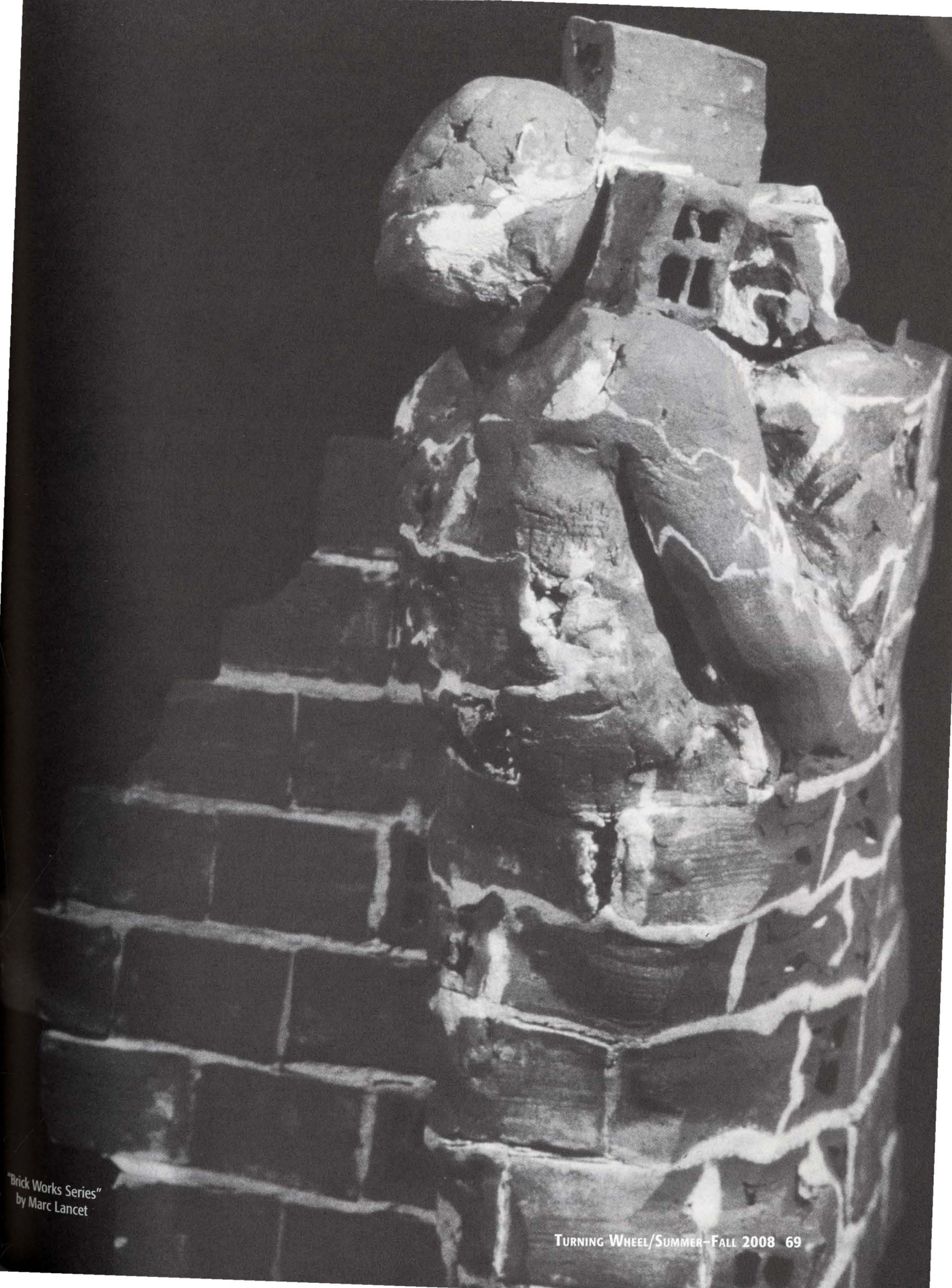
So I practice solidarity with Burma's suffering at the same time that I am intimately engaged with the suffering of black youth in my home city of Oakland, who are being killed in numbers disproportionate to their population. Thich Nhat Hanh and His Holiness the Dalai Lama are engaged, because they are intimate with the suffering that has directly affected their lives and their communities. Even the Buddha espoused that wisdom comes from direct knowledge.

If there is hunger near you and you can feed the hungry, this is good. If you march in solidarity for the Burmese monks, this is good. There is no difference between serving in the soup kitchen and marching for Burma. It is all right action as long as we are also intimate and engaged with the suffering of a neighbor losing her home in foreclosure, of an elderly friend unable to afford necessary medicine, of a child who is receiving a poor-quality education in a local public school.

Of course, we cannot do it all. So we see to what extent we can engage in ending suffering, both as individuals and by joining with compassion-based activist communities such as BPF. There are few answers on the dharma path, but an important question for us to hold is, What is the balance of our work and practice as spiritual activists? ■

*Dr. Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, executive director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, has been a dharma practitioner for many years, initially as a student of Nichiren Buddhism and currently in the Soto Zen tradition at San Francisco Zen Center and Berkeley Zen Center. She is a contributing author to Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism (Parallax Press, 2004), an anthology of essays by Buddhist teachers and practitioners of color.*

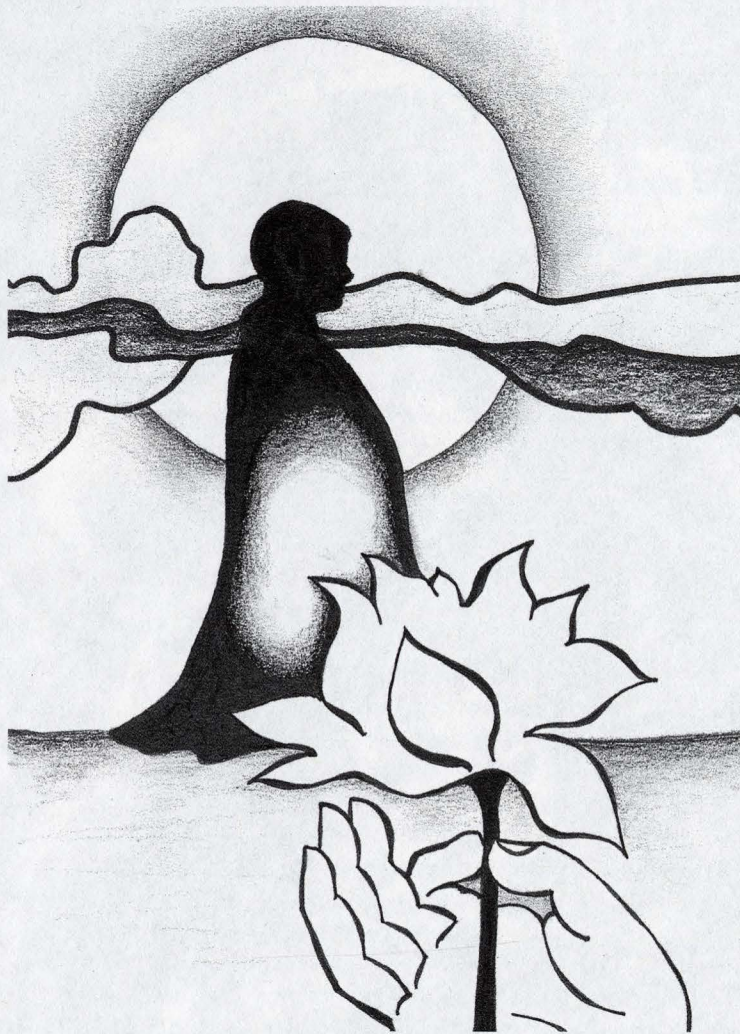




"Brick Works Series"  
by Marc Lancet



Art by  
Charis  
Khoury



## Zoom Out, Drill Down, Help Someone

by **Chris Wilson**

**T**he title above is my irreverent summary of how BPF can achieve what I believe to be its true near-term potential: becoming an internationally respected voice for peace and compassion in the public sphere.

As the pioneering U.S. convert Buddhist organization championing social engagement, BPF has already gained the respect and long-standing support of many thousands of people over its 30 years. By “an internationally respected voice,” however, I mean a voice that will be listened to, not just by the Buddhist community and its friends but by the entire world.

Early in BPF’s history, Robert Aitken Roshi, Nelson Foster, and Gary Snyder, among others, enunciated a vision for BPF in which self-organizing groups of socially engaged Buddhists would help liberate a society afflicted by militarism and harmful corporate practices. As a founding vision, this can hardly be improved upon, and actually is a much more ambitious objective than being “an internationally respected voice” for peace and compassion.

In practice, however, many obstacles stood in the way of such a sweeping objective. Not least of these was the fact that many first-generation American Buddhists had first to be convinced that social engagement and activism in America were consistent with Buddhist practice. After all, most first-generation Buddhists were, by definition, beginners in the tradition. For many of them, Buddhism was first and foremost a contemplative tradition for creating peace and compassion within each individual practitioner. There was a widespread corollary assumption that one must first achieve some degree of enlightenment before taking part in social activism of any kind.

It is safe to say that much of the first two decades of BPF’s existence was spent in an ongoing debate about whether “socially engaged Buddhism” was a contradiction in terms. In one sense, this dispute has been settled. With several decades of practice behind them, most practitioners now generally acknowledge that Buddhists should feel free to take a public, activist role in assuring peace and social justice in the world.



In one measure of the “mainstreaming” of socially engaged Buddhism, the handful of popular magazines devoted to Buddhism now regularly feature articles on the topic. Another example of such mainstreaming is provided by the prison dharma movement. Although BPF pioneered the notion of prison dharma groups, many individual sanghas and other dharma organizations have now taken independent responsibility for prison populations in their localities. These developments contributed to Roshi’s recent statement that he now considers “socially engaged Buddhism” to be a redundant expression.

The mainstreaming of socially engaged Buddhism was so gradual that it took a while for BPF’s board and staff to realize the organization needed to play catch-up with changed times. In particular, the attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, demolishing the World Trade Center buildings, was a clear call that change was needed. Between 9/11 and the second Iraq war, BPF found itself understaffed and underfunded for its programs, which were essentially domestic, peacetime programs (primarily prison dharma work and social engagement training through the BASE program).

As a result, BPF relied on the spontaneous energy of its chapters to mount a response during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. By holding meditation vigils during protest gatherings and marching behind the BPF banner at protest marches, BPF was a noticeable presence at the largest protests in several of America’s major cities, as well as in many smaller communities across the country.

After large protests against the war dwindled in attendance and public notice, BPF was unable to mount a comprehensive national program against the war. Instead, local chapters were encouraged to pursue their own modes of opposing militarism and the ongoing war. This has taken the form of local meditation vigils, antirecruitment work, or volunteer work for local nodes of the GI Rights Hotline network (advising active service members how to avoid service in Iraq or get out of the service altogether).

The reliance on local chapters for BPF’s peace work is the result of a long-standing policy that the national staff does not prescribe strategy for the chapters, in keeping with the nonviolent anarchist principles of founders and supporters such as Aitken, Foster, Snyder, and former BPF Executive Director Hozen Alan Senauke.

**B**PF has continued to rely on the spontaneous energy of the BPF community to respond to crises, including the recent Burmese and Tibetan repressions. The Burmese crisis led to the

formation of a temporary pilot project with its own source of funding and staff. By agreement of all concerned, that program will be spun off as an independent organization with continuing access to the BPF community network.

The Burmese crisis starkly posed the question of how BPF should manage its priorities in the future. There have always been BPF members (myself included) who argued that the BPF Board, executive director, and central staff should be more proactive in suggesting national priorities and strategies for the community at large. In the past, according to this view, BPF has developed programs only responding to the pressing needs of the moment. The result has been a mix of legacy programs with little relation to each other but each needing ever more funding and staffing in order to have a meaningful impact. The Burmese program, for example, could easily have consumed the entire budget and staff of BPF in order to have the international impact that the cause deserves. The result, however, would have been a BPF identified with a single theme and unable to exert leadership in the broader issues of war, social justice, and environmental destruction.

Calling for BPF’s national office to become more proactive in suggesting priorities is not a call for a “top down” approach in which the national office dictates to the chapters. Rather, the process would involve on ongoing consultation in which the executive director and local chapters would work toward an achievable consensus.

And what would such a consensus look like? Since it is clear that BPF cannot play a significant role on behalf of every worthy cause, what general objective or guideline could energize and unite all members of the BPF community?

When asked about their hopes for the organization going forward, many BPF members say they would like to see BPF and Buddhist values grow in public recognition and influence. Buddhist views, such as the interdependence of all beings, are becoming self-evident in this age of globalization and systemic environmental collapse and can positively affect those situations. The general feeling is that BPF can have a much greater influence in shaping how society deals with its problems.

How is this greater influence and recognition to be achieved?

First, it can never be achieved unless BPF limits the number of issues it takes on.

Second, each issue selected must be one that vividly demonstrates the appropriateness of Buddhist values to everyone, whether Buddhist or not.

Finally, BPF must expend its efforts in a way that

**The mainstreaming of socially engaged Buddhism was so gradual that it took a while for BPF’s board and staff to realize the organization needed to play catch-up with changed times.**



gets noticed, so that its credibility and influence can increase. The interest in increased recognition does not arise out of a desire for glory but out of an awareness that increased recognition and influence will help us lessen the suffering of all beings.

BPF's new executive director, Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, with the advice of staff and the support of the board, is preparing a short list of general areas (e.g., international Buddhist engagement, war/violence, the environment, youth incarceration) in which she believes BPF can make a distinctive contribution going forward. The hope is that members will find something of interest in this list and look for local opportunities to make a contribution in these areas. Threaded discussion groups on the BPF website will facilitate the creation of virtual special-interest groups that will share their experiences in these areas, especially how their dharma practice was involved. Successes in any area can then be publicized more vigorously than has been done in the past.

This brings us back to an explanation of the title of this piece. The elements of the title represent my view of what will be necessary if BPF is to have the recognition and influence that comes with being an internationally respected voice for peace and compassion in public affairs.

Each element of the title calls for a change in the way BPF and its members view things. The problems facing the world are increasingly global, systemic, and complex. If Buddhists are to rise to this challenge, it will not be by simply holding a march or a vigil (although these are helpful). What will be more important is that some Buddhists read and learn all about issues that face the world, understand the dynamics of those issues, and then teach and lead others, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

The "Zoom Out" of the title refers to this need to learn what needs to be learned about the "big picture" (such as economics and geopolitics) in order to tackle the problems affecting world populations and the environment. "Drill Down" refers to actually getting down to work in the problem area. "Help Someone" indicates that even without much study or preparation, the world is full of opportunities to help others who are suffering.

Despite what I have written here, the fact remains that after 30 years, BPF has entered an exciting new period of innovation and growth in which you are welcome to participate. ■

*Chris Wilson is a member of the BPF Board of Directors and a longtime Zen practitioner. His work as a volunteer with the GI Rights Hotline has led him to develop expertise in representing, as an attorney, service members with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).*

## The Miracle of Small Circles

by Claudia Horwitz

Tahz and his girlfriend are weeding in the garden. Lizzie concocts a new pesto with the chickweed that grows wild behind her cabin. Jesse sits on the porch with a cup of tea, greeting people the way people do from their stoop. Ryan mows the grass, headphones on, singing at the top of his lungs. Kevin is laying the last pieces of bamboo flooring in our new practice space. It's a Saturday morning at The Stone House, and it's a good place to be.

It's funny how a few words from someone you know little about can become a touchstone. Writer and humanist Lewis Mumford believed fiercely in the virtue of love as a restorative force in the face of modernism and mechanization. Toward the end of his life, a caretaker recorded Mumford's feverish, late-night ramblings. When I read them a decade ago, they brought clarity to my own sense of purpose:

We need smaller groups now. That's all I can talk of and it's not nearly enough.... Hope a new class of people will know what's necessary.... It's these small groups of people who will be able to make the change to a higher place.... Their small risks will become a law. ("The Last Days of Lewis Mumford," by Tonia Shoumatoff)

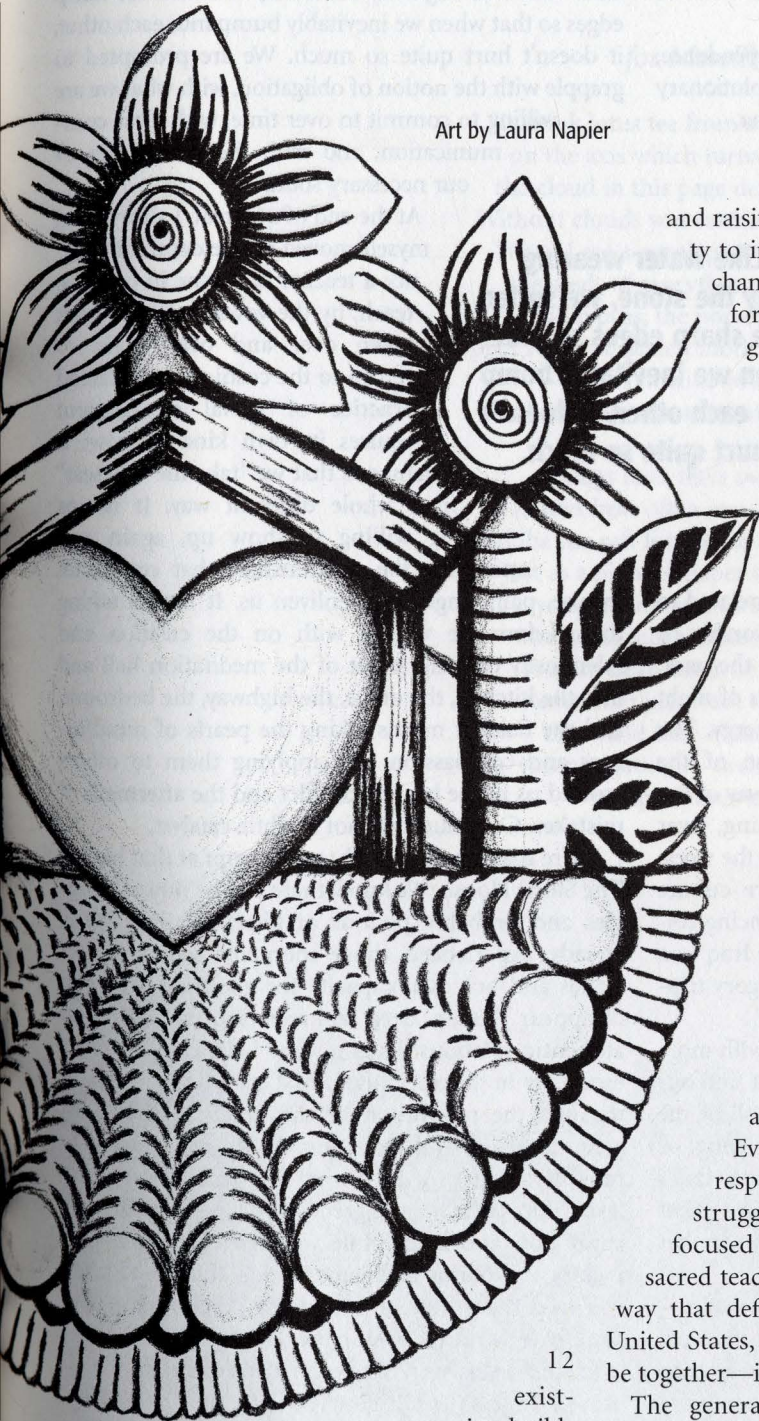
The risks small groups take do become a law. At their strongest, small groups—sanghas, really—become vehicles for collective freedom. This is not easy work, but it is good and necessary work. Last summer, our organization, stone circles, bought 70 acres of land with





# While Reading Thick That Hank

Art by Laura Napier



and raising chickens for eggs. We offer hospitality to individuals seeking retreat and to social change organizations desiring a sweet spot for thinking and planning. We run programs for activists, a unique recipe of individual and collective practice. We've hosted important life rituals like commitment ceremonies and baby blessings for people who want to craft celebrations of their own making. We're building a cross-cultural, multiracial team of staff, board, and volunteers. We're making some mistakes and a lot of good decisions. With few rules we are beginning to create a powerful ground of being. It is taking constant effort and awareness.

When I first traveled to India, I marveled at the endless public demonstrations of belief and respect for those beings on a holy path. And it was the ashram form that ultimately cracked me open and crystallized my own longings. Young and old, rich and poor, Indian and Western, lived under the same roof. There was always enough food and sanctioned time for spiritual life. Even with the predictable squabbles over responsibilities and the inevitable power struggles, these communities remained focused on one purpose—to hold a space for sacred teachings, prayer, and practice. Here was a way that defied the isolation so prevalent in the United States, a potent example of how people could be together—in work, in life, in practice.

The generations of teachers that brought the Dharma here from Asia did a miraculous thing. They took seeds of potent teachings, planted them in new and different soil, and then worked like hell to make sure those roots spread deep. Today we reap the benefits: centers that serve as solid containers for practice, a growing cadre of well-trained teachers, and resources in every form of media. While the depths of

12  
exist-  
ing build-  
ings and began  
to manifest The Stone  
House. We call it a center for spiritual life and strategic  
action, but it is really a radical experiment in relation-  
ship with one another, the land, and ourselves. In eight  
months we've begun growing some of our own food



individual practice seem not to have been fully plumbed in the West, the revolutionary growing edge of our inheritance is to apply the Buddha's teachings more completely and more radically to the work of relationship and community.

Lives lived in real expressions of interdependence, with all the mess and the beauty, are the evolutionary edge, not just for Buddhism and the Dharma, but also for the world as a whole. Those of us living in the West are less practiced in this enterprise. Martin Luther King Jr. illuminated the imperative of this in one of his Christmas sermons: "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality."

But postmodern life entreats us to wander through so many different spheres, most unrelated to each other. We buy our food in one place, worship or practice in another, take our kids to play at the park, and find release in the darkened atmospheres of night life, all the while burning fuel, time, and energy. The shrinking resource base and fragmentation of the planet demands that we envision a different way of living. The predictions about global warming, ever impacted by accelerated change, get worse by the week. Institutions that have long anchored Western culture are on shaky ground and people are experiencing collective stress as a result. The 9/11 attacks, the Iraq war, and Bush's reelection formed an absurd and gory triptych we are still unraveling.

Many of us have been stumbling through with more than a bit of dread, wondering how we might find our way out of the morass. Is this the death knoll of the empire, the wake-up call for a new way of living, or both? Given the massive change of course that's required, will we do it in time? And perhaps most importantly, what kind of glue will bind us together while we find our way?

The Buddha's teachings on the brahma-viharas—four boundless states of lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity—may be more than enough to guide us. Living and working in community gives us a chance to embody the change we seek in the world, to test how well we can share resources, engage in real democracy, live sustainably, support each other, and open safe places for the emotional content of our lives. We get to see how well we can keep each other entertained, happy, and alive. A long-term, collective commitment is not a panacea of course, but it does

provide a genuine cap on hubris, creating a structure of accountability and nudging us to include the shadow that can be so dangerous when rendered invisible. Like water wearing away the stone, we soften the sharp edges so that when we inevitably bump into each other, it doesn't hurt quite so much. We are prompted to grapple with the notion of obligation, with what we are willing to commit to over time, with clear communication, and with the boundaries of our necessary solitude.

**Like water wearing away the stone, we soften the sharp edges so that when we inevitably bump into each other, it doesn't hurt quite so much.**

At the end of a retreat, I always find myself moved by the depth of practice a teacher has done in order to teach, by the vows that have been taken over and over again to return to the cushion. A sustained practice of social engagement requires its own kind of vow; it demands that we "take the one seat"

in a whole different way. It means being willing to show up, again and again, for the relationships that confound,

inspire, pain, anger, and enliven us. It means taking the wisdom we wrestle with on the cushion and relentlessly coaxing it out of the meditation hall and into the kitchen, the office, the highway, the bedroom, and the field. It means taking the pearls of mindfulness and compassion and applying them to others around us in the heat of conflict and the aftermath of mistakes. Community is not a subtle catalyst.

We're making our own brave attempt at that here at The Stone House. We know there will be power struggles and probably periods of bitter conflict. We've already experienced those moments when respect wanes and our own capacity for goodness seems to disappear. Jesse's deep appreciation for rest and authentic relationship is a vital balancing element, especially in this very hectic first year. Kevin steers us through the renovation of the practice space with great patience and precision. With many acres to mow, Ryan, just 16, is learning responsibility at a new level. Tahz cares for the garden for the abundance we enjoy now and later, while we turn cucumbers into pickles and plums into jam. Lizzie's chickweed pesto will feed the group of anti-death penalty advocates coming for a retreat tomorrow. Through it all, our job is to spin a stronger "single garment of destiny" with more seamless threads between individual and collective liberation, to create bold and simple risks that will one day become law. ■

*Claudia Horwitz is the director of stone circles and The Stone House, a home for spiritual life and strategic action on 70 acres of land in Mebane, North Carolina. We are a sanctuary for people of all traditions and no tradition, a place of stillness that understands and values action.*



# While Reading Thich Nhat Hanh

by Sally-Ann Hard

*for Merrill*

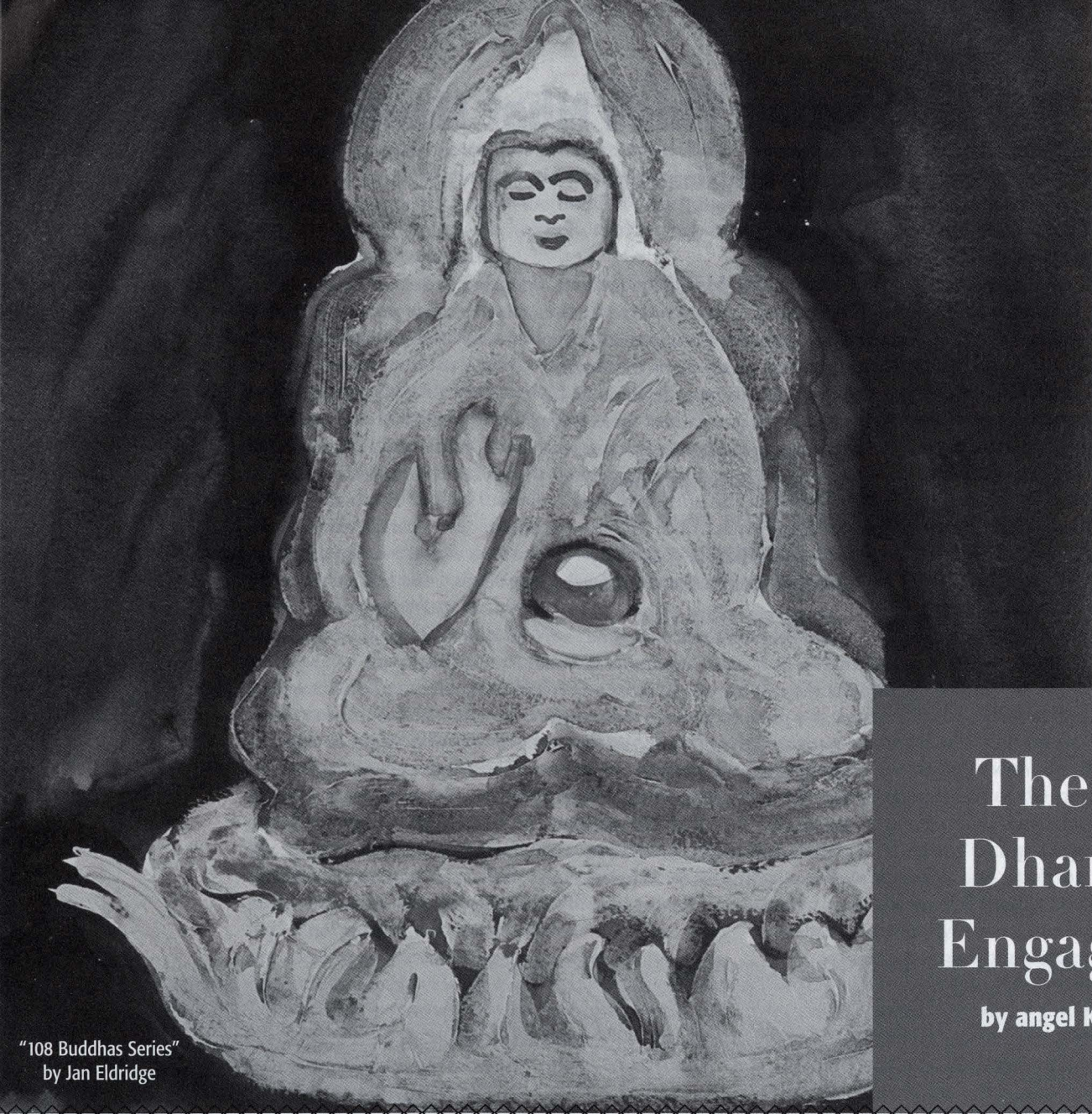
Sit drink lotus tea from a celadon cup  
on the axis which turns the world  
the cloud in this page depends on it.  
Without clouds you cannot make paper.  
When I see a eucalyptus I praise you  
the seeds of everything inside you  
eucalyptus, the porcelain cups  
copper red raku plates, moth orchids, the sun  
—heart outside your body—  
takes eight minutes to reach earth.

Things have their own time  
no matter how often you invite the bell  
Buddha the raft for you to cross any river  
just as a piece of paper is the cloud  
your mouth and ears, vessels  
the Lotus Sutra, Dharma water.  
You are clear water, be the river.  
Remember just wash the dishes  
the world only a small boat  
you navigating by orchid clouds  
a cup of lotus tea.



"Recapitulation" by Lisa Kokin





"108 Buddhas Series"  
by Jan Eldridge

# The Deep Dharma of Engagemen

by angel kyodo williams

Social change isn't out there somewhere. It begins here.

When not negotiating the day-to-day of a residential community, I place a great deal of my energy in conversations, gatherings, and convenings that demonstrate and substantiate the value that Dharma practice brings to social change.

We are well within our rights to beckon to every sector and breed of agent of social change, confidently peddling our dharmic wares. Yoga makes us Centered; Meditation brings us Balance, and Full-blown Awakening lurks at every corner. We, the practitioners of all things spiritual, from the elaborate to the mundane, have got it going on.

But just as in continuing to build the Windows platform on top of the creaky and fundamentally unstable DOS foundation, bugs, viruses, freezes, and

the inevitable painful crash all threaten to cripple the movement for sustainable, equitable, environmentally sound social change on a global scale.

My own battle cry has been to sound the call for activists to become more spiritual, take up individual practice, and find a cushion or mat at all costs lest they fall prey to imbalance and burnout, the battle for temporary policy changes won while the war for true transformation is forever lost.

We know compassion and kindness but have left transparency and group alignment processes aside. We roll out equanimity and joy, but when it hits the fan, we can only find only our lesser-evolved selves hiding behind hierarchy and self-preservation. The result has been that while dharma-based businesses, organizations, and institutions have sprouted and continue to grow, the three poisons of greed, anger,



and ignorance continue to flourish behind the veil of their more insidious counterparts: competitiveness, backhanded power plays, and racism.

Marshall Rosenberg's work in nonviolent communication, Jack Zimmerman and Gigi Coyle's Way of Council, and other forms of talking circles represent attempts at better communication and group process embraced in various sanghas and quadrants of the dharma world. Yet we have been perilously slow on the uptake, which does not bode well for our capacity to grow with the times.

This unfortunate unfolding indicates a lack of responsible methodologies for addressing intersangha concerns—holding accountable teachers and leaders outside of our own immediate walls. This is especially true when other teachers and leaders are pointing the finger. Add to this soup the aforementioned specters of competition, power grabbing, and racism, and you have all the ingredients for a mass implosion.

Even more importantly, though, is the revelation that dharma practice alone doesn't take the place of addressing the wounds of the psyche and how the personality subsequently reenacts those experiences of trauma. Serene posturing, crafty dharma dialogue, and incisive koan response do not expose nor clarify our undigested emotional material. The now increasingly commonly held best practices of truly effective social change trainers and organizations have something to offer us here.

We need not do this alone. The time is now. No matter whom you wanted to usher in this overdue moment in history, a woman or a black man, Obama has, at the very least, whispered a call for integrity into every ear that has ever heard his resounding voice. It spoke to us at levels deeper than we dare admit, wresting us away from a stupor-like complacency while letting someone else handle the pursuit of truth, justice, and freedom.

We simply cannot engage with the ills of society if we are continuing to turn a blind eye to the egregious and willful ignorance that enables us to still "not get it." The majority of our efforts have been reactive, designed to counter explosive scandals or the more subtle abusive practices that have threatened the life of our institutions.

Faced with either certain demise or exposure and recompense, we have chosen the latter, not out of recognition of a need to evolve but out of pure survival instinct.

Until we embrace, master, and institutionalize practices of individual as well as group transformation, we have nothing sustainable to offer social change except a few more glossy magazines. No matter that the covers feature robe-clad superstars rather than under-clad ones. We will be relegated to the arena of well-

intentioned but ultimately ineffectual navel-gazers doling compassion handouts to the needy and less fortunate while we rest on our dharma laurels and titles. The dharma of being nice without being fully aligned in thought, word, and action is neither sexy nor practicable.

The mahasangha continues to be reluctant to address racism and a persistent "othering" of all things different as exotic. It is by no means our making, but given the culture we are emerging and immersed in, we are as responsible and culpable as those still trying to whistle a cruelly ignorant Dixie while flying the Union Jack.

But as demographics shift and the retreat-first, justice-later boomers begin to recede, being replaced by increasingly diverse pools of racially well-adjusted seekers, this reluctance promises to be our undoing. Likewise, the dharma of diversity-resistance, one that eschews the work to root out and transmute the poison of discrimination because it's "someone else's issue," is obsolete.

This social engagement needs to happen first at the levels of our immediate sanghas, with teachers and leaders as committed to the pursuit of their own emotional and psychological balance as they are to the awakening of their throngs of awed members. These two efforts are inextricably linked in a way that has never mattered as much as it does today. More than mere practice and guidance, praxis or, in less academic language, embodiment of the dharma at the deepest levels, personally and collectively, is the new turning of the wheel that we must each get behind.

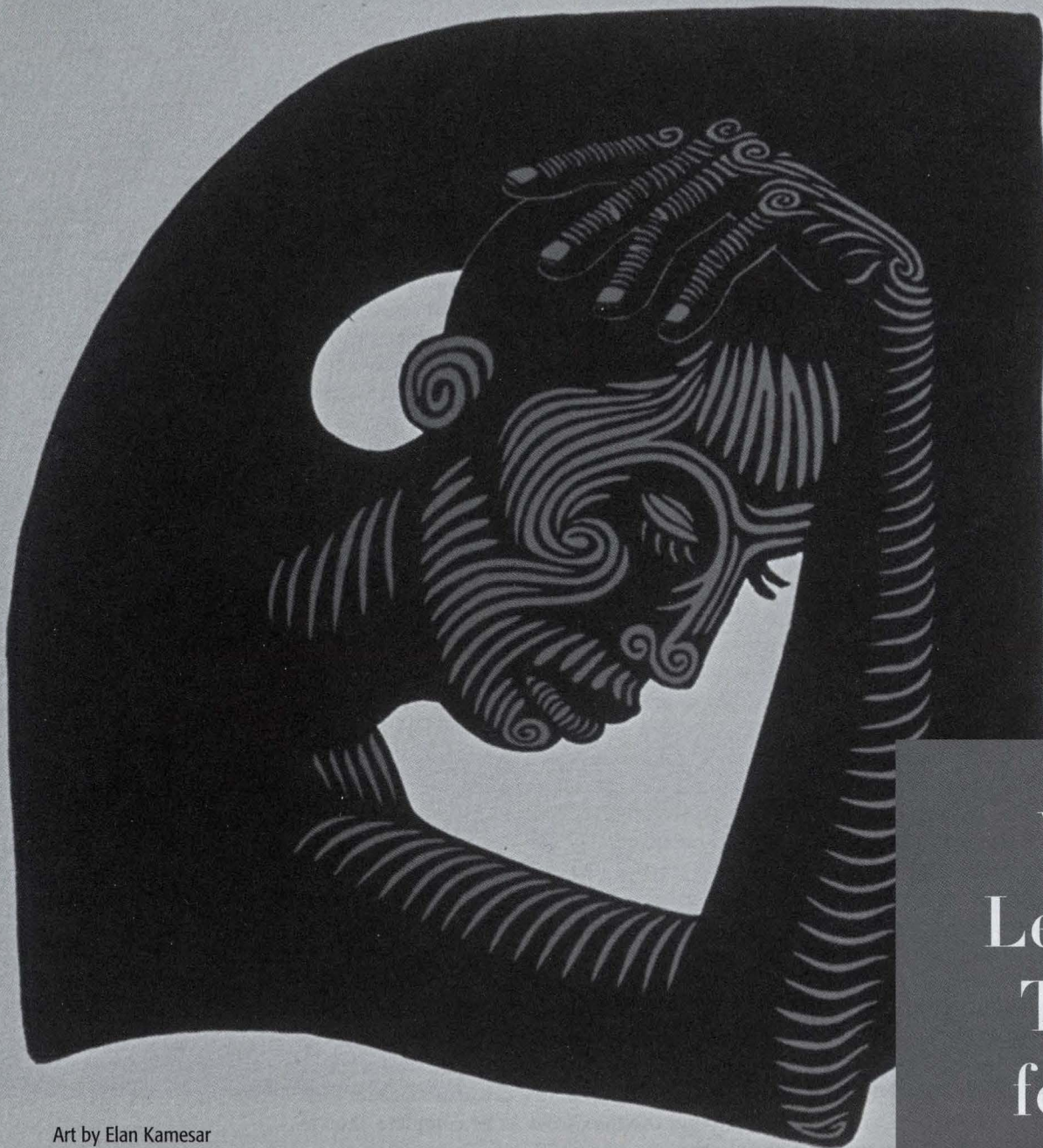
If we do not, the incoming wave of social justice practitioners will expose us as the proverbial man behind the curtain—a wizard of the great marketing Oz that is apparently missing the very brains, heart and, most importantly, in this case, courage that each of us intrepid travelers seeks to be complete, thus to return home.

The dharma of social change needs to be a movement: a loosely connected, dynamic network of strategic effort toward a collective vision that creates space and develops structures to support the needs of all, both inside and out. No one entity has the answer, but rather it is the willingness to offer our best, claim responsibility for our worst, and fold it all into the continuous moment-to-moment practice of simply being present to what is, that promises to deliver our future. ❧

*Rev. angel Kyodo williams is leader of the New Dharma Community and a maverick spiritual teacher, advisor, and friend to many. Of mixed heritage, she is author of Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace (Penguin, 2000), which was hailed as "an act of Love" by novelist Alice Walker.*

**The mahasangha continues to be reluctant to address racism and a persistent "othering" of all things different as exotic.**





Art by Elan Kamesar  
[www.elankamesar.com](http://www.elankamesar.com)

## What I Learned in Training for Peace

by Isak Brown

Stepping into the Kirkridge Retreat Center in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, after a six-hour bus ride, I was met with a wash of warmth and kindness at door of the Peacemaker Training Institute (PTI). I had taken time away from cooking for the Insight Meditation Society to attend this training, which brought together four facilitators and twenty-five young activists working toward integrating activism, peace, and spirituality. The participants ranged from slam-poet high school students to public school teachers, many with a solid spiritual practice. The peace movement has many powerful clusters of youth making change but is also scattered and can lack

unity; PTIs can be a great chance to build a common language and a much-needed community for young activists committed to nonviolence.

The curriculum itself was discussion-based, and the workshops explored different forms of oppression, with an understanding that all forms of oppression and violence build and feed on one another. This perspective led to many reflections over the course of the week, including:

### **Systems of Oppression Are Everywhere**

Our group was invited to confront oppression whenever we saw it come up, paying close attention to how



oppression plays out: notice how much time you talk, how much space you're taking up in the room, if either is at the expense of someone else. The week had just started, and I saw the power dynamics unfolding within our group, despite our good intentions. I watched as my own sense of entitlement kept my hand in the air when I could have been listening. The curriculum included caucuses for white folks and people of color, and discussions of race and racism. Grounded with a morning centering and reflection, I was relieved that the trainings were founded on the belief that violence can never be healed with violence, and that oppression harms all those involved.

### Compassion for Both Oppressor and Oppressed

In the past, I have seen anti-oppression trainings carried out with violent or hateful energy toward the perceived oppressors, which sometimes led to participants shutting down or feeling alienated. Seen from a heart-based rather than intellectual perspective, the human and emotional elements of these systems were clear, rather than abstract. On the second day, it was apparent that many participants were grappling with the idea of structural, multi-generational systems of racism. As one white person demanded proof and explanation of racism from a person of color, I struggled in my own heart to be compassionate to the depth of hurt and delusion we must open to as we let ourselves feel the truth of such pain. Throughout, I was amazed by the skill and care of the facilitators. They led us back to ourselves, and maintained transparency—a commitment to keeping facilitation tools and power dynamics exposed and up for questioning—keeping our minds and hearts open and engaged.

### Perfection Isn't Possible—Process Is

A gender workshop on the third night separated us into male and female groups. As a transgender person, I'm almost always invisible or a total anomaly in discussions about gender—usually the only one in the room and difficult to categorize, since I both benefit from gender privilege and am oppressed by it. PTI had become a safe space for me over the week, but I felt betrayed, facing blatant gender assumptions and trans-invisibility. I was hurt that it took a trans person to bring this issue up instead of a facilitator or other ally, that there weren't other options presented to support me and other non-binaries folks. It was a hard night, but I was met with the best response I could have hoped for. The facilitators gave me as much time as I needed, listened and gave space, as I spoke about the problems with the workshop and how to address them. By the end of the night, I'd connected in a deep and open way. I realized that this is what it means to

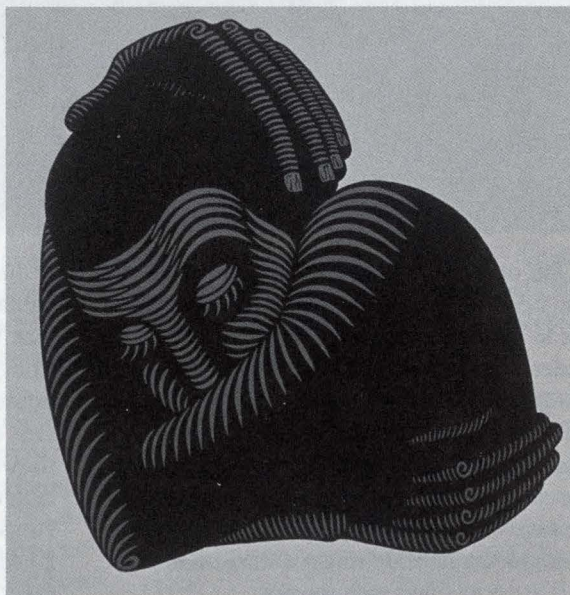
live nonviolently, with compassion for others and myself, and patience for the process.

### 'The Arc of the Universe Is Long, but It Bends Toward Justice'

As the week came to a close, I took the above words from Martin Luther King Jr. to heart. I saw how our group took time, energy, and love to address grief, anger, and confusion. As we did, our spirits slowly lifted and our defenses fell away. Those who benefited from traditional power dynamics felt free to let go of the ways of relating they knew. And those who had felt themselves silenced, unsafe, or unwelcome began to feel supported and cared for as they stepped up and contributed their voices.

The spiritual activist is often a rare and lonely character, and it is a profound gift to be welcomed into community-based trainings and gatherings like the one at PTI. Young activists are passionate, brilliant, and fired up, but can suffer from disconnection, disillusionment, and lack of faith. I felt a deep sense of safety as I walked through the complex and terrifying inner spaces, intent on examining my own racism, sexism, and internalized transphobia. I trusted that the group's process and commitment to connection could hold me through all the spaces I needed to explore. This foundation—a common language, community, and spiritual practice—can turn headed-for-burnout young activists into fueled, energetic peacemakers. And all gods know we need that. ■

*Isaak Brown first came to BPF through a weeklong Teen Retreat in 2005. Issak has gone on to sit the three-month silent retreat at Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, and now works with Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Unitarian Church leading spiritually based trainings for youth ending social oppression.*





# Engaging East and West

by Kenneth Kraft



(photo: Oren Sofer)

In the fall of 2007, engaged Buddhism made the nightly news. Monks in Burma (Myanmar) were taking to the streets in defiance of the country's military rulers. On September 24, a large demonstration in Rangoon included 10,000 monks robed in maroon, carrying multicolored flags and posters of the Buddha. The risks were real: the last time a pro-democracy movement challenged the generals, in 1988, thousands of people were killed. Though the Burmese sangha managed to retain a trace of autonomy, the jails are now filled with monks.

Just a few weeks later, in Washington, DC, the Dalai Lama was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. For that to happen, a bill (The Fourteenth Dalai Lama Congressional Gold Medal Act) had to pass both houses of Congress and be signed by the president, a rare event in the contentious capital. A photograph showed President Bush and the Dalai Lama sharing a laugh. Two days after the Dalai Lama's visit, the White House declared that "monks have been beaten and killed" in Burma, and the United States imposed new sanctions against the military regime.



The crisis in Burma also prompted a demonstration in San Francisco on October 1, captured in the photograph at left. I believe that this image sheds light on some promising developments in engaged Buddhism, and therefore merits a closer look.

First, the scene. The marchers, solemn and silent, are draped in makeshift maroon robes. They carry a wide banner featuring two large eyes; where we would expect to see the name of a group, the banner forgoes words entirely. The dignified monastic figure at the head of the march holds a bowl upside down. The setting is Western, urban, secular.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship, based in Berkeley, organized the march. The senior figure in the brown robe is Ven. Blanche Hartman, who served for seven years as abbess of the San Francisco Zen Center. Ven. Hartman is composed and resolute, almost fierce. Her unflinching gaze accords with the unflinching gaze of the banner above. Buddhist monastics have a limited number of things that can be used as symbolic props in a demonstration. So the Burmese monks and nuns showed their disapproval of the junta by turning over their bowls, a powerful gesture of refusing to accept alms. In San Francisco, Ven. Hartman turns her bowl over in a manner that is both a political and a Buddhist demonstration.

The iconic image on the banner, created by Mona Caron, echoes a well-known image from Bodhnath, a major Buddhist stupa in Nepal. At Bodhnath, the eyes are those of an ahistorical Buddha. The large dot in the center of the forehead, equivalent to a third eye, signifies nondual awareness, an attribute of enlightenment. The squiggle of a nose, a variant of the numeral one in Nepali, reinforces the theme of oneness. The banner modifies the original image to incorporate engaged Buddhism's commitment to ecological integrity: the Buddha's third eye is the Earth, and a partial image of the planet covers (or becomes) the lower half of the face. In Nepal, the same curved line is actually the top of the hemispherical stupa, which resembles nothing so much as...an overturned bowl.

In Southeast Asia, when a new Buddha figure is installed in a temple, there is a ceremony that culminates in the symbolic opening of the figure's eyes. In spiritual terms, the Buddha comes to life. This big-eyed banner may signal something equally significant in the evolution of engaged Buddhism. It proclaims: "We have a fresh vision, and we're moving forward with our eyes open." The Buddha's eyes become our eyes.

By chance, the banner's nose squiggle is positioned directly above Ven. Hartman's head, together forming a question mark. Even more surprising: the question mark seems apt. It recasts the picture as a kind of visual koan. How can the Dharma be actualized now and in the future? Where is engaged Buddhism

headed? What forms of engagement are meaningful for me? In Zen practice, the deeper the questioning, the greater the awakening. Can the same be said of social movements? Of societies?

**T**he monks in Burma, the Dalai Lama in Washington, and the marchers in San Francisco concur on the fundamentals. In each case, nonviolence serves as a touchstone of authenticity and a code of conduct. This is more down-to-earth than it sounds. "Through violence, you may solve one problem," the Dalai Lama says, "but you sow the seeds for another." It may be too soon to assess the Dalai Lama's legacy in geopolitical terms. Yet it is clear that he has become an exemplar of nonviolence on a world-historical scale. "He is a one-man warrior for peace. He is a one-man warrior for spirituality," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid gushed. In other words, the Dalai Lama illustrates the force of truth, Gandhi's *satyagraha*.

In all three events we find the interplay of East and West. Protesters in Burma use the Internet to alert Western media to their cause. President Bush praises a Tibetan monk as "a man of peace and reconciliation." (Ironies noted.) In San Francisco the marchers dress in the manner of Asian monastics, are led by a woman, and adorn a Buddha with jewel-like views of the Earth. One of the few slogans seen on protest signs in the march is "May all beings be free." Is that a Western or Asian aspiration? In the context of a pro-democracy movement, the slogan is a cry for universal political liberation. In a Buddhist context, it is a call for universal spiritual liberation, echoing metta practice and a bodhisattva vow: "All beings without number, I vow to liberate." One perspective emphasizes freedom from oppression; the other, freedom from ignorance. Engaged Buddhism embraces both.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship began three decades ago with a conversation on a porch in Hawaii. Its original goal was to "bring a Buddhist perspective to the peace movement, and the peace movement to the Buddhist community." Progress has been made on both fronts. Now a broader task is emerging. According to Hozan Alan Senauke, "The heart of BPF's work is about creating the conditions for a more just and peaceful society." Envisioning such societies is an important—and practical—part of the process. How can we achieve a peaceful future if we cannot imagine one? ■

*This article originally appeared in the Spring 2008 issue of Tricycle magazine and is reprinted with permission.*

*Kenneth Kraft is professor of religion studies at Lehigh University. He has edited or coedited several anthologies on socially engaged Buddhism, and is the author of The Wheel of Engaged Buddhism: A New Map of the Path (Weatherhill, 1999).*



# A Challenge to Buddhists

by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

Each morning, I check out a number of Internet news reports and commentaries on websites ranging from the BBC to Truthout. Reading about current events strongly reinforces for me the acuity of the Buddha's words: "The world is grounded upon suffering." Almost daily I am awed by the enormity of the suffering that assails human beings on every continent, and even more so by the hard truth that so much of this suffering springs not from the vicissitudes of impersonal nature but from the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion raging in the human heart.

Seeing the immensity of the world's suffering has raised in my mind questions about the future prospects for Buddhism in the West. I've been struck by how seldom the theme of global suffering—the palpable misery of real human beings—is thematically explored in the Buddhist journals and teachings with which I am acquainted.

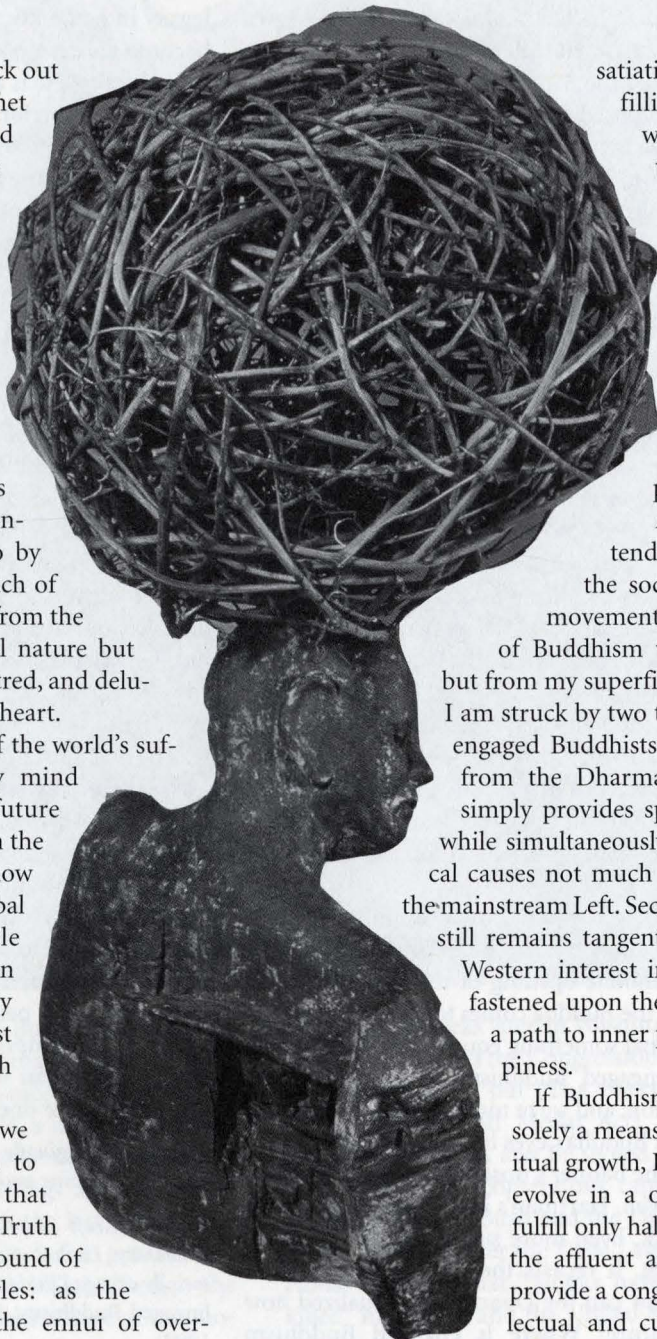
It seems to me that we Western Buddhists tend to dwell in a cognitive space that defines the First Noble Truth largely against the background of our middle-class lifestyles: as the gnawing of discontent; the ennui of over-

satiation; the pain of unfulfilling relationships; or, with a bow to Buddhist theory, as bondage to the round of rebirths.

Too often, I feel, our focus on these aspects of *dukkha* has made us oblivious to the vast, catastrophic suffering that daily overwhelms three-fourths of the world's population.

An exception to this tendency may be found with the socially engaged Buddhist movement. I believe this is a face of Buddhism that has great promise, but from my superficial readings in this area I am struck by two things. First, while some engaged Buddhists seek fresh perspectives from the Dharma, for many Buddhism simply provides spiritual practices to use while simultaneously espousing sociopolitical causes not much different from those of the mainstream Left. Second, engaged Buddhism still remains tangential to the hard core of Western interest in Buddhism, which has fastened upon the Dharma principally as a path to inner peace and personal happiness.

If Buddhism in the West becomes solely a means to pursue personal spiritual growth, I am apprehensive it may evolve in a one-sided way and thus fulfill only half its potential. Attracting the affluent and the educated, it will provide a congenial home for the intellectual and cultural elite, but it risks



"Untitled (Sour Grapes)"  
by Marc Lancet



turning the quest for enlightenment into a private journey that, in the face of the immense suffering which daily hounds countless human lives, can present only a resigned quietism.

It is true that Buddhist meditation practice requires seclusion and inwardly focused depth. But, I ask myself, wouldn't the embodiment of Dharma in the world be more complete by also reaching out and addressing the grinding miseries that are ailing humanity?

I know we engage in lofty meditations on kindness and compassion and espouse beautiful ideals of love and peace. But note that we pursue them largely as inward subjective experiences geared toward personal transformation. Too seldom does this type of compassion roll up its sleeves and step into the field. Too rarely does it translate into pragmatic programs of effective action designed to diminish the actual sufferings of those battered by natural calamities or societal deprivation.

By way of contrast, take Christian Aid, World Vision, or Food for the Poor. Though these three agencies have Christian roots, they are not missionary movements aimed at proselytizing but relief organizations intended to provide relief and development aid while also tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Similarly, take the American Jewish World Service. This organization doesn't aspire to convert people to Judaism. It endeavors, rather, to express Judaism's commitment to social justice by alleviating "poverty, hunger, and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion, or nationality."

I often ponder why Buddhism has not spawned more organizations like these. Surely we can find a supporting framework for such projects in Buddhist doctrine, ethical ideals, archetypes, legends, and historical precedents; however, with a few noteworthy exceptions, these potential guidelines have just not converged in the way needed to give rise to a widespread manifestation of Buddhist conscience in the world.

I do recognize that many individual Buddhists are actively engaged in social service and a few larger Buddhist organizations work tirelessly to relieve human suffering around the globe. Their selfless dedication fully deserves our appreciation. Unfortunately, however, the appeal of such projects in the West has as yet been limited.

Some Buddhist teachers say that the most effective way we can help protect the world is by purifying our own minds. Others say that before we engage in compassionate action we must attain realization of selflessness or emptiness. There may be some truth in

such statements, but I think it is a partial truth, and if taken up too literally it can even be a harmful partial truth. In these critical times, we also must assume a broader sense of human responsibility for our fellow human beings, particularly those who live on the brink of destitution and despair.

The Buddha's mission, the reason for his arising in the world, was to free beings from suffering by uprooting the evil roots of greed, hatred, and delusion. These sinister roots do not exist only in our own individual minds. While they inevitably originate within the mind, today they have acquired a collective dimension which almost gives them a life of their own.

As concrete forces born of our collective consciousness, they spread out over whole countries and continents, wreaking havoc for countless human lives. To help free beings from suffering today therefore requires that we counter the systemic embodiments of greed, hatred, and delusion.

In each historical period, the Dharma finds new means to unfold its potentials in ways precisely linked to that era's distinctive historical conditions. I believe that our own era provides the appropriate historical stage for the transcendent truth of the Dharma to bend back upon the world and engage human suffering at multiple levels—even the lowest, harshest, and most degrading levels—not in mere contemplation but in effective, relief-granting action illuminated by its own world-transcending goal.

A special challenge facing Buddhism in our age is to stand up as an advocate for justice in the world, a voice of conscience for those victims of social, economic, and political injustice who cannot stand up and speak for themselves. This, in my view, is a deeply moral challenge marking a watershed in the modern expression of Buddhism. I believe it also points in a direction that Buddhism should take if it is to share in the Buddha's ongoing mission to humanity. ❁

*Bhikkhu Bodhi, an American Buddhist monk, was ordained in Sri Lanka in 1972. He has translated several important works from the Pali Canon, including the Sumyatta Nikaya: The Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Wisdom Publications, 2000). He currently lives at Bodhi Monastery in Lafayette, New Jersey. An earlier version of this essay was published in the Fall 2007 issue of Buddhadharma magazine.*

**A special challenge facing Buddhism in our age is to stand up as an advocate for justice in the world, a voice of conscience.**



THE VOICE OF HOPE

by Aung San Suu Kyi and Alan Clements

Seven Stories Press, 2008 (revised edition)

MINDFULNESS IN THE MARKETPLACE: COMPASSIONATE RESPONSES TO CONSUMERISM

edited by Allan Hunt Badiner  
Parallax Press, 2002

AGAINST THE STREAM: A BUDDHIST GUIDE FOR SPIRITUAL REVOLUTIONARIES

by Noah Levine  
HarperOne, 2007

DISCOVERING KWAN YIN: BUDDHIST GODDESS OF COMPASSION

by Sandy Boucher  
Beacon Press, 2000

ALTARS IN THE STREET: A NEIGHBORHOOD FIGHTS TO SURVIVE

by Melody Ermarc Chavis  
Three Rivers Press, 1998

ENGAGED BUDDHISM IN THE WEST

edited by Christopher Queen

Wisdom Publications, 2000

DHARMA RAIN: SOURCES OF BUDDHIST ENVIRONMENTALISM

edited by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft

Shambhala Publications, 1999

# 30 Great

Back when BPF began 30 years ago, only a handful of books and pamphlets on socially engaged Buddhism were widely accessible in English. Today we are blessed with abundance. Here, *Turning Wheel* offers a selection of books that are generally available and are good first texts to read. Also, readers are invited to check out the work of individuals featured elsewhere in this issue; most of our article writers and featured individuals have published well-respected books on socially engaged Buddhism, which are generally not repeated on this page.

NOT TURNING AWAY: THE PRACTICE OF ENGAGED BUDDHISM (25 YEARS OF *TURNING WHEEL*)

edited by Susan Moon

Shambhala Publications, 2004

STEP BY STEP: MEDITATIONS ON WISDOM AND COMPASSION

by Maha Ghosananda

Parallax Press, 1992

WIDE AWAKE: A BUDDHIST GUIDE FOR TEENS

by Diana Winston

Perigree, 2003

BUDDHIST ACTS OF COMPASSION

edited by Pamela Bloom

Conari Press, 2000

MINDFUL POLITICS: A BUDDHIST GUIDE TO MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

by Melvin McLeod

Wisdom Publications, 2006

AWAKE IN THE WILD: MINDFULNESS IN NATURE AS A PATH TO SELF-DISCOVERY

by Mark Coleman

Inner Ocean Publishing, 2006

PRACTICING PEACE IN TIMES OF WAR

by Pema Chödrön

Shambhala Publications, 2006



ETHICS FOR THE NEW  
MILLENNIUM

by His Holiness  
the Dalai Lama

Riverhead Books,  
2001

BEARING WITNESS:  
A ZEN MASTER'S  
LESSONS IN  
MAKING PEACE

by Bernie  
Glassman

Bell Tower, 1998

THE ENGAGED  
SPIRITUAL LIFE: A  
BUDDHIST APPROACH  
TO TRANSFORMING  
OURSELVES AND THE  
WORLD

by Donald Rothberg

Beacon Press, 2006

VETERANS OF WAR,  
VETERANS OF  
PEACE

by Maxine Hong  
Kingston

Koa Books, 2006

FINDING  
FREEDOM:  
WRITINGS FROM  
DEATH ROW

by Jarvis Masters

Padma  
Publishing, 1997

# Reads

*For an extensive list compiled by Donald Rothberg of more than 200 books on socially engaged Buddhism, as well as online resources and a link to purchase any of these titles, please see:*

[www.bpf.org/html/resources\\_and\\_links/bibliography/bibliography.html](http://www.bpf.org/html/resources_and_links/bibliography/bibliography.html)

BUDDHISM AFTER  
PATRIARCHY:  
A FEMINIST HISTORY,  
ANALYSIS, AND  
RECONSTRUCTION  
OF BUDDHISM

by Rita Gross

SUNY Press, 1993

QUEER DHARMA:  
VOICES OF GAY  
BUDDHISTS  
(2 VOLUMES)

edited by Winston  
Leyland

Gay Sunshine Press,  
1998/2000

AN INTRODUCTION  
TO BUDDHIST ETHICS:  
FOUNDATIONS, VALUES,  
AND ISSUES

by Peter Harvey

Cambridge  
University Press,  
2000

DHARMA, COLOR,  
AND CULTURE:  
NEW VOICES IN  
WESTERN BUDDHISM

edited by Hilda  
Gutiérrez  
Baldoquín

Parallax Press, 2004

TRANSFORMING  
OUR TERROR:  
A SPIRITUAL APPROACH  
TO MAKING SENSE  
OF SENSELESS TRAGEDY

by Christopher Titmuss

Barron's Educational  
Series, 2002

KNOWING  
HOW TO LIVE:  
THE ETHICS OF  
THE MAHAYANA

by Sangharakshita

Windhorse  
Publications, 2008

SEEDS OF PEACE: A  
BUDDHIST VISION  
FOR RENEWING  
SOCIETY

by Sulak Sivaraksa

Libri, 2005

INNER REVOLUTION:  
LIFE, LIBERTY, AND  
THE PURSUIT OF REAL  
HAPPINESS

by Robert Thurman

Riverhead Books,  
1999

BEING BENEVOLENCE:  
THE SOCIAL ETHICS OF  
ENGAGED BUDDHISM

by Sallie B. King

University of Hawaii  
Press, 2006

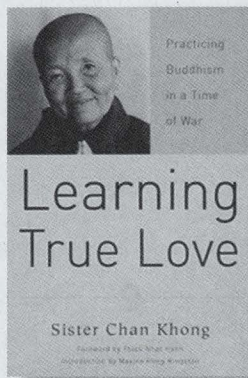
WORLD AS LOVER,  
WORLD AS SELF:  
COURAGE FOR GLOBAL  
JUSTICE AND  
ECOLOGICAL RENEWAL  
(REVISED EDITION)

by Joanna Macy

Parallax Press, 2007



## Book Reviews



### Learning True Love: Practicing Buddhism in a Time of War

By Sister Chan Khong  
(Parallax Press, 2007, 300 pages,  
\$16.95)

Reviewed by Jan Eldridge

In this autobiography, Sister Chan Khong takes us on her journey through four decades of Vietnamese history, showing us the many ways that suffering inspired her to act. Beginning with her childhood, when she spent her pocket money buying noodles for street children, and continuing through college, where she helped families living in tomb-huts in a nearby cemetery crisscrossed by “muddy paths bubbling with microbes that bred tuberculosis,” we see her compassion compel her to help.

Inspired to action, Sister Chan cared for the sick, provided scholarships for orphans and children of single parents, established a daycare center, and began teaching some of the children who were unable to obtain the birth certificates that entitled them to education.

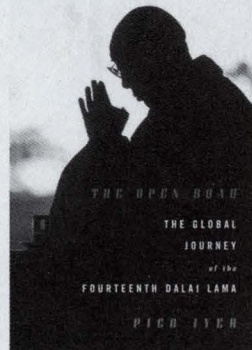
Chan received her political initiation early in life. While she was growing up, the war with the French colonialists was not just background noise. Her father was detained and almost killed. In 1959 she met a radical young monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, who encouraged her to work for social change. Together they founded the School of Youth for Social Service, an organization that grew rapidly, distributing food and medical supplies in rural Vietnam during the war.

When Ngo Dinh Diem gained power in South Vietnam, many students, monks, and nuns were arrested and tortured. The conflict accelerated and Chan witnessed the self-immolation of a close friend, the murder of co-workers, and the repeated bombing of medical clinics and schools that she had helped to build. Yet through it all, she bore no hatred toward those who had caused so much suffering.

In her autobiography, Chan repeatedly shows us her strong belief in the energy of goodness. In one instance, as the police approach her, she says to herself, “Bodhisattva of Compassion, we are going to jail. There is no way to escape. We must go without fear.” On the way to jail she carefully removes a petition for peace from her handbag, folds it five times, and slowly swallows it.

Her love and concern, her commitment to peaceful engagement for social change, are continually challenged far beyond what most of us could endure. In her introduction to *Learning True Love*, Maxine Hong Kingston writes, “The pacifist makes peace moment by moment all her lifetime.” In her life now, Sister Chan continues to inspire us as she assists

Thich Nhat Hanh in teaching the Dharma worldwide. After reading her life story, we can viscerally feel her Buddhist belief that humans are not our enemies; misunderstanding, hatred, jealousy, and confusion are our enemies.



### The Open Road: The Global Journey of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

By Pico Iyer  
(Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, 275  
pages, \$24.00)

Reviewed by Jan Eldridge

Screen savers, billboards, bumper stickers—Pico Iyer attempts in *The Open Road* to peel away the trite and superficial layers of images and slogans that we attach to the Dalai Lama. In the process Iyer introduces us to a philosopher, monk, and politician, all aspects of a very complex being. Iyer weaves some of the mystery that surrounds his subject into his vivid portrayal, while sharing accounts of the public and private life of the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama Iyer shows us is a religious leader who tells people not to get needlessly confused or distracted by religion. He is a global celebrity who calls himself a “simple Buddhist monk.” He is a doctor of metaphysics and a head of state. He travels worldwide with his message of compassion and kindness, but he is also a very private man who meditates for four hours every morning. He wears the robes of a mystic, yet he is a pragmatist. This “simple Buddhist monk” is committed to reality but not just the concrete reality that we see.

When the Chinese government ruthlessly conquered and claimed the territory of Tibet, more than a million Tibetans died, one in 10 was jailed, and all but 13 of more than 6,000 monasteries were destroyed. The old culture that was cut off from the world, along with the feudalism that dominated it, is long gone. Lhasa is now transformed, with 224 karaoke parlors, 658 brothels, and a 13-story Public Security Office on the main street. The people who have suffered and lost so much now have Wal-Mart and Nike.

For the Dalai Lama, the creation of the Tibetan government and community in exile in Dharamsala is a hopeful experiment. It provides a safe haven for 150,000 Tibetan refugees. He has established a *tabula rasa*, a center where little Tibetans learn Tibetan until they are 10 to stay connected to their original source, then English in order to be in tune with the world. Nuns can now earn doctoral degrees. As the new beginning leaves the serfdom of the past behind and leaps into the future, the Dalai Lama gives up more and more of his own power so that his people can



rule themselves. When he included an impeachment clause in the new Tibetan constitution, it met with a great deal of resistance.

In his role as politician, the Dalai Lama is serving two constituencies—his own people and the world—and they pull in opposite directions. Every month new refugees who place all their hopes on him make that arduous trip from Tibet to Dharamsala. He knows that while he continues to practice tolerance, many of these refugees see their lives torn apart and are impatient. Some are calling for action now.

Unlike previous literary efforts to introduce us to the “real” Dalai Lama, *The Open Road* comes much closer to achieving that goal. Written over a five-year period, Iyer’s book is a more intimate portrait by an author with unusual access to his subject. Iyer’s father is a long-term friend of the Dalai Lama, whom he met in 1960.

Iyer’s connection is also deeply personal. He has had the advantage of visits to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala for almost 30 years and following him on his global travels for almost as long.

In *The Open Road*, Iyer captures the paradoxes inherent in the life and role of the Dalai Lama and brings us closer to the man behind the global celebrity.

*Jan Eldridge is a professor of art and a student of Vajrayana Buddhism.*

liberated from the culturally contingent forces that shaped it. Loy, as both an academic of religious studies and a Zen practitioner, applies himself to this task with a balance of faith and analysis.

In the history he traces, Buddhism has always interpenetrated the cultures it has entered, changing whatever lay in its path, while also, itself, being changed. “When transplanting an exotic species,” Loy writes, “it may be helpful to bring some of the original soil entwined with the roots. Eventually, however, the plant must become able to root itself in new ground.”

Dogen himself, in the history Loy traces, challenged the “old metaphors” of his time, and Loy follows in this lineage of renewal and proposition, sometimes humbly, sometimes boldly, and always with passion. At times he does this by taking on the tone of a family member who has become irritated with familial habits he might otherwise tolerate, or even be fond of, were the stakes not so high. “Bare attention” and “mindfulness,” Loy writes, when restricted only to “immediate surroundings...is really another version of our basic problem: our sense of separation from each other and the world we are ‘in.’” To go so far into “emptiness” as to disengage from urgent issues is only another dichotomization.

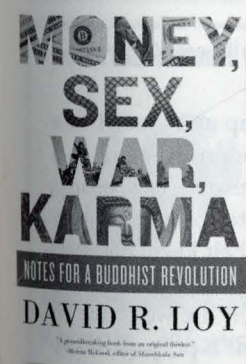
At other times, Loy is more uncompromising: “there is a special place in hell...reserved for those who refuse to give up the self-centered indifference that allows them to sit indefinitely on their cushions while the rest of the world goes to hell.”

If Loy’s words sting, they may also, like the quick, awakening strike of the *keisaku* stick, incite a similarly alert, attentive questioning. How do we, for example, with “bare attention” to the immediately present, also consider and take mindful action on behalf of a distant species, or on behalf of ending a distant war? Pooling across an array of disciplines to impel his argument, Loy points to the extreme sense of lack many in the West feel now that science and modern economics have attempted to supplant spirituality. With the spiritual half of the duality missing and no way to explain our “sense of lack,” the secular world has succumbed to a range of *samsaric* addictions: from “the great seduction” of fame to the terrible love of war.

Herein, Loy concludes, lies the promise Buddhism holds out for us. In his final chapter, “Notes for a Buddhist Revolution,” Loy argues, convincingly, that the most essential issue underlying all others is the “commodification” of our attention.

Although Buddhism may not, in his view, have much “distinctive to offer” to individual activist movements in the short run, it may offer a great deal in the way it can influence the course of events indirectly—through us—by liberating our consciousness from the glut of our myriad distractions, and thereby, liberating our choice.

*Diana Fisher is a Zen student and psychotherapist-in-training in Berkeley, California.*



**Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution**

By David R. Loy  
(Wisdom Publications, 2008,  
159 pages, \$15.95)

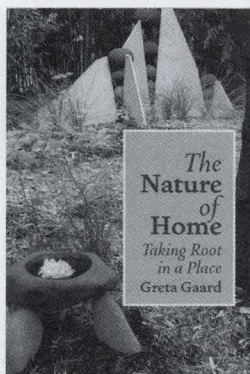
Reviewed by Diana Fisher

The first time I left Tassajara Zen Monastery after an extended immersion as a summer worker and Zen student, I was startled when I stopped for a quick coffee and reached into my wallet. The rumpled dollar bill was the first money I had seen in months. I examined this strange paper symbol closely, as a child or a newcomer to a foreign land might. After months in a realm set apart, where money provides essential yet nearly invisible support for the monastery, I reentered the “profane” world across the threshold of explicit payment. It is this confluence of both profane and sacred in David Loy’s latest book, *Money, Sex, War, Karma*, that gives his writing such impact.

Loy could have simply applied a “Buddhist perspective” to modern issues; instead, he applies the sensibility of the “double entendre” to his task. For Buddhism to liberate and respond to contemporary crises, it must itself be



## Books in Brief



### **The Nature of Home: Taking Root in a Place**

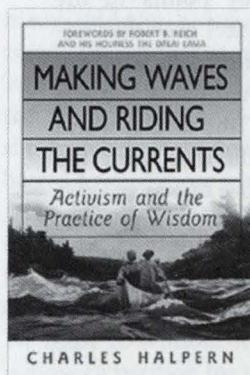
By Greta Gaard

(University of Arizona Press, 2007, 205 pages, \$17.95)

Reviewed by Everett Wilson

In describing the structure of her book, Greta Gaard offers an insightful metaphor about the way all of our lives unwind: "Life develops this way, too, not in a linear progression but as a spiral: questions return again and again, each time finding different answers." *The Nature of Home* is an ambitious book. Gaard examines many social and environmental causes and attributes the roots of these problems to our society's restlessness. Drawing from the spiraling structure of her book and her life, Gaard re-examines the places she's lived and traveled in her search for home, finding new facets to the same questions. Ultimately Gaard shows us, in the examples from her own life, how to better care for the places where we live and the neighbors who live there with us. Whether camping out at the top of a glacier on Mt. Baker, or kneeling on the shore of Lake Superior paying homage to the Ojibwe grandmother goddess who inhabits it, Gaard exemplifies a woman who is both as fluid as the rivers she loves and as true to herself as a river to its channel.

*Everett Wilson is a writer and Zen student. After five years of monastic practice at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, he now lives and practices at the Berkeley Zen Center in Berkeley, California.*



### **Making Waves and Riding the Currents: Activism and the Practice of Wisdom**

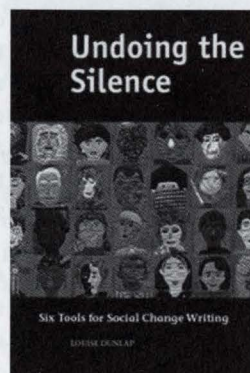
By Charles Halpern

(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008, 287 pages, \$24.99)

Reviewed by Patrick Carolan

The Beatles once asked if we want a revolution and reminded us that we all want to change the world. These words are in keeping with Charles Halpern's *Making Waves and Riding the Currents*, a book chronicling his life and career as a public interest lawyer and social

advocate. Halpern's tale begins with him as a young, disillusioned member of a voracious 1960s corporate law firm. Wanting to heal a damaged world he views as a battleground between status quo elites and counterculture youths, he founds America's first public interest law firm, then a like-minded law school in New York, and heads the Nathan Cummings Foundation dedicated to "cutting-edge grants and social justice." We see him rail against authority, then mature as he begins working with it, before battling to resist its allure when, ironically, he comes to wield it himself. Halpern bares the story of his life for examination—what he did to change the world, how it aided him in his wisdom practice, and how wisdom practice aided his activist journey in turn. In doing so he unfolds an engaging saga, one that just may inspire readers in their own quest to find enlightenment and challenge the world.



### **Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing**

By Louise Dunlap

(New Village Press, 2007, 229 pages, \$20)

Reviewed by Patrick Carolan

In *Undoing the Silence*, Louise Dunlap argues that in a world of unchecked American supremacy there is a second superpower: the average person. As a group, everyday people possess the power to bring military machines and corporate juggernauts to their knees through activist writing. Regrettably, most attempts are quashed by the overwhelming power of silence. Rarely are we prone to speak out, least of all in writing. This trait is propagated by unequal power distribution, fear of taking a stand, and low confidence in our own writing ability. Dunlap coaches writers to "honor their own craziness" by not fearing to entertain radical or risky ideas, as these often result in the most profound change. She outlines key skills like freewriting, consideration of one's intended audience, and the use of drafts. By promoting their application through exercises sprinkled throughout the text, she provides an excellent starting point for improving one's activist voice. While her techniques are best suited to someone looking for an introduction to effective writing, Dunlap's strongest point is not only how she teaches readers to write freely but also how she encourages them to break the bonds that prevent them from living freely in the process.

*Patrick Carolan writes from Vancouver, Canada, where he studies cognitive psychology, history, and Korean language at the University of British Columbia.*





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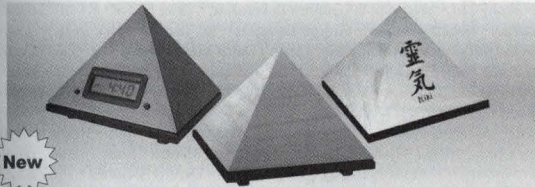
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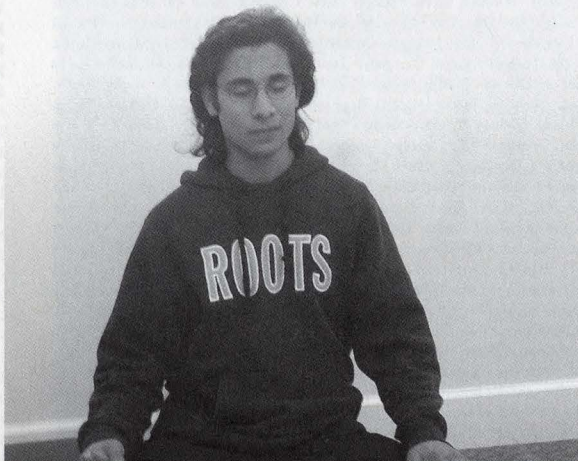
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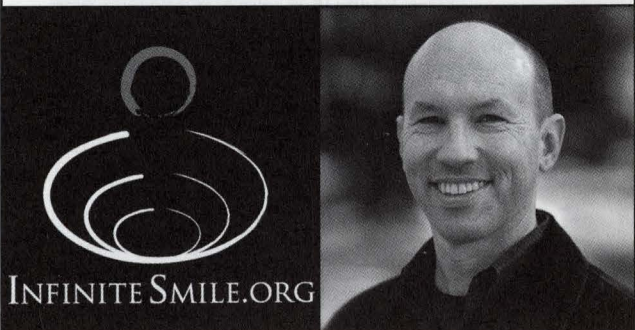
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## U.S. Chapters

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**BOSTON, MA**  
Joan Schwartz  
[info@bpfboston.org](mailto:info@bpfboston.org)  
[www.bpfboston.org](http://www.bpfboston.org)

**NEW YORK CITY, NY**  
Chris Raines  
212/545-4123  
[info@bpfny.org](mailto:info@bpfny.org)  
[www.bpfny.org](http://www.bpfny.org)

**ROCHESTER, NY**  
Jay Thompson  
585/576-6073  
[info@rochesterbpf.org](mailto:info@rochesterbpf.org)  
[www.rochesterbpf.org](http://www.rochesterbpf.org)

### SOUTHERN REGION

**WASHINGTON, DC**  
Rebecca Hines  
301/529-6158  
[info@wbpf.org](mailto:info@wbpf.org)  
[www.wbpf.org](http://www.wbpf.org)

**TAMPA BAY, FL**  
Tom Lacy  
727/455-1056  
[bpf.tampabay@gmail.com](mailto:bpf.tampabay@gmail.com)

**NASHVILLE, TN**  
Joey King  
615/485-1616  
[jbkranger@aol.com](mailto:jbkranger@aol.com)

### MIDWEST/CENTRAL REGION

**CHICAGO, IL**  
Dean Kaufer  
773/465-4279  
[deankaufer@mac.com](mailto:deankaufer@mac.com)  
[www.bpf.org/chicago](http://www.bpf.org/chicago)

**CINCINNATI, OH**  
Mary Clare Rietz and  
Mike Marcotte  
513/821-3031  
[mikemaryclare@cinci.rr.com](mailto:mikemaryclare@cinci.rr.com)  
[www.bpfincinnati.org](http://www.bpfincinnati.org)

**CLEVELAND, OH**  
Lynne Brakeman  
[lbrakeman@cox.net](mailto:lbrakeman@cox.net)  
[www.bpfleveland.org](http://www.bpfleveland.org)

**MADISON, WI**  
Kathy Derene  
608/233-4118  
[kathy@derene.com](mailto:kathy@derene.com)  
[www.madisonbpf.org](http://www.madisonbpf.org)

**MILWAUKEE, WI**  
Paul Brodwin  
[brodwin@uwm.edu](mailto:brodwin@uwm.edu)

### WESTERN REGION

(See below for California chapters)

**JUNEAU, AK**  
Sudie Hargis  
907/321-8300  
[sudie1ak@yahoo.com](mailto:sudie1ak@yahoo.com)

**HONOLULU, HI**  
Pete Shimazaki Doktor  
[dok@riseup.net](mailto:dok@riseup.net)

**PORTLAND, OR**  
Heidi Enji Hoogstra  
503/236-5741  
[bpfportland@yahoo.com](mailto:bpfportland@yahoo.com)  
[www.bpfportland.com](http://www.bpfportland.com)

**BELLINGHAM, WA**  
Edi Norton  
360/527-9101  
[edwinanorton@earthlink.net](mailto:edwinanorton@earthlink.net)

**OLYMPIA, WA**  
Robert Lovitt  
360/357-5409  
[ssbpf@comcast.net](mailto:ssbpf@comcast.net)

**SEATTLE, WA**  
Elaine Waller-Rose  
206/725-7074  
[elainewr@speakeasy.org](mailto:elainewr@speakeasy.org)

### CALIFORNIA

**HUMBOLDT**  
Mitch Trachtenberg  
707/677-0762  
[mjtrac@gmail.com](mailto:mjtrac@gmail.com)

**LOS ANGELES**  
Richard Modiano  
310/439-1507  
[richardmodiano@earthlink.net](mailto:richardmodiano@earthlink.net)

**NEVADA CITY**  
Perissa Busick  
530/265-4274

**SAN DIEGO**  
Ava Torre-Bueno  
619/294-8779  
[avatb@cox.net](mailto:avatb@cox.net)

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
Lee Lipp  
415/864-4828  
[sfchapter@bpf.org](mailto:sfchapter@bpf.org)

**SANTA CRUZ**  
Phyllis Levin  
831/475-8037  
and  
David Hofvendahl  
[davidhofvendahl@hotmail.com](mailto:davidhofvendahl@hotmail.com)  
[www.bpfsc.org](http://www.bpfsc.org)

**TASSAJARA MOUNTAIN MONASTERY**  
Judith Randall  
39171 Tassajara Rd.  
Carmel Valley, CA 93924

## International Chapters

**CANADA: VANCOUVER**  
Andrew Larcombe  
604/879-3650  
[larcombe@telus.net](mailto:larcombe@telus.net)

**AUSTRALIA: MELBOURNE**  
Jill Jameson  
61-3-9844-2289  
[jamesonjg@bigpond.com](mailto:jamesonjg@bigpond.com)

**AUSTRALIA: SYDNEY**  
Mari Rhydwen  
[rhydwen@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rhydwen@bigpond.net.au)

**ITALY: MILANO**  
Stefano Bettera  
[stefano.bettera@stefanobettera.eu](mailto:stefano.bettera@stefanobettera.eu)  
[www.bpfitalia.org](http://www.bpfitalia.org)

**SPAIN**  
Jean-Jacques Vellino  
BPF Bodhyanga, Barcelona  
[jjv@dzogchen.bodhyanga.org](mailto:jjv@dzogchen.bodhyanga.org)  
<http://dzogchen.bodhyanga.org>

## Affiliates

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01/162-867-476  
[www.amidatrust.com](http://www.amidatrust.com)

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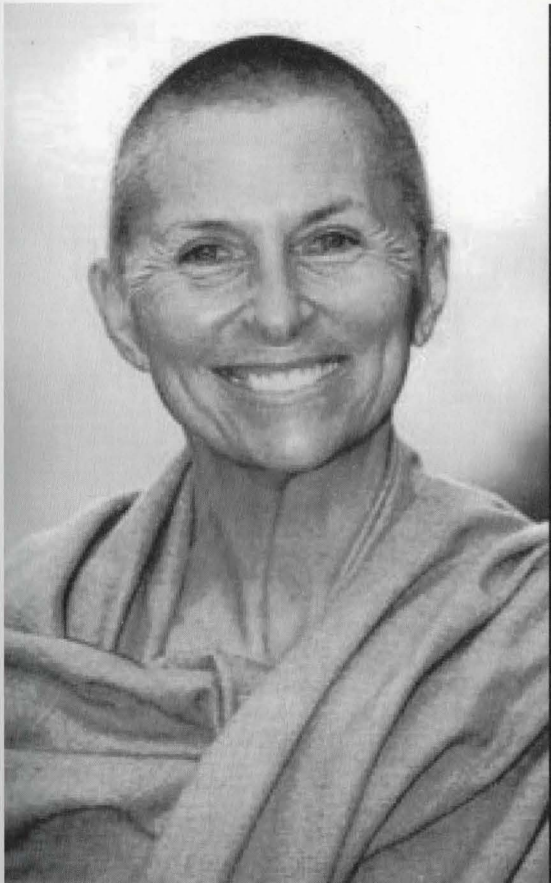
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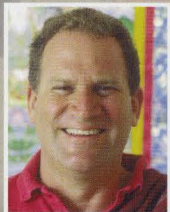


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(HarperSanFrancisco, 2007). He is also the  
author of *Natural Radiance (Sounds True)*, as  
well as a number of other books including  
*Letting Go of the Person You Used to Be* and the  
*Awakening* trilogy, which includes the classic  
*Awakening the Buddha Within* (Broadway).

Lama Surya is a Lineage holder of Tibetan  
Buddhism in the Rimé (non-sectarian) tradition.  
For over thirty years, including more than  
eight years in secluded retreat, he has studied  
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