TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism

Vowing Peace in an Age of War

BUDDHISTS RESPOND TO 9/11:

Jack Kornfield, Pat Enkyo O'Hara, Robert Thurman, and others

PLUS: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR TROUBLED TIMES & INTERVIEW WITH A MUSLIM IMAM

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From the Editors

This issue of *Turning Wheel* didn't start out being about war and peace. We were all set to tackle the theme of medical ethics. And then came the terrorist attacks.

Here in California, thousands of miles away, we can't begin to know the nightmare that people on the East Coast went through and are still going through; yet we are intimately affected. In the first days after September 11, scores of people called the BPF office in shock, seeking some kind of guidance. We had no answers ourselves, although all of us noted how strongly we felt the need to sit in silence, both alone and with each other. A week after the attacks, hundreds of people came to a community gathering that BPF organized, to sing and cry together.

Like many of you, we have gone through a range of feelings since that day—shock, anger, grief, numbness. At our staff check-ins, we've listened to each other and helped each other when we've gotten stuck in despair.

For a while, an extraordinary window seemed open, and perhaps it still is. We have had a rare chance to see the anatomy of a war, to question why people on all sides might be driven to desperate acts—flying planes into buildings full of working people, or bombing an already devastated country full of starving people.

It's been said many times since September 11: the world will never be the same. Perhaps it's more honest to say that Americans will never experience the world the same way again. For a long time, people in other countries have lived with terrorism and violent conflict—a good deal of it connected in some way to U.S. foreign policy, much of which is motivated by something as basic as getting the gas we need to drive our cars. So it all comes full circle. We Americans are now painfully experiencing what the Buddha taught about no separate self and impermanence. The U.S. is not separate from the rest of the world and cannot perfectly secure itself against change. The web of connections and conditions that ties our world together has never been so transparent.

Our belief in nonviolence is being challenged, from within and without. We are hearing, over and over, "Well, if you think we should be nonviolent, then what do you think we should *do* about terrorism?" Not knowing is uncomfortable, but we are trying to live with not knowing while we look for creative responses. Nonviolence is not the same as doing nothing. A number of possible responses are put forward in these pages.

We are overwhelmed with reports about suffering and devastation all over the world. How much of this knowledge is helpful? How much of it can we absorb? *Turning Wheel*, in its own way, is adding to the information, and we have a responsibility to be useful. We all have to find a middle ground between burying our heads in the sand and overwhelming ourselves with information that makes us feel helpless. We appreciate the contributors to this issue, who bravely stepped up to say something in a situation where it's easy to feel silenced or uncertain. We find these voices comforting and inspiring, and that's why we offer this issue to everyone who will look inside its pages for help.

We need to sustain ourselves; we can take a walk near water, drink a cup of green tea, play charades, make gingerbread houses. And then, because we do live in a world where we know about faraway suffering, we can find our own place of engagement. ❖ —*Susan Moon and Maia Duerr*

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel:*
Summer '02: **Art and Social Change.** Deadline: March 4, '02.
Fall '02: **Youth and Buddhist Activism.** Deadline: June 3, '02.

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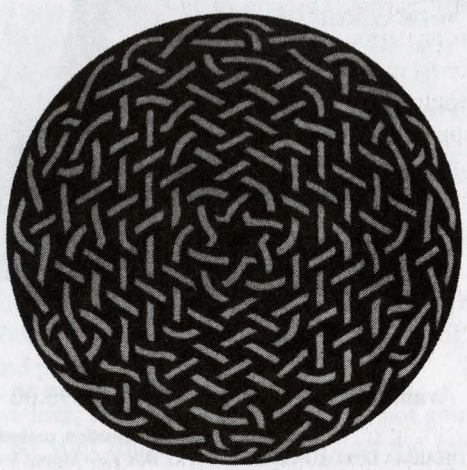
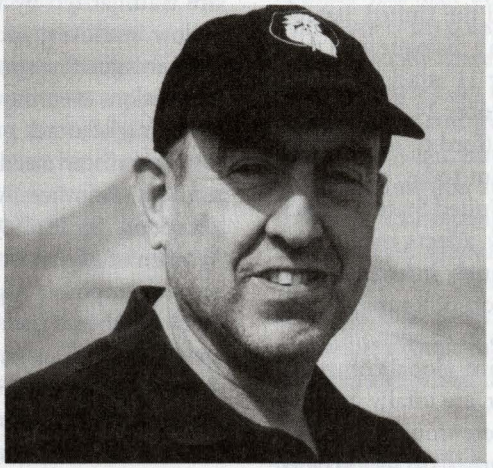


Poetry

Art

Tribute to Alan Senauke

At the end of 2001, Alan Senauke is leaving his position as the executive director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship to devote himself more fully to other parts of his life. As the only staff person at BPF who predates Alan (by seven months), I have the hard job of saying goodbye, on behalf of the staff, the board, and the BPF community. I know my heart is not the only one full of affection for Alan, and I want to celebrate him here.



Alan has been the director of BPF for almost 11 years, and both he and the organization have matured in that time. Sometimes it has seemed that Alan *is* BPF. But while Alan himself has stayed about the same size, the BPF staff and membership have tripled under his leadership. And it's not just a matter of numbers—Alan has put BPF on the map,as a nonprofit with a vision and strategies for socially engaged Buddhism. The very phrase "socially engaged Buddhism" has come to have meaning to many people in large part because of Alan's work. (Some people just say "SEB" now!) He has brought a strong sense of the dharma to BPF, asking for what he calls "all-sidedness," and reminding us of our interconnectedness with the rest of the world.

When Alan came to BPF, there were just three of us on the staff—Alan, myself, and a work-study student—in one tiny room, sharing one computer. Our desks were just a few feet apart, making for an intimacy we might not have been able to abide if we hadn't all gotten along so well. When Alan got his own computer, I witnessed him playing Tetris on it a couple of times; but, practicing renunciation, he soon dumped the game in the trash so that he could give his full attention to more serious matters. As he recalls in his column on page 43 of this issue, it was the time of the Gulf War. A wide community of people felt the need for BPF, and BPF, in turn, needed Alan and the dedicated leadership he provided.

Now there are nine of us on the staff, each with our own computer, and Alan, quite appropriately, has his own room in our much larger office, and his door has usually been open.

I can't possibly name all the things Alan has done for BPF, but I'll mention some of them. And I know he would want me to point out that he has not done these things alone but in collaboration with others.

Alan organized the three BPF summer institutes in the early '90s, which brought together many BPF members to learn from each other and our elders. His international work has been a huge contribution to BPF. Early on in his tenure, he became involved with the new International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), founded by Thai Buddhist activist Sulak Sivaraksa. Alan served on the board of INEB, attended INEB's annual conferences in Asia, and was instrumental in keeping the organization alive. A masterful networker, he brought into the fold many people around the world who are now our close BPF friends and associates. He went on a delegation to Burma in 1992, witnessing the oppression by the military junta firsthand, and he has continued to travel to the Thai/Burma border over the years. Thanks to Alan, BPF has made a commitment to relief work with refugees on the Burma border, and Hal Nathan's Burma Relief Group was born.

Alan helped start the ThinkSangha, which has now published two journals and a book of essays on socially engaged Buddhism. He edited BPF's book *Safe Harbor*, ethical guidelines for Buddhist sanghas, a much needed book that filled a gap; and, with great eloquence, he has written and spoken on socially engaged Buddhism in publications and venues worldwide. With an unerring sense of character, he has hired a wonderful staff of devoted people over the years.

While BPF has been growing, Alan has been growing, too. As he has developed himself as a dharma teacher (he received dharma transmission in 1998), he has brought that deepening practice to the office; we have all benefited from his ability to steady us when we are feeling beaten about by waves large and small, global or personal.

Alan has grown as a parent, too. Silvie was born just before he started at BPF, and Alexander a few years later. Alan has softened, and his heart has opened more and more with the compassion and humor that parenthood teaches. He has faithfully reported to us on the movies he's seen with his children, like *Harry Potter* ("disappointing").

Alan's wife Laurie has also become part of the BPF family, helping and supporting the staff with her steady good cheer as well as her computer skills.

Alan's many other talents include photography (see page 19) and bluegrass guitar. Look for his two new CDs early in 2002, one solo and one with the Bluegrass Intentions!

We're going to miss Alan, with his baseball cap and his New York humor, but we've grown up a lot, with his help, and I guess we'll be all right without him. (We'll tell you about our new executive director in the next *TW.*) I'm happy that he's going to be able to give more time to his dharma teaching, his writing, his music, and his family. I know from him that when he was seriously ill this year, he took a deep look at his priorities, and he saw that being a Zen teacher and priest is at the center of his life.

So, Alan, we love, you, and we're glad you're not going far away. We like your rough edges, so don't get too mellowed out. Stay a little bit grouchy. And get some rest. ❖

—Susan Moon, in consultation with Diana Winston

Indra's Net

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels (Indra's Net), each reflecting all the others. The interdependence of all lives always strikes us when we compile this section, especially in the wake of September 11.

The Dalai Lama: Dialogue, Not War

His Holiness the Dalai Lama urged the United States to end air strikes on Afghanistan and open a dialogue with those it holds responsible for the September 11 attacks. Speaking before the European Parliament on October 24, 2001, he said:

"In the past, communities could afford to think of one another as fundamentally separate. But today, as we learn from the recent tragic events in the United States, whatever happens in one region eventually affects many other areas. The world is becoming increasingly interdependent. Without the cultivation and promotion of a sense of universal responsibility our very future is in danger...

In the context of our newly emerging global community, all forms of violence, including war, are totally inappropriate means of settling disputes...There would be no winners at all if another global conflict were to occur today. We must, therefore, have the courage and vision to call for a world without nuclear weapons and national armies...

It is not enough for governments to endorse the principle of nonviolence without any appropriate action to support and promote it. If nonviolence is to prevail, nonviolent movements must be made effective and successful."

Afghan Women May Hold the Key to Peace

Afghan women's organizations have been resisting oppression in their country for two decades, and we can offer them real help.

The largest Afghan community in the U.S., some 35,000 people, is in Fremont, California, just 30 miles south of BPF's Berkeley office. In September and November, Afghan women's groups working with Global Exchange invited the public to hear their views. The first gathering, "Women United for Peace," drew hundreds of people, filling a college auditorium. Middle Eastern, Latina, Asian, African American, and European American speakers addressed an equally diverse audience. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish women offered prayers and songs for peace.

Several Afghan women spoke. These brave women have taken huge risks to work for a democratic and secular government in Afghanistan that respects women's rights to work, education, and medical care. They expressed their grief over the lives lost to the terrorist attacks. They described the history of their struggle for women's rights and their determined opposition to the Soviet invasion and to the fundamentalist regimes of both the Northern Alliance and the Taliban.

As they spoke, photos were projected, one of them showing the execution-style shooting of a woman shrouded in a *burqa* (full veil).

Especially moving was one middle-aged mother's description of the young Afghan men who have joined the Taliban. "They are children of war," she said. "Most of them were children when the Soviets invaded. Many of them are orphans, most never went to school. They have known no mother, no sister, no wife, no daughter of their own...they are traumatized by war." This, she suggested, is why they follow warlords, including many who are foreigners to Afghanistan. She spoke with a sense of loss of these sons of her nation, even though, were she in Afghanistan, some of them might attack or even kill her just for speaking out.

Afghanistan needs to hear the voices of such mothers and grandmothers. We can help by supporting their organizations. Since 1977, Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has led humanitarian projects to empower Afghan women against fundamentalism. In November, a member of RAWA toured the U.S. using a pseudonym, Tameena Faryal. BPF members heard her describe RAWA's humanitarian work. See also: Women Living Under Muslim Law at *www.wluml.org*; *www.afghanwomensmission.org*; and *www.globalfundforwomen.org*.

Several of these groups are raising funds for Malalai Hospital in Quetta, Pakistan, which served refugees, including landmine victims, until it closed for lack of funds. Making donations to reopen Malalai would be a small effort against the harm caused by American bombing. Send checks made to SEE/Afghan Women's Mission to: Afghan Women's Mission, 260 South Lake Ave, PMB 165, Pasadena, CA 91101.

—Melody Ermachild Chavis

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

Tibetans Honor Victims of the September Attacks

Tibetan Buddhist communities around the world observed the traditional 49-day mourning period for the victims of September 11.

After a death, relatives and friends come together to perform rites to help the deceased every week for seven weeks. On the final, 49th day of mourning, they conduct an elaborate ceremony, *Shagu*, calling upon the entire community to offer their prayers so the dead may have a peaceful passage into the next life. Those who suffer a violent death are thought to have a particularly urgent need for such prayers.

In New York City, Tibetan communities from New York and New Jersey ended weekly prayer services in Union Square with a final candlelight Shagu ceremony celebrating the victims' lives, in which some 20 monks and more than a thousand people, mostly Tibetans, participated. In addition, the communities offered donations to the relief workers of New York City, dedicating the merit of these gifts to the dead.

Nawang Rabgyal, the Dalai Lama's representative to the Americas, describes the 49th Day Ceremony as "a special

prayer expressing the Tibetan people's sympathy, solidarity, and support for the people of the United States, in an effort to further the universal goal of world peace."

Merciful American Voices

In late September, a friend and I took a bus trip from New York to San Francisco. We interviewed people we met about their reactions to the events of September 11.

I expected a variety of responses—anger, fear, grief—but, to my surprise, underneath differences in vocabulary and accent, everyone seemed to be saying the same thing: "I don't want more innocent people to die." What we heard convinced us of people's ability to feel compassion for others who live thousands of miles away, not only in New York and Washington, but beyond this continent, all the way to Afghanistan.

One woman was traveling from New Jersey to Missouri to see her oldest son, who had just completed basic military training. He called home on September 11 to say he didn't know what was going to happen or where he would be sent, and he really needed to see his family. The woman had never been on a long bus trip before, but she gathered her mother-in-law and younger son and headed for Missouri. Speaking of Afghans, she said, "They're not all terrorists. There's terrorists in this country, too." And then, "Violence just breeds more violence."

A banker in Youngstown, Ohio, said: "There's hate all over the world, like white supremacists, or the Ku Klux Klan. The entire world has to band together to fight it, it's our responsibility. But we shouldn't go after innocent people, that's the important thing."

In the Youngstown bus station, a group of young men talked about their community's response to the attacks. "Maybe this will bring us together, people of all colors. There hasn't been a single death in the 'hood since this happened. Usually there's deaths every day."

And a man from rural Utah paused in the middle of our conversation, and then, out of the blue, as if thinking out loud, said "Allah, Buddha, Jesus...maybe we're all worshipping the same god and we just don't know it."

Six days of talking to Americans in restaurants, bus stations, and on sidewalks left me with the sense of a river of strength and openheartedness running through this country. If our political leaders can be influenced by public opinion, it is possible to hope that the empathy awakened by this tragedy can be transformed into actual changes in foreign policy.

—Sarah Creider

Sarah Creider grew up in rural Pennsylvania. She moved to the San Francisco Bay Area after college and now works at an independent publishing company. She has been practicing at the San Francisco Zen Center for a year.

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

❖

Choosing Nonviolence

by Annette Herskovits

"The choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence, the choice is between nonviolence and nonexistence." These words of Martin Luther King became frighteningly real this fall as our president began his "war against terrorism"—a war he said might reach every corner of the world and last for years—and as rage against the U.S. rose among Muslims in many places with every day of bombing.

With the collapse of the Taliban and their brutal rule, it may seem that violence has "worked." It is wonderful to see photographs of unveiled Afghan women, smiling. But the "success" won by violence almost always ignores destructive consequences. In the words of nonviolence advocate Michael Nagler, "Somewhere, somehow, violence will always hurt, while somewhere, somehow, nonviolence will always heal."

The violence continues as the factions in the Northern Alliance fight each other. And even if peace comes to Afghanistan, many will die of hunger because, during the bombing, no food could come to valleys that are now blocked by snow. The children who screamed through the night during the bombing of Kabul have been permanently scarred. "Bomblets" of cluster bombs lie on the ground waiting to explode. And terrorism is no less a threat: Muslims have been humiliated once again by U.S. power, and the United States bought the support of Pakistan—home to many disaffected fundamentalist youth—by selling it arms.

So it is essential that we, engaged Buddhists, work with other nonviolence advocates to articulate concrete alternatives to war. A Gallup poll showed that support for military action after September 11 dropped when other choices were offered.

Many nonviolence activists agree that terrorism should be dealt with through the United Nations. This would require U.S. support for a U.N.-controlled police force and tribunal. International law gives the Security Council the authority (and responsibility) to restore international peace and security. Member states can act alone only in self-defense, and there is some question as to whether the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan can be considered self-defense. Extending the war to other "rogue" states—Iraq, Lybia, Syria, etc.—would qualify even less as self-defense.

We must insist that the U.S. ratify the International Criminal Court Treaty, signed by President Clinton, which President Bush seems determined to "unsign."

We should also ask our government to support an international ban on sales of weapons to zones of conflict.

Then, there is the question of Arab grievances. "The Arabs sense they have not only been scorned by the U.S. but considered somewhat less than human," said Dan Tschirgi, a political scientist at Cairo's American University. Johan Galtung, the father of "peace studies," proposes the U.S. demonstrate sincere respect for Islam by

1) withdrawing U.S. troops from Saudi Arabia, the Muslims' holy land (imagine Islamic troops in Vatican City);

2) lifting the sanctions on Iraq, responsible for some 1.2 million deaths, a large proportion of these young children;

3) urging former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to apologize for saying the Iraqi deaths were a price worth paying, a statement now circulating throughout the Muslim world;

4) starting a dialogue with Iran in response to Iran's President Mohammad Khatami's call for negotiations, which the U.S. has ignored;

5) pressing Israel to work in good faith toward the creation of a viable Palestinian state.

Such actions would do more to contain Muslim extremism than a war that rains suffering on civilians.

In any case, there is much evidence that this war may be as much about ensuring the West's access to Central Asia's oil and gas reserves as it is about fighting terrorism. Last May, President Bush declared that the nation is running out of energy, and his spokesman explained that reducing energy consumption "is a big no...The president believes...that it should be the goal of policy makers to protect the American way of life...The American way of life is a blessed one." This may stand out as a particularly crude attempt to disguise greed and selfishness as goodness rewarded, but the country's unrestrained appetite for oil has driven U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East for decades.

There are signs that the September attacks may have made some Americans curious about why so much of the world resents U.S. power. As a man in the street in Egypt told an American reporter, "Everyone knows that America's policies lack justice." But many Americans know little of their own country's foreign policy—the more than 60 military interventions since 1945; the supplying of weapons to almost anyone able to pay, sometimes to both sides in a conflict; and the consuming of 60 percent of the planet's resources, while billions go without basic necessities.

As long as such violence is perpetrated, the lives of all of us will be in jeopardy. Pacifist Coleman McCarthy called upon the United States to say, after the terrorist attacks: "We forgive you. Please forgive us." This may be an unrealistic suggestion, but it contains a deep lesson that many Americans may be ready to listen to.

May we, Buddhists and others, together, imagine manifold ways to disarm the appeal of war; may we put these into practice with a gentle mind in the face of opposition. ❖

For information on various nonviolence groups, contact The Other Side, 2000 W. Apsley, Philadelphia, PA 19144, *www.theotherside.org/resources*; and The Nonviolence Web at *www.nonviolence.org.*

Annette Herskovits writes on political issues and human rights, and practices at the Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley.

What We Can Do

1) Be peace yourself.

Take the time to stop, breathe, and notice your feelings and reactions. In the wake of September 11th's tragedy and the spiraling cycle of violence since then, face your own sense of helplessness and powerlessness.

But don't stop there. Consider how your every word and interaction carries the potential for peace or war. The gift of engaged spirituality is the invitation to begin from a place of peace within ourselves, a center of action beyond dualities of good and evil, liberal and conservative. Nurture your soul with readings that water this deep desire; one of the best is Thich Nhat Hanh's *Being Peace.*

2) Cultivate an environment of peace and tolerance in your community.

Stand up for and speak out for groups that are bearing the brunt of ignorance and hatred. See the Web site of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, *www.adc.org,* for ideas about how to help. You may also want to contact a local mosque and ask what kind of support they would find useful.

3) Stay in relationship with those with a different point of view from yours.

Don't assume that there is one "right" Buddhist perspective or spiritual position. The complexities of the situation are beyond any simple answer or solution. Respect each other's questioning of responses. See Rosa Zubizarreta's article on page 28. Other reading suggestions: *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone and *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion* by Marshall Rosenberg.

4) Don't just sit there, do something.

Socially engaged Buddhists sit down, and they also stand up. It can feel good to take action, and there are numerous ways to be of service and help alleviate suffering:

• As the winter snows move into Afghanistan, millions of refugees are in need of food, medicine, and warm clothing. You might organize a blanket collection in your community, or make donations to UNICEF or Doctors Without Borders.

• Suffering continues at Ground Zero in New York City. Consider giving help to those who may be underserved, like the thousands in the service industry who lost jobs. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has set up a fund to assist workers and their families affected by the tragedy. Mail contributions to SEIU September 11th Relief Fund, c/o SEIU, 1313 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005.

• Organize a weekly vigil or another kind of gathering, as some BPF groups have done (for a calendar of events, see *www.bpf.org/9-11gatherings.html*). Gatherings could include meditation, music, time to talk in small groups, readings, or speakers. Also see *www.bpf.org/9-11otheractions.html* for actions that dharma centers and BPF Chapters have taken.

5) Educate yourself.

Find out more about Islam and the history and culture of the Middle East by attending teach-ins and by speaking with people of Middle Eastern descent. Find out more about the causes and conditions that have led to the current crisis. Study the history of the U.S.'s oil needs. Reading suggestions: *Islam: A Short History* by Karen Armstrong, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* by Edward Said, and *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* by Ahmed Rashid.

6) Contact your government representatives.

U.S. mail has traditionally been the most effective way to express your opinion to your elected representative, but the threat of anthrax has changed this, at least for the time being. Fax and phone are more reliable. E-mail petitions are not taken seriously—don't be lulled into inaction because you've "signed" an electronic petition. The Friends Committee on National Legislation *(www.fcnl.org)* highlights important legislative issues and makes it easy to contact your senator and congressperson. To contact the Bush Administration, call the White House Comment Desk: 202/456-1111. Why not do this as a daily ritual?

7) If you are of draft age, consider your options.

If you are a young man between 18 and 26, U.S. law requires that you register for the draft. The interview with a Buddhist in the National Guard on page 35 may help you sort through your feelings about military involvement. The American Friends Service Committee provides excellent information about your options at their Web site: *www.afsc.org/youthmil.* You can also reach AFSC by phone: 215/241-7176 or fax: 215/241-7177.

8) Make your sangha a place of safety and refuge.

In the same way that we would pull together as a community to plan for a natural disaster, it would be wise to make preparations for acts of war and terrorism. Coordinate to make sure there is enough food and water on hand in the event of a crisis, and discuss how best to contact each other in an emergency. This can be done from a place of wisdom rather than panic. Realize that people's fears are very easily triggered now, and find a way to act from non-fear in order to offer stability.

9) Find joy and balance.

If there was ever a time when this world needs your compassion, intelligence, and courage, this is it. But you can only be of service if you have not burned yourself out. During the Vietnam War, Thich Nhat Hanh and his community went out every day to help those who were affected by bombing. Every week, they stopped for a day of mindfulness in the midst of the chaos. Do the same for yourself—a day out of the week, an hour out of the day, a breath out of the hour. Read writings that inspire you and give you strength and sustenance. Take care of yourself and one another. ❖

☞ Please note: We recommend two back issues of *TW* as particularly relevant now: "Fundamentalism" (Fall 1995) and "Hatred" (Summer 1997). Available from the BPF office for $6/each.

Human Rights

by Judith Stronach

We are pleased to initiate a new column here. In each issue of Turning Wheel, *starting with this one, Judith Stronach's human rights column will highlight the case of one person whose human rights are being violated and who needs international attention and support.*

A Buddhist monk in Vietnam needs our help. Thich Thien Minh has been imprisoned since 1979 for exercising his right to freedom of religion. He is said to have protested to the authorities when the pagoda where he practiced was taken over by the government. (It was later razed to the ground.) He was arrested initially for "attempting to overthrow the government" and given a life sentence. In 1986 he was given a second life sentence for attempting to escape from prison. Neither trial conformed to accepted international standards. Both were held *in camera* (privately, without legal counsel), he was not allowed to choose a defense lawyer, and he had no right to appeal. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said that he was a victim of arbitrary detention.

Thich Thien Minh is a member of the unofficial Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), whose members have long been targeted by the government. Prior to the establishment of the current government in 1976, UBCV ran a variety of social projects such as schools, orphanages, day-care centers, and self-help projects, and engaged in political activities. Since then, its activities have been severely restricted and members have been officially harrassed.

During his time in a "re-education" camp, Thich Thien Minh is reported to have endured harsh conditions, including long periods of solitary confinement, shackling by hand and foot, and hard labor. Despite this, he has continued to speak out against the injustice of his detention and the conditions under which he and other political prisoners are being held.

Please write letters calling for immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Thich Thien Minh and other members of the UBCV who are being held solely for practicing their religious beliefs. Send appeals to: Phan Van Khai, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, Hoang Hoa Tham, Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and Nguyen Dinh Loc, Minister, Ministry of Justice, 25 Cat Linh, Ha Noi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam. ❖

This information comes from Amnesty International.

Judith Stronach is a teacher living in Berkeley, California. Since September 11, as part of the antiwar effort, she has been counseling conscientious objectors.

ERRATA: In the last *Turning Wheel*, the name of our new administrative director was misspelled. Her correct name is Joo Eun Lee.

How Can I Be a Passionate Pacifist?

by Diana Lion

My friend Jimmy, one of the regulars in our jail meditation class, was talking about the responses in his jail to the September 11 events. He said reactions range from apathy to glee. Many don't care about the terrorist attacks. They see themselves as victims of a society that didn't care about them before they landed in jail and ignores them now that they are incarcerated.

When they hear the national anthem on TV, some of the guys speak of feeling repulsed, others accept the heightened patriotism, but nobody embraces it. Most see it as political jockeying.

Jimmy is lonely because he cannot talk to fellow prisoners about his knee-jerk desire for retribution. Part of him wants to see the terrorists get smashed. He is trying to figure out how karma works. He knows he's in jail paying for what he did—shouldn't the terrorists pay, too?

He used to be a black-and-white kind of guy. Now, since starting a meditation practice, he's seeing shades of gray, and it makes everything more complicated. Jimmy's family talks about how America bears some responsibility for the hatred directed toward it, but Jimmy doesn't see that he played any part in inviting the hatred. He wonders how he can join his fervent desire for justice with a commitment to nonviolence. He wonders how he can be a passionate pacifist.

A few days after September 11, all the women in one of the yards at Chowchilla were marched outside. They sang "God Bless America" and each was given a tiny American flag to wear. They are mostly women of color from poor and working class backgrounds, marginalized since long before their incarceration. Yet they appreciated the opportunity to come together as a community (rare in prison, for security reasons), though I suspect the irony of the compulsory patriotism was not lost on them.

A man on Death Row described how the guys in his cellblock have been quieter and kinder since the September events. The atmosphere there is normally charged with the possibility of violence. Given the added emotional volatility since the terrorist attacks, these men have made an unspoken pact to be more caring toward each other. They have also learned, mostly from their TVs, of a general increase in respect and gratitude on the part of most Americans toward people in uniform, after the heroic work by firefighters and police on September 11. This feeling has even extended to their correctional officers, with a corresponding softening in relations between them and prisoners.

Some of the guys in a prison zendo recently discussed their feelings about September 11. They sounded like the cross section of people in my regular zendo—though a bit more radical—echoing the range of bewilderment, fear, anger, and subtle analysis that I have heard from many people outside prison walls. Surprising to find the same opinions from "hardened felons" as from my other dharma friends. Or is it?

These are some of the voices we haven't seen reported in our newspapers or heard on TV.

Many of us in the peace movement are asking: what can we do next? I have no final answers, but am thinking about two simple things: practicing generosity and listening. We can follow the example of our sisters at Central California Women's Facility, who raised nearly $15,000 for the Red Cross. These women, if lucky enough to have a prison job, make between 7 and 25 cents an hour. What proportion of our salaries would that correspond to, and what kind of difference might that make if directed toward projects designed to prevent some of the conditions that lead to crime and terrorism in the first place?

As for listening, how about pairs of us sitting at bus stops and outside stores, willing to engage in dialogue with folks, to listen and share perspectives—especially with people with whom we don't agree? Many people are afraid, and have been told that the only way we can find more security is to build higher fences and more prisons, and to create more separation between "us" and "them"—the gangs, the criminals, the terrorists. How many of us have eaten a meal with a gang member? How many of us know a prisoner's parents or siblings? How many of us can empathize with the anger of folks we don't agree with on the bombing?

As I write this last part, I am remembering my last conversation with Jimmy. He said, "I'm so grateful for this practice. In here, every day is September 11 for me. When people want to kill me I send them lovingkindness." I think to myself how grateful I too am for the practice during this time of no definitive answers. We can listen to each other and see what emerges. ❖

Diana Lion is the co-director of the Prison Project. She enjoys riding her bike to work.

Attention California residents! We need 100,000 signatures for a California moratorium on executions, by May 1, 2002. Visit the Web site at *www.californiamoratorium.org* or e-mail Diana at <prisons@bpf.org> to get petitions.

The Nuns of Tokeiji Temple

by Diane Ames

Whether a doctor or priest should try to help a victim of domestic violence was by no means an easy call in Tokugawa Japan (1600–1853). For one thing, Confucian ethics did not, as a practical matter, encourage it. Even if an abused wife managed to get medical attention, she was not likely to be frank with her doctor about the cause of her injuries; a decent woman was never supposed to complain to outsiders about her husband. There was little anybody could do about the victim's situation in any case. The authorities were scarcely likely to interfere in what was considered a private family matter, and it would have been considered outrageous to advise a wife to leave her husband. Confucianism held that a woman must spend her entire life in the power of one man or another: first her father (who arranged her marriage), then her husband, and finally, if she was widowed, her own adult son. It followed that although her husband or father-in-law could dissolve her marriage unilaterally for any reason, a wife could not legally seek a divorce, and it would have threatened the social order for her to walk out the door. In short, everybody seemed to subscribe to a code that forced abused wives to stay with their abusers—everybody except the nuns of Tokeiji Temple in Kamakura, who in effect turned their convent into a battered women's shelter.

Over the centuries, these nuns somehow established the principle that if a wife managed to seek sanctuary in Tokeiji, became a Buddhist nun, and remained in the temple for three years, she was in effect divorced. This was considered a desperate thing to do, and not only because Buddhist nuns led such austere lives. The woman's flight to the temple could be perilous, with no one questioning the right of her husband's family to chase her all the way. Likewise no one questioned the right of the husband's family to keep the children and to prevent them from ever seeing their runaway mother again, no matter what her reason for leaving had been (a consideration that induced many abused women to leave the temple after finding refuge there and to return to their husbands). Yet the popular literature of the day tells us that desperate wives kept arriving at the temple door, often with such serious injuries that the nuns had to send for a doctor at once. Nobody doubted that the nuns of Tokeiji, many of whom had themselves been battered wives, saved many lives by their determined adherence to the principle that a Buddhist temple must be a place of refuge for all beings in danger, even abused married women. ❖

Source: Sachiko Kaneko and Robert E. Morrell, "Tokeiji: Kamakura's 'Divorce Temple'," in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, edited by George J. Tanabe, Princeton University Press, 1999.

Diane Ames, writer and editor, has been a member of the Buddhist Churches of America, a Shin Buddhist organization, since 1978.

Statement from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship on the actions of September 11, 2001

[The following statement was written immediately after September 11. It has been widely circulated by way of the BPF Web site, by e-mail, and by hand. Painful events of the last three months—bombing, commando attacks, anthrax in the mail, the rollback of civil liberties, and the routing of the Taliban in Afghanistan's cities—have overtaken these first words. But I feel that the call for patience, reflection, and generosity is still as much needed today as it was on September 11. —A.S.]

Our hearts are broken open by last week's terrible acts of violence in the United States. We offer our deepest condolences to families and friends of the thousands of innocent victims of the September 11 attacks. We can only condemn such acts that defy any sense of the sacredness of all human life. There is no justification for wanton killing. In our grief, fiery images of destruction are etched upon our minds. It seems to many of us that things will never be quite the same in this country. But here in the U.S. and around the world, things never really were as they seemed. The illusion of peace and the comforts of privilege are like a thin curtain, so easily torn. Now our leaders loudly beat the drums of war. It scares us. Our hope at Buddhist Peace Fellowship is that the leaders and people of our nation will pause to look deeply and think clearly before they step in time to this drumbeat.

In the tense moment between violent action and violent reaction we invoke several simple teachings of the Buddha. The first is that all beings are our family. Twenty-five hundred years ago the Buddha said "Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; by love alone is hatred appeased. This is an Eternal Law." (The Dhammapada,Verse 5). This same sentiment can be found in every great spiritual tradition. In the middle of the twentieth century Gandhi put it even more concisely: "An eye for eye only ends up making the whole world blind." The most painful thing about this teaching is that we need to hear it at all. If we are one family—victims, perpetrators, innocent, guilty—then each of us is potentially capable of terrible and noble action. We must first taste our fear and anger, without rashly retaliating and escalating the violence. This is very hard work and we need each other's help. Then let us seek what is noble and just in even the most damaged of us.

The second principle is that each effect has its web of causes and conditions. This is the law of karma. Nations deny mutual causality by ascribing blame to others—terrorists, rogue nations, and so on. Singling out a particular enemy, we short-circuit the introspection necessary to see our own karmic responsibility for the terrible acts that have befallen us. We re-create ourselves as mirror images of those we think of as the enemy. I am not justifying their horrific acts in any way. But in the Middle East we have demonized peoples and an entire faith, Islam, for many generations. At the same time we have curried favor with corrupt regimes so we might suck the oil we desperately crave from their lands. In Israel and Palestine, the legacy of colonialism and our national guilt for inaction against the holocaust has until now only fed the flames of violence between peoples. Until we acknowledge the causes we bear responsibility for, at home or in the Middle East, last week's violence will make no more sense than an earthquake or cyclone, except that in its human origin it turns us toward rage and revenge.

The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti offers this teaching about the lives of Bodhisattvas, enlightening beings: In order to help the living beings, they voluntarily descend into the hells which are attached to all the inconceivable buddha-fields.

We are now in hell, and it seems we must go deeper. The events of September 11, their prelude and aftermath, are a rare and terrible gift in our hands, a broken heart. When our hearts are broken open we may find a moment of real opportunity. Only out of suffering comes understanding. Great suffering can turn to great compassion and beneficial action. We pray for the healing and turning of the perpetrators of these crimes whose wounded hearts and clouded minds have created vast suffering in the present and into the future. We count on the wisdom, patience, and lovingkindness of the world's leaders, that they may be just and exercise restraint and care in all their actions. From this day on, let us rededicate ourselves to peacefulness and nonviolence so that the power of human goodness will overcome the folly and delusion of violence.

How can we become a real friend to all the world's people? Instead of brandishing and trading expensive weapons, can we share our wealth to feed the hungry, house the homeless, provide medicine for the sick, heal the wounds of war and hatred? Can we end our theft of the world's resources? Can we see that every human life is precious, and stop the political and economic manipulation of others? Such bold steps, acts of wholesome letting go, might at last bring us real security and help us find our true family, all humankind. Let us stop and breathe and step forward toward life in the midst of unimagined grief. ❖

—Alan Senauke, 15 September 2001

A Buddhist Response to 9/11

Three Teachers Comment on Recent Events

Questions keep coming up in my mind—and, I assume, in yours—about terrorism, and violence, and the war we find ourselves in. So, in late October, I called three Buddhist teachers and asked each one a different question. I was hoping they would bring a dharmic perspective to these troubling times, and I was not disappointed.

—Susan Moon

Pat Enkyo O'Hara

TW: Your Zen Center is right there, close to Ground Zero. How do you, as a Buddhist teacher, respond to the violence of what's going on now?

Pat Enkyo O'Hara: It's devastating. I find it very difficult to talk about. We still smell the destruction—we're just a few blocks away. We couldn't get into our zendo for a week after the attacks and we had to sit in the park.

Right now, the window's open, and there is that smell—it's a peculiar smell, kind of like burned insulation, or rubber. And smell is such a primary sense. You can't *not* know, even if the sky is blue, that something dreadful has happened not very far away. The ash and dust gets onto the zafus and everything. And you're aware that all this dust is—well, guess what happened to those four thousand people…

We were very fortunate that we didn't lose anybody directly, but some sangha members did. This kind of brutality goes on all over the world all the time, but now it's here, and now we know what it's like. It's not an idea that we talk about on Sunday morning; it's not like AIDS in Africa. It's like AIDS here in the Village, only it's a bomb. There's nothing abstract about it.

One of the things we do is that right after our regular service we read the names of those who are dead and missing. We got the list of names from the *New York Times* Web site, and we pass the list around, and each time we read a certain number of names. We're gradually making our way down the list. We always include the name of at least one of the perpetrators, so that we don't forget the humiliation and despair of these people. Interestingly enough, the *New York Times* list does not include the perpetrators, as if they weren't on the plane, too. We have their pictures on our altar for deceased people, along with pictures of all the others, and we have some ashes that I picked up down there.

People here are traumatized, and very frightened. We're doing a lot of meditation that's very physically oriented, around whatever is coming up for us, whether it's sadness or numbness. And after we meditate we do council work: we sit together and each person will talk a little bit about how they're feeling. And, you know, not all Buddhists are on the left.

It's important to let people speak on a regular basis, even daily, about how they are feeling about all of this. And we need to teach ourselves to bear witness to that, so that we don't begin to demonize either the Muslim fundamentalists or the people in this country who are afraid, and who are being warmongers. Essentially the practice is to be able to trade places with everybody as we go along, and to continually bear witness to our own pain.

In our council circle we talk about unexpected feelings, too. For a time you couldn't come into the Village without an identity card, and suddenly the Village became a very pleasant place to live. There were no cars, just the people who live here, walking in the streets. You feel like you shouldn't have these feelings, in the midst of all this suffering.

The sangha has been bonding closely as a result of this. And we have a lot of therapists and bodyworkers who have been doing volunteer work with people who are very angry, or very destroyed, like firemen and policemen. They have had such a loss.

We've also had new people coming to the sangha looking for spiritual sustenance. The place is packed.

I'm reminded of that classic story of the Buddha. He said that when someone in the next village is hurt, a really aware practitioner will start to practice, and to realize the truth of life and death. But when someone in your own village is hurt, then *most* people will begin to realize the truth of impermanence. Well, that's what's happening here; I'm seeing lots of people I haven't seen for years. And we're all being reminded that this suffering is bigger than any of us; we're being reminded of our interconnection. I've got my light on right now, and I'm using oil, indirectly. I'm part of the whole thing.

Constantly sharing feelings with one another, and hearing things you didn't want to hear from other people—that's been a rich practice. We do not know how to respond, really. We try. If somebody needs help we'll take care of them, but there's no set ideology to fall back on.

Just walking down the street, you walk by the firehouse, and you see all the photographs. You feel it—it's in the air, and in people's faces. And so we really try to use this experience as a way to get in touch with the suffering that's going on all over the world. ❖

Pat Enkyo O'Hara is the Zen teacher at the Village Zendo in Manhattan, New York.

We still smell the destruction—we're just a few blocks away. And smell is such a primary sense. You can't *not* know, even if the sky is blue, that something dreadful has happened not very far away.

Caitriona Reed

When I see bumper stickers that say, "God bless America," I want to roll down my window and ask the people who have them, "What would you have God do for the rest of the world?"

TW: How do you talk to people with whom you disagree about the current crisis?

Caitriona Reed: I haven't had any serious disagreements with people I'm close to, but I make a point of talking to strangers. I feel it's our responsibility to keep talking. We must keep this dialogue going and encourage people who are afraid to speak up. I started out by suggesting to people I meet that if people in other parts of the world are that angry at the U.S., maybe we should find out why. My attempt is to open up some kind of political discussion. I engage strangers in stores with, "How're you doing? How're you feeling?"

I said to somebody in a grocery store the second week after 9/11, "People seem pretty subdued. Do you notice that?" She said, "I can't tell because I'm feeling so bad myself." And I left it at that.

When I see bumper stickers that say, "God bless America," I want to roll down my window and ask the people who have them, "What would you have God do for the rest of the world?" But I don't. The traffic light always changes before I have time.

I feel that it's important to engage in dialogue because—as we know if we have traveled much, or if we come from outside of the country—the level of geopolitical/historical information in this country is excruciatingly awful. And isn't it also the work of a teacher of awareness to engage others on that level of geopolitical awareness? I hope so.

Engagement is very human and straightforward and on the heart level. But I know that to launch into a dialogue with a stranger takes a little extra energy. It's bodhisattva work. Fortunately I've become fairly gregarious in recent years, so it's not that hard for me to do.

I also talk with my Iranian, Afghan, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi neighbors in Los Angeles and elsewhere on my travels. I will check in and ask, "How're you doing? Are you okay?" I wear a pendant around my neck with the opening lines of the Koran on it.

The Indians at my local coffee shop told me that the Bangladeshis at the 7-11 have been harassed. This is on Westwood Blvd. in West L.A. where you would not expect racism, or nationalism (or whatever it is we are experiencing), to raise its head.

Across the street from my office there's an Iranian grocery store where I often go, and the man who works there is an elderly, distinguished Persian gentleman. I told him, "On behalf of my fellow Americans, I want to apologize for any hassles you might have had." There was something gracious in the way he received that. With his daughter I have had conversations in which we both disclose our grief and fear as well as our discomfort with the U.S. response.

TW: Here's another question: Is kindness a tool with any usefulness or relevance in dealing with terrorism?

Caitriona: There's so much unkindness behind us already, and it's too late to expect the U.S. to start being kind in this situation. My feeling is that U.S. foreign policy has been the very epitome of unkindness for decades. Our work now must be to help avert or lessen the impact of the next crisis. To work on a personal level, to speak and live with kindness.

So for me kindness has to do with bringing economic and social justice issues into my dharma teaching and asking questions. My hope is that those who hear what I say will become part of a greater collective awareness and will influence what we do collectively.

We always have to default to kindness, whatever the circumstances. And of course, it's important that we're kind to ourselves, that we pay attention, that we take time out for ourselves, and don't just go about furiously organizing things.

Perhaps our kindness is also in not using our meditation practice merely to distance ourselves from difficult feelings and responsibilities. To look at causes and consequences. I would hope that this is always so, but certainly now more than ever.

Kindness isn't a warm, fuzzy feeling, but it is deeply rooted in the basic teaching of interdependent co-arising. Any action we might take toward the Taliban, for example, should be informed by knowing that the cadres of the Taliban were brought up as children in all-male refugee camps. They never had a mother or a sister. They never learned to read. They never could read the Koran. They were indoctrinated. They are broken people who were deprived of a childhood, like the Khmer Rouge, the children of Iraq, or the children in the inner cities here in the U.S. who are given guns at the age of eight. Understanding that is the beginning of kindness.

Perhaps there is a certain kindness, for those of us so ignorant of it, in studying the Koran. Anyone who loves the Buddhadharma would surely be moved by the beauty of the Koran and the exquisite expression of nonduality that is found in it. The all-pervading radiance of Allah corresponds to the dharmakya. And many of us already have a taste for the devotional nondual spirit of Islam through the Persian poet Rumi, now that he is so popular in the West.

As I understand it, every chapter of the Koran begins with, "In the name of Allah the Merciful and the Compassionate." Let's feel that visceral spaciousness that opens up in the name of God the Merciful and the Compassionate, that tells us that no matter

what happens, no matter what the challenges we have to face, each moment of our lives is a gift. ❖

Caitriona Reed is a Buddhist teacher rooted in both the Vietnamese Zen and Theravadin-Vipassana traditions, and a longtime BPF member. She and her partner, Michele Benzamin-Miki, are the founders and directors of Ordinary Dharma in Santa Monica and Manzanita Village Retreat Center in San Diego County.

Jack Kornfield

TW: How do we think about our personal safety in these scary times, and what do we say to people who are thinking about buying gas masks and Cipro?

Jack Kornfield: The Middle Eastern poet Hafiz says: "Fear is the cheapest room in the house. I'd like to see you in better living conditions." The whole of Buddha's teaching is an instruction for how we can step out of the small sense of self, the body of fear, and remember who we really are.

The insecurity that naturally comes from the terrorist attacks and the media frenzy that has followed them touches everyone. In particular, it touches the trauma that we carry, and our deepest fears. But the truth is that life *is* insecure, and has always been so, independent of what happened at the World Trade Center. The reality of existence is that it changes—that it is born, transforms, and dies. This is the central realization of the Buddha. So when people ask me about their fears, I remind them to breathe. I remind them to touch that place within that is timeless and compassionate, that can hold all the current events, and all the events of time. Otherwise we get lost in the small stories.

The real security is not found in gas masks or guns. Those amplify our fears and lead us down the road of insecurity. Real security is in returning to the understanding that—yes—there is suffering and danger, and—yes—there is tremendous beauty and tremendous possibility for compassion. When Mark Twain said, "My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes—most of which never happened," he was describing the false suffering of fear. Fear is always about something that hasn't happened yet. Of course we need to care for ourselves responsibly, and even to defend ourselves and those we love when necessary. For example, we live in an earthquake zone, and it's appropriate to get your house fitted for earthquakes. But from the information that I have, it seems that citywide poison gas is extremely unlikely at this time, and that a gas mask is not going to make you safer. To live a life of fear is to lose the freedom that is our birthright.

So much trauma has been touched off by this outer trauma that this now becomes more than ever the place that we have to practice. Our practice is to deal with our fears and our sorrow with tenderness, so that we don't project them out into the world. To the extent that we're willing to face our own pain, and only to that extent, can we be a source of peace for the world around us. So this is a really important time to do the inner work on the pain that has been activated: collectively, in our communities, through our meditation practice, through the support of trauma and healing work in whatever form it takes.

A lot of vulnerability has been activated by these events. I sit with people and I say "Breathe. Can you hold your fear with a tender compassion? Can you let the vulnerability be a place that invites presence and freedom, rather than closing up and looking for a gas mask and Cipro? Can you stay with what Alan Watts called 'the wisdom of insecurity?'"

Let's breathe. Let's look at how fear operates within ourselves, and then we can learn how it operates in the world outside us. This is the source of true compassion. ❖

Jack Kornfield has been a dharma teacher for more than 25 years. He is the founder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. His most recent book is After the Ecstasy, the Laundry.

Our practice is to deal with our fears and our sorrow with tenderness, so that we don't project them out into the world.

THE SAME SUNTAN

Burn
Every address for
God.

Any
Beloved
Who has just one color of hair,
One gender, one race,

The same suntan all the time,
One rule book,

Trust me when I say,

That man is not even
Half a god

And will only
Cause you

Grief.

—Hafiz

From *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz,* translated by Daniel Ladinsky (Compass, 1999)

Evil Is Not Absolute

by Robert Thurman

"No threat will keep freedom-loving people from defending freedom! And make no mistake about it: this is good versus evil. These are evildoers. They have no justification for their actions. There's no religious justification; there's no political justification. The only motivation is evil." —President George W. Bush

When you're a child, you attack the universe when it doesn't do what you want, but a mature person has to realize that you can't just indulge your gut feeling.

The word "evil" puts something completely incomprehensible, like the bombing of the World Trade Center, into a theological framework. People think, "Oh, right, it's evil," and that sort of settles it. The word makes people feel more comfortable. You feel you've struck a blow for the good. And if you use a weaker word, you are not showing sufficient condemnation of the terrible thing that has happened. You would be wishy-washy or milquetoasty if you didn't say "evil."

The danger is that you polarize the situation in absolute terms, and that kind of polarization inevitably leads to violence. When people feel that they have absolute good on their side, they project all evil onto the enemy, and their actions toward that enemy tend to be extremely exaggerated, like the blowing up of the World Trade Center.

The Muslim extremists call America "The Great Satan," a phrase coined by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Now President Bush is taking the idea of evil and turning it in the opposite direction.

According to Buddhist tradition, it's not a question of an absolute evil. It's a relative evil, and certainly one should adopt measures that are effective against it. Even violence can be justified according to some Buddhist traditions, if it's surgical violence, if it's healing violence. But if those who are dealing with evil are aware that they may have a dark side within themselves, they don't project all the evil outside of themselves, and they therefore restrain their own responses. And that's very critical at this time.

For example, if you can shoot down a plane that's about to plough into the World Trade Center—which would be an evil act in the sense that it would end the lives of the people in the plane—then you shoot down the plane in order to save the lives of the people in the building. You should use surgical violence to prevent greater violence, and nonviolent theory includes that. But you shouldn't deny that you're breaking some eggs on the way, and you should be sensitive to that. That understanding will cause you to minimize the violence as much as possible.

But if you decide that everything is evil, then what do you do? You might obliterate Afghanistan, and that would create more recruits for the fanatics on the other side. When you're a child, you attack the universe when it doesn't do what you want, but a mature person has to realize that you can't just indulge your gut feeling.

For a political leader of a country with a powerful military (a country that has not always used that power wisely) I think it's a little irresponsible to constantly harp on the term "evil." We cannot afford such a dualistic position in an era of nuclear weapons and biological warfare, with nations inhabited by people of many ethnicities and religions all mixed up together. It's a much more complicated world than it used to be.

Bush's father blasted Iraq and he didn't even get rid of Saddam Hussein, who was the devil of that time. Now, in turn, our New York City is being blown up. How do we respond? There are a billion Muslims, and we can't exterminate them all. The terrorists who hate the U.S. government are not a nation state that we can fight against in the old way. We do not want them to continue to blow up our cities. Moderation and dialogue are crucial in such a world.

Reagan referred to the Russians as "the evil empire." And following from that, the CIA, during his administration, armed the Taliban and other Muslim extremists to fight the Russians in Afghanistan in the '80s. Osama bin Laden and company were part of that movement.

The terrorist attacks on September 11 were evil, and Bush is not wrong to say so. It's all right to use the term, but not to harp on it. That kind of extremism blows up in our face in the modern world. The dangers are magnified by the incredibly powerful technologies that we Americans are largely responsible for releasing into the world. We're proud of our high-tech American technologies and we have to be mature enough to use them wisely.

What you put out into the universe will come back to you in some form. Karma is not a mysterious term—it just refers to the cause and effect of your actions. It's like the old Western expression, "He who lives by the sword dies by the sword." ❖

[The preceding piece is based on a radio interview on the subject of evil, on the program *The Connection,* on WBUR-FM/Boston, on September 26, 2001.]

Robert Thurman is Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University. He is a scholar, author, and activist for Tibet. He is also co-founder and president of Tibet House.

We Have to Bear It

by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

As everyone who knows me knows, I am a big fan of zazen practice. But there are times when life becomes so stark that there is no thought of meditation practice—just bearing witness to what is is enough.

When I heard of the bombing of the World Trade Center, I tried to imagine what it might have been like to have been on one of the four hijacked airplanes—what terror would have flooded the body, how the heart must have been beating uncontrollably, how the feeling one takes for granted, of a self grounded in an ordered reality, must have all of a sudden flown away.

And what did the terrorists feel? An apocalyptic religious high? Some perverse joy of martyrdom, as the early Christian or Jewish martyrs might have felt? Elation? Pride? Panic? Ambivalence? Or the grim precision of carrying out a task long since committed to?

Later that week I went to San Francisco to an appointment at Embarcadero Plaza. It was the first time since September 11 that I had been among tall buildings. And I felt a palpable anxiety. An airplane could rip into these buildings just as easily as a knife into flesh.

That same day, I heard The Rev. Franklin Graham, Billy's son and heir to his religious empire, talking about how Muslims hate us Americans because we are Christians, and how we all need to "wake up." I became jittery, and angry.

In all my dharma classes that week I had been planning to finish up my series of talks on the Surangama Sutra, a wild Buddhist text that talks about the intricacies of deep meditation practice. But it was really impossible to do that.

In the Surangama sutra we hear of Kuan Yin, the bodhisattva who hears these cries with perfect serenity, understanding that they are all manifestations of enlightenment. Because of this she remains peaceful, and is able to offer exactly the right kind of help to beings, each one a different help, according to the situation. I suppose we are all Kuan Yin. But also we aren't Kuan Yin. We are human beings—and so when we confront human violence, we cringe. We aren't serene. We feel grief and terror. If we are human we feel these things, and we *want* to feel them.

Maybe we have to be both: Kuan Yin, who accepts what is with equanimity, and also poor human beings, who sometimes find that what happens is unbearable. And yet we have to bear it, because there isn't any alternative.

The day before the terrible bombing I was at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, at a meeting about racism and diversity in the sangha. In the meeting we heard many expressions by people of color about their frustration and their suffering—suffering that is often hidden from people of the dominant culture, who have no idea what their brothers and sisters go through in the course of any ordinary day in America. One African American woman said to the group, "Racism isn't just eye holes cut into white sheets. In its most insidious form it is simply privilege itself. When you live in a world structured so that some races dominate over others, some races enjoy peace and prosperity while others suffer terribly, then unthinking enjoyment of your privilege is itself a form of racism."

And this is what is so upsetting to me about the remarks I have been hearing our government officials

East Jerusalem, January 2001. Photo by Alan Senauke.

make. When the actions taken in response to the violence come out of a blindness to the social forces that have given rise to that violence, then I think those actions will be ineffective. I have seen this so many times in my lifetime: violence inspiring violence that gives rise to more violence; wars that end temporarily, only to produce new wars.

Maybe we have to be both:
Kuan Yin, who accepts what is with equanimity,
and also poor human beings, who sometimes find
that what happens is unbearable.

The people who hijacked those airplanes and murdered so many people were themselves people. They did what they did because of their damaged hearts and twisted minds. But their hearts became damaged and their minds twisted for a reason. There isn't any separate evil out there that I can find, blame for all this, and root out of the human family. There's just one world, one human race. The evil that happens happens for a reason.

Human beings act with violence and aggression and delusion because others have acted with violence and aggression and delusion against them and their families. The violence outside of us is a projection of the violence and pain we feel inside.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that my moment of anger as I listened to Rev. Graham is the equivalent of flying a plane into the World Trade Center. Nevertheless, if I want to stop the violence in this world, I need to begin by understanding that the causes and conditions of violence are part of the world in which I live and participate. If I externalize these causes and conditions, scapegoating some outside force or person, some evil in which I have no part, and if I then, to alleviate the grief and the impotence that I feel, try to stamp out that evil once and for all, this will never work.

The disaster in New York and Washington is terrible. But there have been so many terrible things. Almost every nation in the world has felt terrible things like this: the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the bombing of London, of Dresden, of countless other cities; the bombing of Iraq, the decimation of Vietnam, the Holocaust, the genocide of the native peoples of the Americas, of Africans, of Armenians, of Balkan peoples. All the lives lost in those places and times were just as important as the lives we lost on September 11. We cannot forget about any of them.

When I said that sometimes the starkness of reality makes meditation practice seem irrelevant, I did not mean meditation practice itself, I meant the preciousness of it, all the interesting and artistic refinements. That's what reality sometimes blows out of the water, especially during times like this. But meditation practice itself—the simple practice of being quiet, and, if possible, being quiet together, in community, for our mutual support; the practice of listening deeply to the cries of the world and opening to what we hear—that practice is more relevant now than ever. There are, in a crisis, a million ways to help, and we all should help in whatever way we can. I can give this talk today. This is my way. But beyond help, we need to bear witness to what has happened. To take it in, imagine it, feel it, grieve over it, accept it, not accept it, understand it, fail to understand it, and comfort each other in that. To do that we need to sit, we need the expansiveness of our sitting, as well as of our chanting and our prayers. It seems absolutely essential. ❖

[Based on a dharma talk given at an Everyday Zen all-day sitting on September 16, 2001.]

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A New Holy War against Evil?

by David R. Loy

Americans have always understood the United States to be a special and uniquely privileged place. In many parts of the globe the twentieth century has been particularly horrible, but the continental United States has been so insulated from these tragedies that we Americans have come to think of ourselves as immune to them—although we have often contributed to them.

That confidence has been abruptly shattered. We have discovered that the borderless world of globalization allows us no refuge from the hatred and violence that continue to haunt many parts of the world—again, hatred and violence that we have often sponsored.

Talk of vengeance makes many of us uneasy, but naturally we have the impulse to strike back. A few days after the attacks, President Bush declared that the United States was called to a new worldwide mission "to rid the world of evil." If anything is evil, those terrorist attacks were evil. I share that sentiment. But when Bush says he wants to rid the world of evil, alarm bells go off in my mind, because that is what Hitler and Stalin also wanted to do.

Of course I'm not defending either of those evildoers, just commenting on their intentions. Both were trying to perfect this world by eliminating what they saw as its impurities. The world could be made good only by destroying its evil elements.

Paradoxically, then, one of the main causes of evil in this world has been human attempts to eradicate evil.

As Joshua Teitelbaum said in the *Washington Post,* "Osama bin Laden looks at the world in very stark, black-and-white terms. For him, the U.S. represents the forces of evil that are bringing corruption and domination into the Islamic world."

What bin Laden sees as good—an Islamic *jihad* against an impious and materialistic imperialism—Bush sees as evil. What Bush sees as good—the U.S. military defending freedom—bin Laden sees as evil. They are two different versions of the same holy war between good and evil.

Do not misunderstand me here. I am not equating them morally. But we must understand how this dualistic way of thinking deludes not only Islamic terrorists but also us, and therefore brings more suffering into the world.

This dualism of good-versus-evil is attractive because it is a simple way of looking at the world. And most of us are quite familiar with it. Although it is not unique to the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—it is especially important for them. It is one of the reasons why the conflicts among them have been so difficult to resolve peacefully: adherents tend to identify their own religion as good and demonize the others as evil.

It is difficult to turn the other cheek when we view the world through these spectacles, because if the world is a battleground of good and evil forces, the evil that is in the world must be fought by any means necessary.

The secularization of the modern West did not eliminate this tendency. In some ways it has intensified it, because we can no longer rely on a supernatural resolution. We have to depend upon ourselves to bring about the final victory of good over evil—as Hitler and Stalin tried to do. It is unclear how much help bin Laden and Bush expect from God.

Why do I emphasize this dualism? The basic problem with this way of understanding conflict is that it keeps us from looking deeper, from trying to discover causes. Once something has been identified as evil, it seems there is no more need to explain it; it is time to focus on fighting against it. This is where Buddhism has something important to contribute.

Paradoxically, one of the main causes of evil in this world has been human attempts to eradicate evil.

Buddhism emphasizes the three roots of evil, also known as the three poisons: greed, ill will, and delusion. The Abrahamic religions emphasize the struggle between good and evil because for them the basic issue depends on our will: which side are we on? In contrast, Buddhism emphasizes ignorance and enlightenment because the basic issue depends on our self-knowledge: do we really understand what motivates us?

According to Buddhism, every effect has its web of causes and conditions. This is the law of karma. One way to summarize the essential Buddhist teaching is that we suffer and we cause others to suffer because of greed, ill will, and delusion. Karma tells us that when our actions are motivated by these roots of evil, their negative consequences tend to rebound back upon us. The Buddhist solution to suffering involves transforming our greed into generosity, our ill will into loving-kindness, and our delusions into wisdom.

What do these Buddhist teachings imply about the situation we now find ourselves in?

We cannot focus only on the second root of evil, the

hatred and violence that have just been directed against the United States. The three roots are intertwined. Ill will cannot be separated from greed and delusion. This requires us to ask: why do so many people in the Middle East, in particular, hate us so much? Americans think of the U.S. as defending freedom and justice, but obviously that is not the way the U.S. is being perceived.

Micah Sifrey, an academic teaching in a U.S. university, says, "Does anybody think that we can send the USS *New Jersey* to lob Volkswagen-sized shells into Lebanese villages (Reagan, '98), or loose "smart bombs" on civilians seeking shelter in a Baghdad bunker (Bush, '99), or fire cruise missiles on a Sudanese pharmaceutical factory (Clinton, '99), and not receive, someday, our share in kind?"

In particular, how much of our foreign policy in the Middle East has been motivated by our love of freedom and democracy, and how much has been motivated by our need—our greed—for its oil? If our main priority has been securing oil supplies, does it mean that our petroleum-based economy is one of the causes of the terrorist attacks?

Finally, Buddhist teachings suggest that we look at the role of delusion in creating this situation. Delusion has a special meaning in Buddhism. The fundamental delusion is our sense of separation from the world we are "in," including other people. Insofar as we feel separate from others, we are more inclined to manipulate them to get what we want. This naturally breeds resentment—both from others, who do not like to be used, and within ourselves, when we do not get what we want.

Delusion becomes wisdom when we realize that "no one is an island." We are interdependent because we are all part of each other, different facets of the same jewel we call the earth. This world is a not a collection of objects but a community of subjects. That interdependence means we cannot avoid responsibility for each other. This is true not only for the residents of lower Manhattan, who are, as I write, uniting together in response to this catastrophe, but for all the people in the world, however deluded they may be. Yes, including the terrorists who did these heinous acts and those who support them.

Do not misunderstand me here. Of course those responsible for the attacks must be caught and brought to justice. That is our responsibility to all those who have suffered, and that is also our responsibility to the deluded and hate-full terrorists, who must be stopped. Those who intend other terrorist actions must also be stopped. If, however, we want to stop this cycle of hatred and violence, we must realize that our responsibility is much broader than that.

Realizing our interdependence and mutual responsibility for each other implies something more. When we try to live this interdependence, it is called love. Love is more than a feeling; it is a mode of being in the world. In Buddhism we talk mostly about compassion, generosity, and lovingkindness, but they all reflect this mode of being. Such love is sometimes mocked as weak and ineffectual, yet it can be very powerful, as Gandhi showed.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Buddha said, "In this world hatred is never appeased by hatred; hatred is always appeased by love. This is an ancient law" (Dhammapada).

Of course, this transformative insight is not unique to Buddhism. After all, it was not the Buddha who gave us the image of turning the other cheek. In all the Abrahamic religions the tradition of a holy war between good and evil coexists with this "ancient law" about the power of love.

So where does that leave us today? Many people want retaliation and vengeance—well, that is what the terrorists wanted. As we pursue the path of large-scale violence, bin Laden's holy war and Bush's holy war become two sides of the same war.

No one can foresee all the consequences of this war. They are likely to spin out of control and take on a life of their own. However, one sobering effect is clearly implied by the "ancient law": massive retaliation by the United States in the Middle East could spawn a new generation of suicidal terrorists eager to do their part in this holy war.

But widespread violence is not the only possible outcome. If this time of crisis encourages us to see through the rhetoric of a war to exterminate evil, and if we begin to understand the intertwined roots of this evil, including our own responsibility, then perhaps something good may yet come out of this catastrophic tragedy. ❖

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Breathing Through

by Joanna Macy

Basic to most spiritual traditions, as well as to the systems view of the world, is the recognition that we are not separate, isolated entities, but integral and organic parts of the vast web of life. As such, we are like neurons in a neural net, through which flow currents of awareness of what is happening to us, as a species and as a planet. In that context, the pain we feel for our world is a living testimony to our interconnectedness with it. If we deny this pain, we become like blocked and atrophied neurons, deprived of life's flow and weakening the larger body in which we take being. But if we let it move through us, we affirm our belonging; our collective awareness increases. We can open to the pain of the world in confidence that it can neither shatter nor isolate us, for we are not objects that can break. We are resilient patterns within a vaster web of knowing.

Because we have been conditioned to view ourselves as separate, competitive and thus fragile entities, it takes practice to relearn this kind of resilience. A good way to begin is by practicing simple openness, as in the exercise of "breathing through," adapted from an ancient Buddhist meditation for the development of compassion.

Closing your eyes, focus attention on your breathing. Don't try to breathe any special way, slow or long. Just watch the breathing as it happens in and out. Note the accompanying sensations at the nostrils or upper lip, in the chest or abdomen. Stay passive and alert, like a cat by a mouse hole.

As you watch the breath, you note that it happens by itself; without your will, without your deciding each time to inhale or exhale. It's as though you're being breathed—being breathed by life. Just as everyone in this room, in this city, in this planet now, is being breathed, sustained in a vast, breathing web of life.

Now visualize your breath as a stream or ribbon of air passing through you. See it flow up through your nose, down through your windpipe and into your lungs. Now from your lungs take it through your heart. Picture it flowing through your heart and out through an opening to reconnect with the larger web of life. Let the breath-stream, as it passes through you, appear as one loop within that vast web, connecting you with it.

Now open your awareness to the suffering that is present in the world. Drop for now all defenses and open to your knowledge of that suffering. Let it come as concretely as you can...concrete images of your fellow beings in pain and need, in fear and isolation, in prisons, hospitals, tenements, hunger camps...no need to strain for these images, they are present to you by virtue of our interexistence. Relax and just let them surface...the vast and countless hardships of our fellow humans, and of our animal brothers and sisters as well, as they swim the seas and fly the air of this ailing planet...Now breathe in the pain like dark granules on the stream of air; up through your nose, down through your trachea, lungs and heart, and out again into the world net...You are asked to do nothing for now but to let the pain pass through your heart. Be sure that stream flows through and out again; don't hang on to the pain...surrender it to the healing resources of life's vast web.

With Shantideva, the Buddhist saint, we can say, "Let all sorrows ripen in me." We can make good rich compost out of all that grief.

If no images or feelings arise and there is only blankness, gray and numb, breathe that through. The numbness itself is a very real part of our world.

And if what surfaces for you is not the pain of other beings so much as your own personal suffering, breathe that through, too. Your own anguish is an integral part of the grief of our world, and arises with it.

Should you feel an ache in the chest, a pressure in the rib cage, as if the heart would break, that is all right. Your heart is not an object that can break...But if it were, they say the heart that breaks open can hold the whole universe. Your heart is that large. Trust it. Keep breathing.

Your heart is not an object that can break.

This guided meditation serves to introduce the process of breathing through, which, once familiar, becomes useful in daily life in the many situations that confront us with painful information, whether we are reading the newspaper, receiving criticism, or simply being present to a person who suffers.

For activists working for peace and justice, and those dealing most directly with the griefs of our time, the practice helps prevent burnout. For when we can take in our world's pain, accepting it as the price of our caring, we let it inform our acts without needing to inflict it as a punishment on others who are, at the present moment, less involved. ❖

[Excerpted from "Spiritual Practices for Social Activists," from Joanna Macy's Web site: *www.joannamacy.net*; also found in her book *Coming Back to Life* (New Society).]

Joanna Macy, author, teacher, and trainer in socially engaged Buddhism, is one of the founders of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and is on the Advisory Board.

Praying at the Hearth

Family Practice Since 9/11

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

As a Buddhist family practitioner, my response has been to tend closely to the family hearth and do Mom-type things.

It's October 4, and I'm working on my article for *Turning Wheel*, opening it with a quote:

> *Even when one is feeling overwhelmed, still one can say, "I dedicate my practice to all the sentient beings who most need it. I dedicate to all." Do not limit who you love. Dedicate to those who are dead and those who are afraid they will die. Dedicate to the Afghan women who are hungry and thirsty, running away from bombs, with children in their arms. Pray for everyone. Pray, pray, pray, pray, pray.*
>
> —Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche

My 12-year-old son Joshua comes into the room, and the following conversation ensues.

Joshua: Can I use the computer, Mom?

Mushim: No, I'm writing my article for *Turning Wheel.*

Joshua (reading over my shoulder): "Pray, pray, pray, pray, pray." I don't think that's such a good quote. After all, Osama bin Laden probably prayed a *lot.*

Mushim: But Buddhist prayer is different from the kind of prayers he might have prayed. Buddhist prayer is never intended to cause anyone suffering. It is always to end suffering.

Joshua: Still, I wouldn't say "just pray."

Mushim: What would you say?

Joshua: I would pray to end hostility, suffering, and injustice.

Mushim: And to whom would you pray?

Joshua (jokingly): To anyone I could!

Mushim: To anyone you could?

Joshua: I think it's better to pray to yourself.

Mushim: Why?

Joshua: To reinforce yourself. To be peaceful.

* * *

Burning people falling through the air. Heartbroken families holding photos of loved ones buried in the rubble of the World Trade Center. Photos of children drinking muddy contaminated water in Afghanistan. War.

"I never thought this would happen during my lifetime," Joshua says.

"I'm sorry," I say, "but the truth is, these situations didn't develop overnight."

Since the initial flood of televised images of death and destruction on September 11, our family has gone back to getting information from newspapers and the Internet. Joshua had just begun seventh grade at a new school a week before the terrorist attacks, and he was already stressed. The evening of the 11th, Josh said that watching the airplanes slicing through the World Trade Center towers again and again made him feel nauseated, so Chris and I told him to go to another room while we continued to watch television until we couldn't stand it any longer, either.

Balancing the need to go on with our daily lives with the need to talk about what is currently happening is a challenge. My family has had occasional, but not frequent, mealtime discussions about Pakistan, Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, and Islam. Chris and I discuss what we've read with each other, and I check in with Josh from time to time, or show him an article or photo from the newspaper.

"I'm sure we'll be able to go into Afghanistan, find Osama bin Laden, and bring him out," Josh said, soon after September 11.

"Maybe," I said, thinking to myself that this was highly unlikely. "But I think the real threat is that someone with a nuclear weapon will get excited and do something crazy."

The look of horror on my son's face convinced me to end this conversation gently and go on to other topics. I vividly remember how, as a child in the 1960s, I feared the Russians would explode atomic bombs over my elementary school in rural Ohio. Although some of our neighbors were building underground bomb shelters, my father only laughed grimly and said, "If the atom bomb hits, we'll all fry like bacon." I had nightmares for years about this, and to this day the image of a mushroom cloud makes me sick to my stomach.

In the wake of September 11, psychologists recommend that we now plan to spend more time with our children, playing games, watching funny movies on video, cooking comfort foods, and making sure the

family's routine schedule goes on without interruption. We should talk with our children in age-appropriate ways, they say, not denying what has happened but being alert to signs that they might be overwhelmed or traumatized. If our children don't want to talk about the war at all, we should respect that. As always, we need to listen fully and carefully to one another.

I was surprised to notice that Chris, Josh, and I didn't feel any anger after the attacks, any need for revenge. I'd like to think it was because of our buddhahood, but most likely we simply were overwhelmed with shock and the fact that Chris's mother had begun to die at the beginning of September. Even in times of international crisis we have to attend to our own personal grief as well, not minimize or dismiss it.

When I was a single Zen Buddhist practitioner, I usually spent a lot of time sitting or chanting in the meditation hall when I felt overwhelmed. As a Buddhist family practitioner, my equivalent response has been to tend closely to the family hearth and do Mom-type things. It seems to have been what was needed. Although Josh had been showing preteen scorn toward Chris and me before September 11, since then, around 9 PM, Josh's bedtime, he has gone often to our bed, announcing, "No way are you moving me out of here." So all three of us squeeze onto the futon, sometimes with terse comments that one person or another *could* move a few centimeters one way or another *if* he were considerate, and no one had better hog all the covers. Near morning Butterscotch the cat sprawls across my heart and goes to sleep, touching my cheeks softly with her front paws.

"Butter and I just feel happy right here," Josh said one morning. "You have that good Mom smell."

"Are you regressing?" I asked him, somewhat sarcastically.

"What does that mean?" Josh asked, interested.

"Regression. Devolving back into being a baby," I said.

My preadolescent son waved his arms expansively. "We *all* like to do that!" he said, grinning. Touché.

I've spent a lot of time on the phone and e-mail, connecting with family members and friends old and new, affirming our ties. I've put extra love into family dinners, trying to make things that I know Chris and Josh will enjoy eating. We've gone out to restaurants for sushi and other treats. I printed out the quote from the Buddha that says: "Hatred never ceases by hatred but by love alone is healed" and taped it on the refrigerator door. I baked zucchini bread and Josh and I took some to our neighbors, one of whom is going through chemotherapy. I found Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech on the Net and printed it out. I prayed silently for everyone.

My husband, meanwhile, was going through the process of letting go of his mother. On Sundays, Chris visited his mom in the hospital at Stanford Medical Center. She slept a lot, so he would sit beside her, doing the Tibetan Buddhist *phowa* (visualization) practice described in Sogyal Rinpoche's book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying.* While she dozed, he told her quietly that she was dying, that it was okay, and that she wouldn't be alone.

"I want to come home tonight," Chris said when he phoned me from the hospital on September 26 to tell me that his mother had just died.

"Please be very careful about driving," I said. Unable to sleep, Josh and I stayed up, waiting. When I heard Chris's key turn in the lock of the front door, I was so relieved. Hugging my husband, I could smell death in his clothing and on his skin. It was, undeniably, the slightly sweet smell of human bodily decay after long illness.

My mother-in-law's name is on our family altar. Her end was peaceful, the result of natural causes, but I am aware of the enormity of the thousands of recent violent deaths, of the grief of those left behind, and the extreme desperation of poor and starving people in the world. My family's practice is to build safety, love, and spiritual comfort in our home, while not holding ourselves apart from consciousness of oppression and immense suffering. We have to find a way to keep opening our hearts. We sleep together, we wake up. Today has its work, and tomorrow will be the same. ❖

Mushim Ikeda-Nash is a writer who has been active as a volunteer in the Oakland, California, public schools as a literacy tutor.

Many of us worry about the situation of the world. We don't know when the bombs will explode. We feel that we are on the edge of time. As individuals, we feel helpless, despairing. The situation is so dangerous, injustice is so widespread, the danger is so close. In this kind of situation, if we panic, things will only become worse. We need to remain calm, to see clearly. Meditation is to be aware, to try to help.

I like to use the example of a small boat crossing the Gulf of Siam. In Vietnam, there are many people, called boat people, who leave the country in small boats. Often the boats are caught in rough seas or storms, the people may panic, and boats can sink. But if even one person aboard can remain calm, lucid, knowing what to do and what not to do, he or she can help the boat survive. His or her expression—face, voice—communicates clarity and calmness, and people have trust in that person...One such person can save the lives of many.

Mahayana Buddhism says you are that person, that each of you is that person.

— Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*, Parallax Press, 1987

Listening to Our Feelings

Speaking with Others about 9-11

by Terry Stein

One week after the attack on the World Trade Center towers, a close friend and I sat down to lunch together. We had only spoken a few words when anger flared up between us. Longtime lefties, we agreed on most issues, but we suddenly found ourselves at odds about how to respond to the terrorists. As we became aware of our descent into anger and hurt, we were able to step back and acknowledge our vulnerability and edginess. Soon we were comforting each other instead of lashing out. Interestingly, the lunch I had with my friend provided me with my first opportunity for a conversation about September 11 outside my community of like-minded socially engaged Buddhists. I had been concerned that my nonviolent ideas would be provocative to those who held opposing views once I left the protective environment in which I lived.

I was concerned that my nonviolent ideas would be provocative to those who held opposing views once I left the protective environment in which I lived.

Another friend revealed that she and an old friend of hers had also disagreed, but the outcome was more painful. She and her friend were no longer speaking to each other following their disagreement about whether or not military action was appropriate as a response to the terrorist attacks. My friend did not know if the rupture could be healed.

For many of us, the events of September 11 brought on feelings of helplessness, fear, confusion, and anger. My friend and I had approached each other with expectations of safety and a wish to connect about our feelings. We were seeking validation and comfort, but instead, we got into a fight. We were able to interrupt this disagreement and return to a stance of mutual caring by observing what had happened and pausing to examine it.

Afterwards, I wondered what I had learned from this interaction that could help me talk to friends more skillfully, and help prevent painful disruptions in relationships like my other friend had described.

I realized that we all feel vulnerable in the face of horrible events, but for some of us our reactions may also echo past experiences of injury or become intertwined with other current stress. The collective trauma is shared by all, but our own individual trauma is known only to ourselves unless we express it to others. For example, one person told me that she had become psychotic in reaction to a previous national crisis and feared that she might do so again after the events on September 11. When she spoke to me about her anxiety, I became frightened for her, and I understood better the complexity of factors that can underlie individual reactions to shared events. When these factors remain unacknowledged or have not been worked through, they may manifest in day-to-day interactions with others. Remembering that each of us has our own complex history and life circumstances and not just what we present on the surface may help us to approach one another with mindfulness not only about what is actually said but also about what might not yet be spoken or even understood.

Even though we have known each other for many years, when my friend and I first sat down to lunch we had no idea which stories from our lives might have become associated with the tragedy that had occurred a week before. Ideally, each of us might have remembered to listen more fully before reacting. However, in this instance the anger itself provided an opportunity to dive deeper into an understanding of our reactions. Because of our trust of each other, we were able to interrupt the angry exchange in order to look together at the underlying emotions that had so quickly led to anger. I was concerned about the terrorist attacks and felt they were partly due to U.S. policies, while my friend was more concerned about the immediate risk of terrorism for American citizens. Neither of these views was wrong, but they seemed at odds. Our political assertions were the overt expressions of our underlying fear and isolation. Not yet seeing the emotional origins for our arguments, we attacked each other when we momentarily disagreed.

In other situations, for example, when you do not know the other person well, you may need to be more cautious in your exploration of anger. Remembering that arguments about ideas are associated with underlying feelings and that the feelings may not always relate to the immediate situation can help us step back, reestablish a respectful tone, and listen better.

In thinking about these angry interactions, I also realized that we need to see an emotion through to the end in order not to be held captive by it. Becoming

aware of our emotions, expressing them, and being heard and understood by others, we can meet our emotions directly, contextualize them into a larger story, and thereby transform them. Otherwise we risk being stuck in our emotions. A frightened person who cannot express her fear may become even more fearful; an angry person who suppresses his anger may become even more enraged. Zen teacher Sensei Pat Enkyo O'Hara, writing about anger, asks: "Can we just sit with the power of anger, its raw, powerful energy? Can we experience the racing pulse, the pounding heart, the tingling skin, the hot energy as it courses through us?" We might further ask, "Can we sit with this powerful energy, these bodily reactions, not only in ourselves, but when others are experiencing them as well?" When we know how to cradle ourselves when we are distressed, we can then better cradle others as they experience their emotions.

I had forgotten to let my friend tell the whole story of her emotions before I reacted to her. I had been unable to just sit either with my own emotions or with hers. They were so strong, and they were accompanied by such a crush of neediness on both our parts, that the anger simply erupted. Anger did need to be acknowledged, but its proper object was not each other. And its expression in the form of our argument only served to mask the larger emotional and mental stories that were waiting to be told. But because we had danced this dance together before, we knew how to step back, take care of each other, and adjust the tempo. In the midst of our argument, we simultaneously looked at each other, smiled, and I asked, for both of us, "Why are we fighting about this?"

Finally, as I thought about the angry exchange with my friend, I realized that I could have practiced staying present with her feelings without identifying with them. We often try to silence the emotions of others because they are painful to be around. When we hear another person expressing sadness, hurt, frustration, loneliness, anger—most of the so-called negative feelings—we often try to diminish the intensity of that person's feeling, just the opposite of what might be most helpful. Sometimes it is even hard for us to hear about other people's positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, and excitement. Learning to respond to emotions in ourselves and others with curiosity instead of defensiveness can lead to deeper engagement.

I had not listened fully to my friend's emotions, nor had she listened to mine, before we began to protect ourselves against the perceived onslaught from the other. Ultimately, when we heard each other out, I did not disagree with her assertion that we must protect ourselves as a country, and she did not think I was wrong in wanting to look at American culpability for the attacks against us. Instead, we were reacting to the emotions that lay beneath our arguments, in this instance primarily fear for her and helplessness for me.

Often we can most strongly influence others by practicing in our own lives the nonviolence and peace that we hope will be achieved in the larger world. Faced with overwhelming emotional reactions to horrendous violence, an important step we can take toward enacting nonviolence is to assure safety in our interactions with others. In the end, my friend and I achieved such safety by stepping back from the precipice of our fight and sharing our deeper feelings. When we stopped fighting about political issues, we were able to disclose our fear about what might happen in the world and our uncertainty about what we could do ourselves to respond to the situation. By the end of our lunch, we hugged each other tightly and looked forward to our next lunch together.

Because Kuan Yin listened deeply, she heard the cries of the world. By listening deeply to our own emotions and to the feelings of those with whom we are in relation, each one of us may also learn to hear the cries of the world. Only when we have heard these cries, whether they are sent forth by terrorists, refugees, the person sitting with us at lunch, or ourselves, can we begin to see what is there and know compassion. ❖

Terry Stein is the vice president of the board of BPF. He is also Professor Emeritus in Psychiatry at Michigan State University. He lives with his partner, Chris, in Oakland, California, where he writes and is a Zen student.

Muslim angel bearing a soul to Allah, adapted from a Persian painting by Prudence See, an artist and writer living in Saugerties, New York.

Toward a Deeper Unity

Honoring Divergent Perspectives in Difficult Times

by Rosa Zubizarreta

As I write this article, our U.S. government is still dropping bombs on Afghanistan. I pray that, by the time you read this, we may have stopped doing so.

As Buddhists, we hold to the truth that "hate does not cease by hate, but by love alone." As social activists, we know that all government policies are ultimately dependent upon our collective consent as a people.

In our work building a peace movement, how we engage with those who hold different views than ours is an ongoing challenge and opportunity. This challenge occurs at many levels. One level, of course, is: how do we respond to those who support our government's current polices? In order to build broad public consensus, we need to engage in respectful dialogue with others who may think very differently from us.

Yet, while it can be a challenge to engage in conversations with fellow citizens who support the bombing, offering compassion to someone advocating war can sometimes feel easier than practicing patience with a fellow peace activist who is angry. So another level might be: how do we constructively engage with other peace activists whose strategies and approaches may be different from our own?

I'd like to share some recent anecdotes that speak to those questions.

In the last month, our local Peace and Justice Center has hosted weekly vigils downtown, along the edge of a park that is usually populated by homeless folks. Peace activists line the sidewalk every Friday, holding up signs and receiving a variety of responses from the passing drivers.

On various occasions, we have been joined by pro-war demonstrators. Several weeks ago, after the vigil had started to disperse, my friend Alice noticed a woman standing off to the side with a sign that said, "PEACE = BENDING OVER FOR BIN LADEN." Alice walked over and invited her to participate in one of our "talking and listening" circles designed to honor all perspectives.

The woman told Alice that she didn't think people would welcome her views. She said she had lost a relative in the World Trade Center, and when she saw the peace demonstrators out in the street, she had felt inspired to grab some cardboard and create a makeshift sign.

While Alice listened, the woman talked about how we could not simply stand back and do nothing. She was adamantly against a nonviolent approach, as she didn't see how it could work. She mentioned that the U.S. had tried using humanitarian aid to influence policy in the region before, and it hadn't worked. She was clearly well-read concerning international politics.

Alice acknowledged her own ignorance of that particular policy initiative, and promised to look up the information. She said that it was important for folks in the peace movement to learn about previous failed efforts, and she even loaned the woman her marker so that she could touch up her sign.

By the end of the conversation, the woman was telling Alice that she really didn't want to bomb, and that she would love it if we could figure out some peaceful resolution to all this. In response, Alice shared that one of her own favorite prevention strategies was conserving gas.

"Oh, I completely agree!" said her new friend. "My husband and I ride our bicycles all over—we're avid bicyclists." She was still holding up her sign, and folks were honking in response, but something had clearly shifted. Alice, too, had something new to explore.

Alice has continued to do this listening work at the vigils, but she has sometimes been frustrated in her attempts to listen deeply to the pro-war demonstrators when fellow "peace activists" have interrupted the process with arguments and challenges. In one situation where several peace demonstrators were converging on a war supporter, each wanting to persuade him with their arguments, Alice was told that she had "wasted her turn" by inviting him to share his views, instead of arguing points.

Later, she was finally able to engage with this young man alone and listen to him. Afterwards, she invited him to join the talking circle, telling him that she enjoyed hearing his views, that he was articulate and had important things to say. The young man appreciated the invitation but declined. When Alice repeated the invitation, saying that she would defend him and not allow anyone to gang up on him, the young man became very vulnerable. He said, "If someone went before me in the circle and said that they were against war, I'd feel like a murderer." He got choked up and then said that he really didn't want to bomb either, but didn't know what else we could do.

That same evening, further up the street, two young pro-war demonstrators had arrived with huge signs and placed themselves right in the middle of the line of pro-peace demonstrators. As soon as they realized what was happening, several of the peace protesters began to challenge the war folks, and a number of loud, animated arguments quickly ensued.

Concerned about the possibility of escalation, I walked over and talked with some of the upset peace activists. I got up close so I could speak quietly yet still be heard, and I asked each person, one at a time, if they would mind lowering their voice a notch to help keep a peaceful presence.

Next, I spoke directly to the war supporters and welcomed them, saying that I was personally glad to see them there and that they had just as much of a right to share their views as I did. Afterwards, I kept talking to the various peace activists, inviting them to consider the paradox that the more pressured we humans feel to change our minds, the more resistant we are to other perspectives.

At one point the situation became so mellow that one of the pro-war people turned to the other and said, "Hey man, this is getting boring—let's get out of here!" Whereupon one of the peace demonstrators started up a fresh argument, and so of course they changed their minds and decided to stay.

Later, a man I hadn't seen before told me how angry he had been to see the war supporters there. He said he had purposefully stayed away from that area because he was aware of his own anger.

I thanked him for his decision, and I spoke about the gift those pro-war activists had brought us: an opportunity to practice peace. And I shared with him my fear that if there had been 20 instead of two pro-war demonstrators, we may not have had enough of a peaceful presence to co-create a positive outcome.

As Alice and I talked that evening, I realized that there was another dimension to the gift. Not only had the war supporters given us the opportunity to practice peace in the moment, but the exchange between the war advocates and the upset peace activists had also given us the opportunity to think about how to better prepare ourselves for the next encounter. And so the following flyer, which we distributed to everyone the next week at the beginning of the vigil, was created:

SIMPLE GUIDELINES FOR DE-ESCALATING CONFLICT

All of us have the desire to promote our own positions. At the same time, we are all responsible for helping keep our vigils peaceful.

When we encounter others with opposing views, we can use this as an opportunity to practice peace in a public space by honoring different perspectives.

Whenever we choose to act in a way that de-escalates conflict, we are doing *Shanti-Sena* (peacekeeping). The following basic principles can be helpful:

Being aware of our own emotional state

Emotions are contagious. It's easy to get angry at others who are angry. In a potentally volatile situation, the most responsible act can be to step back and calm ourselves if we are upset.

Being aware of our own intentions

Are we seeking to persuade, convince, or change another person's mind? This can often provoke defensiveness and escalate conflict, regardless of the righteousness of the position we may be seeking to advance.

Offering peaceful presence, empathy, and connection

When humans feel cornered, we tend to strike out, either verbally or physically. Instead, when we feel accepted and safe, we have more space to grow and to consider other viewpoints.

This flyer is part of the Community Conversations project. The purpose of this project is to facilitate democratic dialogue and transformational conversations on difficult issues. The Community Conversations project is a member of 911 World Solutions: North Bay Peace and Justice Coalition. ❖

Rosa Zubizarreta has worked in bilingual, multicultural, and community education for the last 15 years. She is currently doing graduate work in organization development as a tool for social change, at Sonoma State University.

I welcomed the war supporters, saying that I was personally glad to see them there and that they had just as much of a right to share their views as I did.

Street shrine in Berkeley, California. Photo by Susan Moon.

Yassir and Khadijah Chadly

A Conversation with a Muslim Imam and His Wife

Yassir Chadly is a Muslim imam, or teacher, who teaches at a mosque in Oakland, California. He lives with his wife, Khadijah, and their three children in Albany. Yassir works as a lifeguard for the city of Berkeley at several public swimming pools, and he is an accomplished musician. He sings and plays Moroccan music on the oud *and the* gimbri*, both stringed instruments. Khadijah sometimes accompanies him, singing and playing the* karcabas*, castanet-like percussion instruments held in the hands. Khadijah also makes ceramic tiles and pottery painted with intricate decorative designs and verses from the Koran.*

Alan Senauke and Susan Moon interviewed Yassir and Khadijah on a Saturday afternoon in the living room of their home in Albany, and Khadijah served delicious Moroccan mint tea. After the interview was over, they played a few songs.

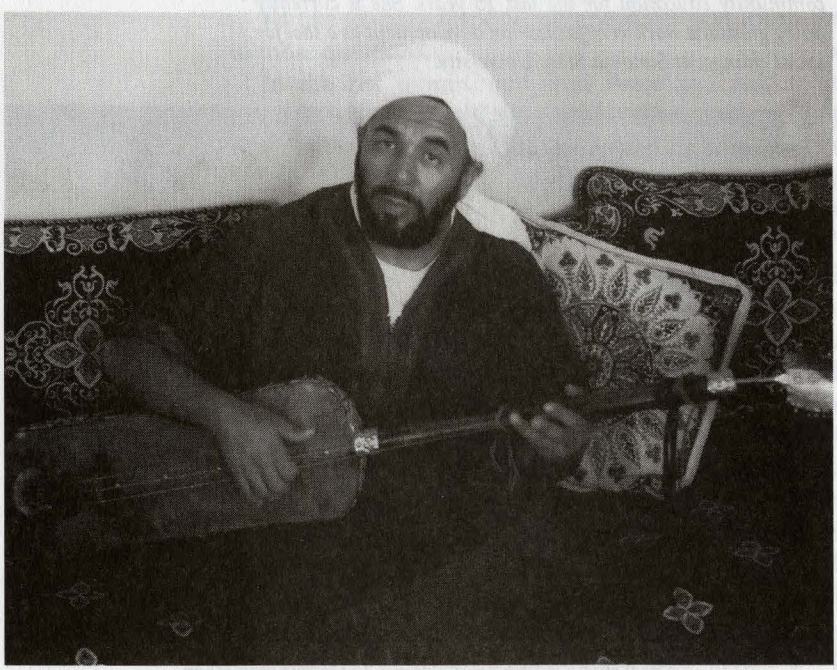
Alan: Can you tell us a little about your background? What kind of religious training did you have as a child?

Yassir: I grew up in Casablanca, Morocco, and my family came from a religious Sufi order called the Chadly Order—therefore my last name is Chadly.

My father knew the whole Koran. I was just the opposite as a child. One of my famous questions to my father was, "Why are you praying five times a day and doing all that stuff? People from America have been to the moon. They have been learning to do something, and you're just doing this praying. We're missing something."

He would say, "Well, those people who went to the moon—see if they can make the sun rise from the West. If they can do that, then I will follow them." I used to laugh at that.

He let me rebel, let me have long hair, play James Taylor and Jimi Hendrix on guitar, and read books by Karl Marx. My father's friends said to him, "Wow, is that your son? He is going off completely!" And my father would say, "I'm just giving him immunization shots."



Yassir playing the gimbri. Photo by Susan Moon.

Susan: How did you come to the United States?

Yassir: In the 1970s I was a P.E. teacher in a high school in Casablanca, and during the summer, to make a little extra money, I taught Arabic to Peace Corps volunteers. One of the women I taught was from Vermont, and we had a good connection. She and other Peace Corps volunteers came to my house all the time and my mom made them tea and Morroccan pancakes. They said, "You've been so nice to us. We are inviting you to our homes in America." So they bought my plane ticket and got me a tourist visa. When I got to the U.S., I visited them in New York, Boston, and Vermont.

In 1977, my good friend Hocine, another teacher, lured me to San Francisco. He said, "You haven't seen anything until you see this Bay Area. It's like Morocco." He kept insisting: "Please come! You will never regret it."

He was working at a Moroccan restaurant, so I went there to keep him company. The restaurant had three belly dancers: one played the oud, one played the drum, and one danced. I was floored to see three Americans playing our kind of music.

I waited until they finished, and I said: "Can I play your oud?" I started playing, and they liked what I was doing, and they said: "Wow, we want you to play with us."

The restaurant needed a waiter, so I worked for them to make some extra money. When I finished my job, I would go to a place called the Keystone Korner. There was a bald guy who guards the door. He says *Salaam alaykum* to me, and I answer, *alaykum salaam*. He got me to come in. And I heard the jazz musicians like Winton Marsalis, way back before he

became famous, and Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. And that changed my whole life.

Alan: How did you and Khadijah meet?

Yassir: I took a Moroccan instrument to the flea market to sell it. Lots of Moroccans met at the Ashby flea market—it was like a little community. Moroccans know where to meet each other. She came and saw this instrument. She said, "This is a Moroccan instrument." She knew because she'd been to Morocco several times.

I was giving music lessons, and I invited her for a lesson. She came, and brought mint to make mint tea, and black figs. We just started talking and talking...

Susan: Khadijah, were you already studying Sufism?

Khadijah: I had lived overseas for five years, and I had studied Tibetan Buddhism in Dharamsala, and I had started to study Sufism and Islam. So I was already interested. I was brought up Jewish, but we didn't have a religious family, and I didn't see myself as being Jewish, except culturally.

Alan: Yassir, how did you become a teacher?

Yassir: When I came here I was following the Chadly Order. I was by myself, and there was nobody around. So when Sheik Nazim, the Naqshbandi Sufi Master, came, I went to see him. I saw a fire coming from his head. It was like those Persian miniatures where they put a fire around a holy person's head, or the saints in European pictures with a halo. I saw that halo—it was big. That's when I knew he was representing the light. I knew I had met a real man, a huge man! So I took the Order from him. He appointed me to speak on behalf of the Order and to help people who want to join to the Order. He gave me that baton.

Alan: So there was a transmission?

Yassir: Yes, there was a transmission.

Alan: He recognized something in you.

Susan: Tell us about your mosque.

Yassir: I go to a mosque called *Masjid-al-Iman*. And there I give sermons every Friday, which is the Muslim day of observance, like Shabbat for Jews or Sunday for Christians. I give advice according to the people's hearts, according to who is there. Every Saturday morning, we do something like Zen. We call it *zikur*. We sit down in a circle.

Susan: Are you the main teacher there?

Yassir: I am the main *imam* there, yes.

Alan: "Imam" means teacher?

Yassir: It means somebody who leads the prayer.

Susan: Who are the people who come to your mosque?

Yassir: Mostly they're African Americans and European Americans, and a few people from Pakistan and Bangladesh. A few Arabs—maybe two or three.

Khadijah: Most mosques are all black, or all Afghani, or all Pakistani. So we really are very unusual, to be so integrated.

Susan: Can anybody come?

Yassir: Under the sign "Masjid-al-Iman" it says, "Everyone is welcome."

Alan: What is the relationship of Islam to the other Abrahamic religions—Judaism and Christianity?

Yassir: Well, like you say, Abraham is the connection between the three religions. They all go back to Abraham. Mohammed was descended from Abraham. The Arabs have a good knowledge of the ancestry, like the Mormons do here.

Alan: Or like we do in Zen. I have papers that trace the lineage generation by generation, from the Buddha, to my teacher, to me.

Yassir: We have that, too. Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. And Ishmael had 12 kids. From the 12 kids came the 12 tribes, and from one of the tribes came the prophet Mohammed. He came 600 years after Jesus—that's the longest distance between one prophet and another. The other prophets came one after the other. Before Jesus was John the Baptist, and before him was Jonah.

Alan: Have there been any prophets since Mohammed?

Yassir: When Mohammed came, he said, "All the prophets are like bricks in a house. The house was almost finished, but there was one brick missing. I am that brick. Now the whole house is complete." He said: "There is no prophet after me, but revelations will still be coming." He said that spiritual inspiration would come to human beings through their dreams.

So there was a big gap, and then—*boom!*—Mohammed came. He came in the middle of the desert, in Mecca. The middle of nowhere.

When he was young, there was something special that he knew within himself. But he didn't understand what it meant until he became mature. So when he was 40, he went into seclusion in a cave. He asked questions: Who are we? Why are we here? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is this all about?

One day, the angel Gabriel came to him and said:

In Sufism, we're looking more at people's intentions and their hearts, not just at whether they're following rules.

In the name of Allah, the Universally Merciful,
the Singularly Compassionate–
Allah! There is no deity save Him; the ever living.
The Eternally Present.
He is taken neither by slumber nor by sleep.
To Him belongs all that is heaven and the earth.
Who is there to intercede with Him save by His Permission?
He knows what is betwixt their hands and behind their backs and
they encompass nothing from His Knowledge except what He Wills.
That which underpins Him is vaster than the heavens and the earth–
and preserving them does not tire Him.
He is the All High, The Sublime.

–The Koran

Read. Mohammed said: I don't know how to read. And the angel held him tight and he said: Read. So the first word that came, in Islam, was *epcah*, or in English, "read." This means education is important.

The angel Gabriel told Mohammed: "You are a prophet, and you have to go out there and tell the people you are sent by God to correct their crooked way of living." Because they were living a bad life. They were tribal, and everybody was a country by himself and had his own law—each person. They were not together. They had many, many statues of different gods. They had 365—one god for each day. All the tribes came to Mecca and offered money to their separate gods.

When the prophet came, he declared that all these divisions were not part of the Oneness. Everything is One, and everything that is created belongs to that One. And furthermore, that One is not possible to be conceived in the mind. The people wanted something to hook their mind onto, but he said it's inconceivable and there's nothing like it. Whatever you think it is, it's not.

They were lost. They said, "How can we follow something if we don't know what it is?" They went against him and threatened to kill him. So he had to go to another place called Medina, and in Medina he found people ready for his message.

Well, one of the big tribes in Arabia—they were very angry. They were making a lot of money out of the offerings the tribes were bringing to all the different gods. They said, "Now Mohammed says we're going to have only one god, and he's an invisible god! We have to get rid of Mohammed." So there was a war between them, and Mohammed had to defend himself.

He won the war, and he went back to Mecca and took over the place, and the people were very afraid of what he was going to do to them out of vengeance. They asked him, "What are you going to do to us?" And he said, "You know me. What do you think I'm going to do?" They said. "You are very generous." He said: "You are right." And he forgave everybody. That was the turning point.

It's very famous—the forgiveness of the people of Mecca. Before that, people who got the upper hand in battle always took vengeance and killed everybody. Forgiveness was new.

Susan: Could you say something about the general attitude toward violence and war in Islam?

Yassir: Well, there is the idea of the dove. The dove represents peace. If you do nothing to protect the dove, the eagle comes and eats the dove. You have to protect the dove. If you want to have peace, you make sure that the eagle doesn't eat the dove. The eagle is always after that dove.

Alan: It's an interesting metaphor, because the eagle is our national bird. I think there's a perception in many parts of the world that the powers of the U.S. are predatory.

Yassir: According to Islam, you can defend yourself, but you have to say, "You are oppressing me and I'm going to defend myself." There is no sneaking. You have to be up-front. To sneak up and kill innocent people—that's not Islam.

Khadijah: And suicide is not allowed, either. It's a sin.

Susan: It seems as though every religion has the potential for a kind of fundamentalist fanaticism. Do you think that Islam has a particular tendency in that direction?

Yassir: It doesn't have anything to do with Islam, but some personalities have a tendency to be self-righteous and arrogant. If you put them in Islam they will do it in Islam, if you put them in Christianity they will do it in Christianity. They are coming out of pain and anger, and they don't have a strong foundation.

The foundation of Islam is the faith. In Islam, faith is based on two qualities: patience and gratitude. If you don't have these two you don't have faith.

So those people don't have patience. They want to do something quickly. "You did this to me; I am going to do that to you." But to see what's behind events, and to understand—that takes patience.

Also, if you don't have faith, you don't have the gratitude to say, "These things that happen to me are actually a lesson for me, and I should be happy that I am receiving this lesson." That's gratitude. These are the foundations of faith in Islam.

Khadijah: In the end of the last century, a fundamentalist movement called Wahabism started in Saudi Arabia. It has become bigger as Saudi Arabia has gotten richer. They're not exactly making things up, but they're taking the laws to extremes. You can't listen to music, and women can't drive—those kinds of things. Now they are spreading Wahabism around the world, so that that's what a lot of people think Islam is.

Susan: Could you clarify the different branches of Islam?

Yassir: Ninety percent of Muslims are Sunni. They follow the Prophet's way of doing things. Then there's 10 percent who are Shiite. They say the only person who can tell us what to do should be a blood descendant from the Prophet.

Khadijah: We all follow the same Islam—that's really the only distinction. Sufis aren't another sect. Yassir and I are both Sunni and Sufi. Sufism is more of an esoteric, mystical teaching.

Susan: Are the people in Saudi Arabia Sunni?

Yassir: They are Sunni but they are very much against Sufism.

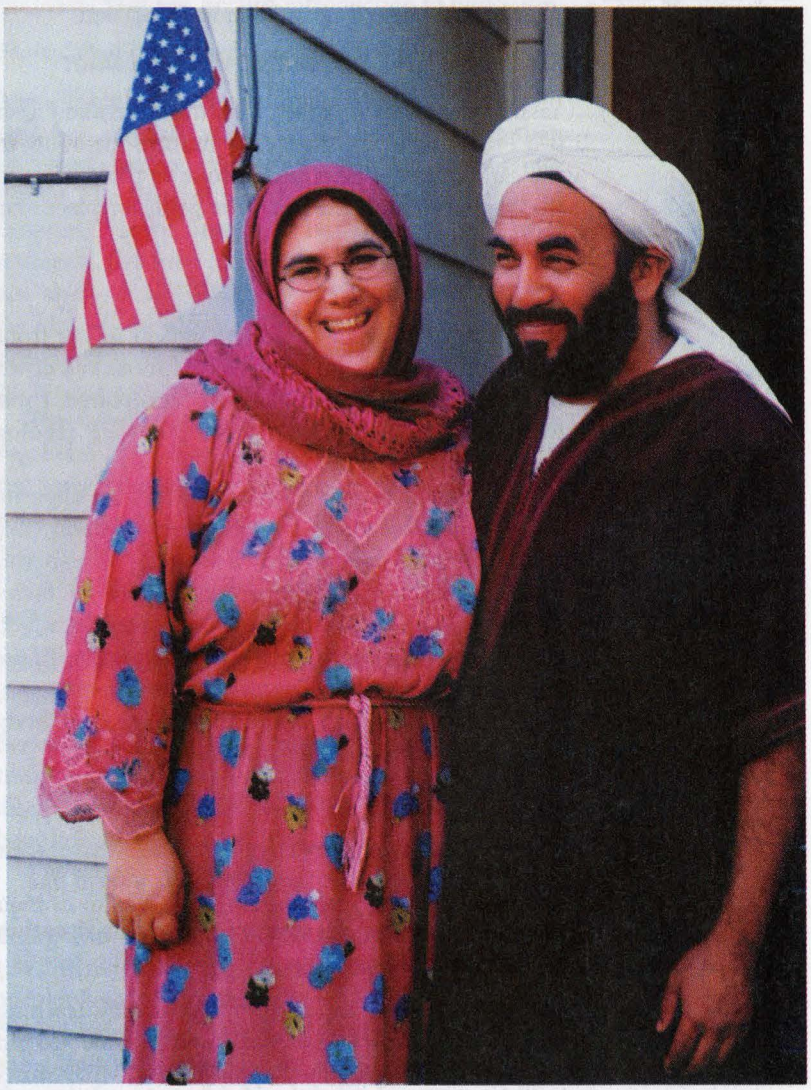
Khadijah: In Sufism, we're looking more at people's intentions and their hearts, not just at whether they're following rules.

Susan: Another aspect of Islam that I think is very misunderstood, especially right now, is the meaning of *jihad*.

Yassir: There are two kinds of jihad—outer and inner. There is jihad to stop injustice, when you have to do something to make things better. Like Martin Luther King—he was going to a jihad.

It's a kind of struggle. In sports, before you run a 100-meter dash you have to do a lot of jihad—the whole process of running and lifting weights.

The inner jihad is getting rid of bad characteris-



Khadijah and Yassir Chadly in front of their home in Albany, California. Photo by Susan Moon.

Here in Albany, people are more friendly, overly friendly, like when you see someone who is mentally ill and you want to let them know you're not scared of them. People we don't know are waving, with big grins, which is nice.

tics—it's a struggle for purification. The inner struggle is harder than the outer struggle. The inner jihad is the higher one.

Susan: Turning to the present situation, what have you experienced since September 11, as a Muslim and also as a Moroccan? Have you personally had any hassle?

Yassir: I used to wear my turban all the time when I went outside. The day it happened, I went to check the pool chemistry at Berkeley High, and when I was driving I could see that people's gaze was different than before. Even though it's just the way they look at you, you feel something. So I decided not to put my turban on. Also I had a longer beard, and I cut it shorter.

Susan: That must be quite painful, to have to make those changes.

Yassir: It's not painful, because I don't like to upset people. To be a servant is the most important.

Susan: And have you changed what you wear?

Yassir: When I am at home I wear this robe, and I wear it if I'm going to the mosque. I go from the house to the car, car to the mosque, mosque to the car, car to the house. No problem. But if I'm going anyplace else, I wear regular clothes.

Susan: What about you, Khadijah?

Khadijah: I had a lot of pottery set up in the front yard, with Arabic writing on it, and I took it all down the first day. The first few days we were scared. I was worried about Yassir going out. We were reading about people being shot.

But basically here in Albany we've had the opposite effect. People are *more* friendly, overly friendly, like when you see someone who is mentally ill and you want to let them know you're not scared of them. People we don't know are waving, with big grins, which is nice. But Yassir hardly goes out to the store with me anymore, or for a walk. He stays at home more.

I can take my scarf off and blend in. If anybody bothers me I'll just tell them I'm Jewish!

Susan: What about your children?

Khadijah: Albany is so small, and they have their friends. They're not really affected. They seem fine.

Susan: Has there been concern about this situation at the mosque?

Yassir: Before this happened I was already teaching about fundamentalism and how people go to extremes in the way they apply the law. Extremists would like to say that it is a sin to drink wine, and because grapes can lead you to make wine, therefore they forbid grapes. That's how extreme they are.

All my teaching was about staying centered, in balance, not to side this way or that way. Keep that middle way, and Islam is the middle way.

Susan: We talk about the middle way in Buddhism, too.

Yassir: I'd been teaching about not going to extremes way before September 11, so when that happened, everybody understood what I was saying.

Sometimes I even give them an example to make them laugh. I tell them about a man who didn't answer the phone. And so the doctor told him, "Answer the phone when it rings, please." A month later the man came back, and the doctor said, "How are you doing with the phone?" The man said, "Now I answer the phone whenever it rings. And to be really excellent, I answer it even if it doesn't ring!" That's extreme—it's not normal anymore. But that man thinks he's excellent. And these extremists don't think they are extremists, they think they are excellent.

Alan: So even though there's pride and arrogance, there is also a seed of good in them.

Yassir: Yes, if you squeeze them, you find out that they want to be excellent. Even in the Taliban's army, they wear white turbans. They are looking for virtue.

Susan: How are you doing emotionally in all of this? Is it a very hard time for you?

Yassir: It's a time for explanations about Islam. People want to know, and I need to explain what I can. So we are under a magnifying glass. I have hope that things are going to get better. I feel that strongly.

I became an American citizen about five years ago, and the question they gave me, to see if I wanted to become an American citizen, was: "Do you know who Martin Luther King is?" That's what they wanted to know. The lady had a lot of papers in front of her, and she asked me that question. I said, "The guy who said, 'I have a dream.'" She smiled and said, "You pass."

Martin Luther King Jr. saw Jews, Palestinians, blacks, and whites holding hands and working together and saying, "We shall overcome." I think he prophecied what's going to happen. And it *is* going to happen. I think America will be the leader of this peace treaty between the Palestinians and the Israelis and make them hold hands together.

And the American Muslims are going to explain what Islam is. So, everything is going to be better. Through explanation, there is understanding, and through understanding, there is a direction toward goodness. I think people are going that way, because the will of the people is good. ❖

To Protect and Serve

A Conversation with a Buddhist in the Army National Guard

Jason Gassman has spent over 10 years of his life in the military. After a tumultuous childhood in Ohio, Montana, and Wyoming, he joined the navy when he was 20 years old. Currently, Jason is serving in the California Army National Guard. For the past year, he's also been practicing at the San Francisco Zen Center. Maia Duerr, associate editor of *Turning Wheel,* spoke with Jason in October.

Maia: Why did you originally enlist in the military?

Jason: I got in a lot of trouble as a youngster. At one point, I was given an option that I could get out of going to prison if I joined the military, and so I did. That was in 1988.

I was in the navy during the Gulf War and spent nine months floating around the Persian Gulf. I didn't see combat myself, but we did see the jet streams from the cruise missiles. I got out of the navy in 1993 and rejoined the National Guard in 1997.

Maia: How often do you report for guard duty?

Jason: I go one weekend a month, two weeks in the summer, and occasionally to special trainings. And I can be activated at any time for state emergency duty or active duty.

Maia: What do you think the chances are of that happening?

Jason: I think it's half-and-half. If I got called up, I'd get 72 hours' notice and they'd send me to Fort Irwin in Southern California to do a one- or two-month training. Then I'd be in for however long I was needed. It could be a week, a year. There's technically no limit to how long they can keep you—I'm basically government property.

Maia: What has been positive for you about being in the military?

Jason: The discipline and the camaraderie have done me a lot of good. When I first got out of the navy, I missed that camaraderie. I joined back up to seek that again. There's something about training in the army that can be really nourishing. It's given me a purpose for a long time. I don't know if I need that anymore, but it's certainly something that was a part of who I was.

Military service gives a lot of young people their first introduction to discipline and teamwork and what it means to stand up for something, for freedom. I firmly believe that we're the freest country in the world.

I'm a believer that we need a military that can do what it does. And at the same time, I also support the peace movement. I live in a country that's never had anybody take our soil, and I'm thankful for that. It's partly because we are the best army in the world, and we train that way.

Maia: How did you first get involved with Buddhism?

Jason: I had a drug and alcohol problem for a long time. After getting in a lot of trouble in both civilian and military life, I chose to go into rehab. About a year ago, I met Paul Haller [a dharma teacher from San Francisco Zen Center], who came once a week to offer a class at the rehab. That was my first introduction to Buddhism.

Maia: What impressed you about Paul?

Jason: I think it was his calmness. His class began with stretches, and then we sat for five minutes. After that, we talked about our week and ended with the Serenity Prayer. The first couple of times, I had a feeling of dropping down into my body for a few brief moments. I've been chasing that feeling ever since. It's not always achievable, but there's something about the idea of just sitting with the self—something happens for me. But it's nothing like I thought it would be. It's quite painful sometimes.

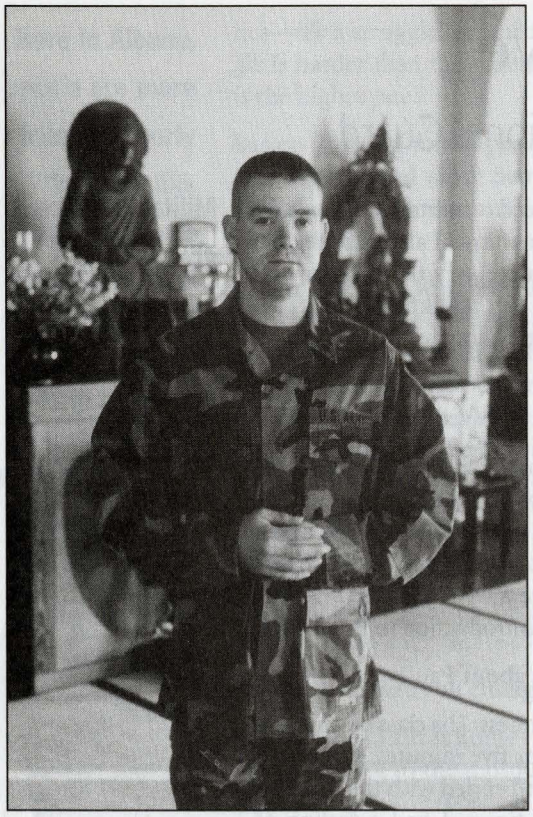
The rehab center was only six blocks from San Francisco Zen Center, so I made my way over there for the Saturday morning public program. Eventually, I went to morning zazen and got more involved. I've been living at Zen Center for three months now, and I worked in the kitchen there all summer before I moved in.

Maia: The camaraderie and the discipline you described in the navy sounds a lot like Zen Center.

Jason: Yes, I think that's what attracted me about Zen training—the discipline of it. At times I can provide discipline for myself, but it's been institutions that have helped me find my way.

I've had to take discipline deeper within myself. I'm used to following orders, to doing what I'm told and doing it to the best of my ability. With Zen training, the difference is being aware of everything going on and looking deeper than the surface. In what's happening now, what the hijackers did was a terrible thing, but looking below the surface, I'd have to say that our foreign policy hasn't helped matters, and has probably made things worse.

Military service gives a lot of young people their first introduction to discipline and teamwork and what it means to stand up for something.



Jason Gassman in the Buddha Hall at San Francisco Zen Center. Photo by Luke Iwabuchi.

Maia: Have you received negative comments from other Buddhist practitioners about your involvement in the military?

Jason: I've only gotten grief one time. When I first started going to Zen Center, I came to the morning program and I had to go to guard training right afterwards. So I came in my fatigues. I went in the Buddha Hall for service, and the only place to stand was up front with the priest. So I bowed in my fatigues. A guest student didn't appreciate me doing that. But otherwise, everyone at the Zen Center has been very supportive. They've made it known that they don't agree with what the military is doing, but they're supportive of *me*. That has been a real big attraction for me about the Zen Center. They let me be who I am, which has been very powerful for me.

Maia: Tell me about practicing the precepts in your life, especially the precept about non-harming. How do you see that fitting in with being in the military?

Jason: I haven't formally taken the precepts yet, but I think I have an idea of what they're about. I would say that there are karmic implications about what I'm doing now, what I could be doing, what I might be asked to do. I am in conflict with that. I'm part patriot, and I would get a lot of pressure from my superiors and associates if I were to put my weapon down. I'm in conflict. I'm not sure where I'm at yet. I don't know how else to put it. If somebody was trying to kill me, I think I'd probably have it within me to kill them, but I don't support what's going on now.

Maia: How much room is there for dissent in the National Guard?

Jason: I'm careful about what I say. Technically, during a war, you can be executed for dissent or desertion, though they haven't done that since World War II. If I spoke out about this, I'd definitely get a lot of verbal pressure. There is a way you can be a conscientious objector, but that process can take a year to go through. I'm considering that, but I'm also torn. I reenlisted with the guard before I went to rehab, and they could have kicked me out because of my drug problem but they didn't. So I feel this weird sense of loyalty about it. There's a part of me that doesn't want to go back on my word, but I'm torn between that and doing something that's more in line with this new way of life that I'm living. I ask myself, what do I stand for now?

Maia: Are you "out" as a Buddhist in that setting? Does anybody know that you practice?

Jason: My supervisor does. He actually supports my involvement with Buddhism. I've brought him to San Francisco Zen Center a couple of times. He's very conservative in his beliefs, and at the same time, he supports anything religious that seems to be giving people direction. But he firmly believes in retaliation and putting a stop to the Taliban. He's my mentor, so it would be uncomfortable to tell him if I figure out I want to be a conscientious objector.

Maia: What are your thoughts about how to deal with the terrorism of this current crisis ?

Jason: We need to send a clear message that no one can come here and attack us, but I don't agree that bombing Afghanistan is the answer. I think we need to take a stance. And we need to do everything we can to diffuse what's going on between Israel and Palestine right now. I think we'd give a much stronger message by stopping the bombing and pulling out of the Middle East as much as we can. We need to seriously look at our own foreign policy, and keep all our troops here to protect us.

Maia: You're in a very interesting place—you're in two worlds, and you have a lot of respect for both of them. I get the sense that you're being pulled more toward the Buddhist life.

Jason: I am. But it's difficult, because the military is so intoxicating. Every time I go away to guard training, I have to readjust when I return. I tried to sit zazen a little bit when I was doing my training last summer, but it was hard.

Maia: Was any particular Buddhist teaching pivotal in bringing you to look at things differently?

Jason: The idea of sitting with suffering and opening up to it instead of running away from it. Before, I related to suffering by pushing it away.

Maia: A year and a half ago, before you got involved in Zen, would you have thought you'd have questions about being in the military?

Jason: No, not at all—I wanted to get more training. I'm not sure I want to do that anymore. There's a big change in the way I'm looking at a lot of things. ❖

The Places That Scare You:
A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times
by Pema Chödrön

Shambhala Publications, 2001, 144 pp., $21.95, hardcover
Also available from Sounds True Audio, 4 cassettes, $29.95

Reviewed by Grace Schireson

Before September 11, 2001, I thought I would review this book, *The Places That Scare You,* through the lens of individual mortality. I was wondering how this book would help me to develop coping resources for my mother's diagnosis of late-stage cancer. Before September 11, I was not coping with fear and dread minute by minute. Even though I was trying to practice with the Buddhist doctrine of no satisfaction, before September 11, I was satisfied with my practice, comfortable with my suffering, and only distantly aware of my relationship to the violent life that infected the rest of this planet.

On September 11, my security blanket was burned up at the World Trade Center. Physically and emotionally shaken, I turned to Pema Chödrön's book for a way to survive the fear that was neither limited to personal grief nor on a personal timeline. This is not a book about blissing out through meditative practices. This is not a manual for avoiding painful experiences. This is not a guide to finding safety in the purity of a monastic setting. In this, her latest book, Pema illuminates the variety of practice opportunities lodged in the hardship and the terror of everyday life, and she offers a wealth of practice instructions for mining the jewels of wisdom found only in these scary places.

From the perspective of this new scariest place, one world threatened with infectious hatred, I was encouraged by Pema's unique contribution to my own Buddhist practice. She teaches how we actually practice Buddhism with our own life. Buddhist practice does not occur in some academic ivory tower or in some heavenly realm; it occurs in our own life. In practicing Buddhism, we pry open our well-developed defense mechanisms and meet what we don't want to encounter.

"The Buddha taught that flexibility and openness bring strength and that running away from groundlessness weakens us and brings pain. But do we understand that becoming familiar with the running away is the key? Openness doesn't come from resisting our fears, but from getting to know them well."

Each one of us can experience our own fear while watching firemen rush into burning buildings, and while holding our breath as we or our loved ones begin to board airplanes all over again. This fear arises automatically, but using it to deepen our practice is what Pema teaches in this book.

Her instructions are valuable because of the sincerity of her personal practice. Pema's own genuine life experience shines through and supports the multitude of practice instructions she offers in this book. She shares her own scary places and how she works with them.

I have been practicing Zen Buddhism for 35 years, and I was surprised by how many new techniques I could learn from Pema's own broad and personal view. For example, in discussing the *brahmaviharas*, or the "four limitless qualities" (lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), Pema translates a teaching found in most traditions of Buddhism into wonderfully current language. She explains that "idiot compassion, overwhelm, overexcitement, and detachment" are ways that we mistakenly practice the brahmaviharas.

Pema's clear-eyed understanding brought to life my own mistakes in practice. I began to see that exhausting myself for the sake of compassionate caregiving might in fact be "idiot compassion," and that my desire to be strong for my family or my practice community might edge over from equanimity into detachment. The old Zen expression, "A hairsbreadth's deviation and heaven and earth are set apart," was well illuminated by Pema's explanation of how even the smallest addition of self-clinging ruins these compassionate states.

Pema reworks many Tibetan Buddhist practices into a form that is accessible to Western lay practitioners of other traditions. Her literal explanation and step-by-step description of *tonglen* practice (sending and receiving) clarified how one activates lovingkindness. On September 11, I used her instructions to begin receiving the pain and terror of the situation while sending back affection and tenderness. Even though we can donate blood, labor, and money, we also have the priceless gift of serenity to offer if we can maintain some composure.

For maintaining composure while staying connected, Pema also describes the "four methods of holding your seat," "three kinds of laziness," and "59 mind-training slogans of Atisha." The detailed instructions can help even a newcomer to Buddhism face fear and pain with equanimity. As we approach the daunting task of building peace and love for one another in our terrorized world, we need to not be overwhelmed by the immensity of this task. We can make good use of such mind-training slogans as: "When the world is filled with evil, transform all mishaps into the path of bodhi," and "Whatever you meet unexpectedly, join with meditation." It was my good fortune to be able to follow Pema's practice instructions to make use of my grief and jittery energy to deepen my meditative practice.

Pema emphasizes that the initial result of meditative practices is not always the immediate relief of suffering, but that sometimes Buddhist training can result in unconscious fortification of our defense mechanisms. She devotes a chapter, "Heightened Neurosis," to helping practitioners find their way through troubled times. The terrorist attacks of September 11 certainly opened me up to

forgotten fear and anxiety. I was able to make use of her wise words: "Understand that a feeling of dread or psychological discomfort might just be a sign that old habits are getting liberated."

At times the book's organizational style makes the reader work awfully hard. For example, the important overview of the book's basic premise—why it is effective to work with suffering—is not found until the third chapter, called "The Facts of Life." The book would have been stronger and easier for beginners to follow if it had begun by presenting these Facts of Life—impermanence, suffering, and interconnectedness—as an organizing principle. Pema points out that it is impossible to be effective in our lives when we are pretending that life is supposed to be permanent, satisfying, and made up of wholly separate objects. With this clarification, the practical value of what she is teaching becomes more apparent. The book also suffers at times because Pema crams too many ideas into a paragraph. Finally, I think it would have benefited from a summary chapter at the end.

Despite these limitations, this book is well worth tackling for its realistic perspective, its wealth of practice instructions, and the window it provides into the depths of Pema Chödrön's Buddhist practice. She teaches how the scary places in our lives can become, through Buddhist practice, a compost heap for enriching the garden of our life experience. She does not idealize the garden by viewing only blossoms. She does not idealize Buddhist practice as a path that captures our bliss and minimizes and separates our pain. This is a very important teaching for Western Buddhists. Pema is a real person confronting the real problems that make life so difficult. The pain in our life, especially after the sobering events of September 11, requires us to "get real," and reading this book may improve the chance of that happening. ❖

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

Saffron Days in L.A.:
Tales of a Buddhist Monk in America
by Bhante Walpola Piyananda

Shambhala Publications, 2001, 185 pp., $14.95, paperback

Reviewed by Denis Thalson

Like many books, *Saffron Days in L.A.* manages to be both a success and a failure at the same time. Its great strengths and equally apparent weaknesses both seem to be rooted in the unusual background and identity of its author. Ven. Piyananda is a traditionally trained and now senior Theravadin monk from Sri Lanka who has lived in the U.S. since 1976. After attending Northwestern University in Chicago, he became the first Theravadin bhikkhu to settle in the Los Angeles area, where he founded and still leads the Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara. *Saffron Days* is Piyananda's attempt to restate foundational Theravadin teachings for a modern U.S. audience.

The book succeeds very well as an introduction to basic Theravadin precepts, and as an explanation of how these might be lived in an ideal way. Piyananda presents the teachings in a series of problem-solving vignettes that demonstrate how Theravadin fundamentals apply to a wide array of human predicaments. Despite its title, the book's U.S. setting is incidental. The problems Piyananda describes are universal and could happen anywhere. Each chapter introduces a common problematic situation, such as an unruly teenager refusing to listen to his parents. The author then suggests sutta quotations that address the issue at hand, and provides his own scriptural interpretations. Each chapter ends with a quotation from the Dhammapada.

Saffron Days is an exemplary and succinct presentation of the connection between everyday human problems and solutions offered by Theravadin tradition. However, the tone Piyananda adopts often seems sanctimonious, and the story format doesn't always work. In chapter after chapter the problem is solved so readily that the story doesn't quite ring true. Piyananda describes some astounding counsel-

ing successes, but instead of strengthening his argument, these just make the resolutions seem less convincing. The unruly teen says, for example: "Bhante, I see where I can apply to my life what you have just explained. I almost decided to drop my history class, but now I won't. Using the Four Noble Truths I realize that the problem, or 'suffering,' as you call it, is something I created."

One might suspect that difficulties with language contributed to such counterproductive phrasing. But the author has lived in the U.S. for a quarter century, so language problems probably are not at fault here. Rather, I suspect that Piyananda deliberately chose to imitate the customary style of Theravadin instructional texts. While this may be charming and highly effective in its original setting, this traditional approach does not serve well in presenting the teachings to a modern U.S. audience.

The book might have been stronger if Piyananda had chosen to include some discussion of his grappling with American culture. If he had described his encounters with a new secular society, recalled early struggles, and told of the adjustments he had to make as he adapted to his new environment, it probably would have made interesting reading. However, Piyananda never steps out of his role as teacher and exemplar of Theravadin practice. The insights always seem to flow one way, and Piyananda never seems to reach a state of real engagement with his current U.S. setting. While this may demonstrate a laudatory and uncompromising clarity of identity, it makes for a stiffer and ultimately less satisfying book than might have been the case.

Saffron Days has a foreword by H.H. the Dalai Lama. A short Pali glossary is included at the end of the text. ❖

Denis Thalson is a doctoral student at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley and is currently teaching introductory religion classes at Dominican University in San Rafael, California.

Deep in Our Hearts:
Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement
by Constance Curry, et al.

University of Georgia Press, 2000, 407 pp., $29.95, hardcover

Reviewed by Dr. Harry Scott Coverston

Many of those who are not old enough to remember the civil rights movement—and some who are—tend to see the earth-shaking events of the 1960s through romantic lenses. Readers who hope for an account of a noble movement, with larger-than-life heroines who helped lead America out of darkness, will find their hopes disappointed in this book. What they will find instead are candid, heartfelt, insider views of that movement from nine white women who left colleges, families, and former lives to devote themselves to the cause of equality.

As each of the women tells her story, an increasingly complex and often uncomfortable picture of the civil rights movement emerges. The women dispel a number of myths: for example, the persistent notion that civil rights protections resulted from the efforts of enlightened, benevolent white people from the North, who traveled south as Freedom Riders to help their brothers and sisters throw off the shackles of racism. In fact, many of the early civil rights workers were homegrown southern women like Casey Hayden, a Texan who got involved in the movement through the University YWCA in Austin. Or Joan C. Browning, whose humble background in the cotton fields of Georgia helped her to identify with the lives of many poverty-stricken blacks. "Friend and hostile foe alike called me 'poor white' and sometimes tacked on 'trash,'" she said.

Nearly all the women recount losses of family and friends because of their civil rights work. One woman's father described her to FBI agents as a "commie," which prompted them to begin surveillance of her activities. Another woman's mother spoke of her daughter as if she had died—the two did not reconcile until just before the mother's death. The authors describe their palpable fear of southern whites who were willing to use lethal force to stop the movement. Some of the victims were the authors' friends.

The women reveal the movement's shadow side, in which educated white women were both desperately needed and deeply resented by a burgeoning black male leadership. Most of the women left the movement feeling estranged, and fled to self-exile in rural communities far from the places and events that defined the struggle.

All nine women reported experiencing an ongoing decline of what could be called naive optimism about humanity. Most began their civil rights work in religious organizations and student leadership groups, full of youthful confidence that the world could be changed quickly and decisively through education and organized action.

In each story, optimism gives way to a growing consciousness of the deeply rooted, multifaceted problems faced by the essentially unconscious American culture of the early 1960s. Racism proved to be only the tip of that iceberg. In short order the struggle for justice began to peel back layers of injustice based in gender and class. Such realizations also informed a growing opposition to the Vietnam War, which all nine authors espoused.

As they relinquished the safety nets of their own former lives, joining protests in the elections offices and schools of Mississippi, and the lunch counters of drugstores and bus stations across the South, each woman came to see a larger picture of justice that has defined her ever since. They also found spiritual guides among southern women such as Ella Baker, an African American whose courage and resolve reassured them that they had not taken the risk in vain. The spirituality they developed through hardship and compassion for the "other" leaps from the pages, even as their life jour-

neys take most of them far from their childhood religious roots. Two of the authors ultimately found ways to combine ongoing work for social justice with Buddhist practice.

If there is any weakness in this compelling collection of first-person accounts, it is that readers who are unfamiliar with this particular segment of American history and geography could find themselves lost in a sea of dates and places. An overview of the movement, a timeline, and some maps would help. In addition, the writers' tendency to refer to organizations by acronyms left this reader badly in need of a list of abbreviations.

It is particularly telling that this collection of narratives takes its title from a line of the civil rights anthem "We Shall Overcome." While most of these stories suggest that the women's initial involvement in the movement was unplanned, it is clear that their ongoing engagement with that movement was motivated by a compassion found only deep in the heart. It bound these women to one another and to the people they served.

Casey Hayden concludes the final chapter with these words:

> On the inside, in my bones, I am still with them all. This isn't fluffy or sentimental. It's a visceral thing, earned by doing what was common to us all...We embodied, not as abstraction, but actually, the struggle and the stress, the ambiguities and the paradoxes of creating new social realities...The unity we achieved transcends any political differences we might have had in the past as well as the distance between us now in space and time. We were many minds, but one heart. ❖

Dr. Harry Scott Coverston is a professor of humanities, religion, and ethics at Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida. He also chairs the Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Death Penalty Interest Group.

At the Eleventh Hour:
Caring for My Dying Mother
by Susan Carol Stone

Present Perfect Books, 2001, 195 pp., $14.00, paperback

Reviewed by Anna Barnard

In this book, Susan Carol Stone tells how she left her training at Shasta Abbey, a Buddhist monastery, to care for her mother during six months of chemotherapy, and again as her mother negotiated the end of life and died. It is a fine example of engaged practice.

Western Buddhists are working to find a balance between maintaining a practice that evolved for monastic life, and maintaining a life in the world. We are trying to bring the awareness we develop from sitting meditation to our daily life. Stone shows how this work can go forward in two fundamental areas: our relationships with our mothers, and death.

If you are caring for a dying relative or involved in hospice work, and open to a definitely Buddhist commentary, this book will appeal. If you are also of Jewish heritage, and many Western Buddhists are, you may feel an added sense of connection to the writer. Other readers may pick up this book for the charm of an honest and simple story.

My impression is of a book let go too soon by both its author and editor. I felt some interest in this woman who shared so honestly, and it was frustrating to know so little of her. The writing could use some work as well, to smooth the jumps back and forth in time, so that they work with the story instead of jarring the reader. But perhaps the short episodes are evidence of the sort of interrupted schedule that a caregiver might experience.

This book kept drawing me back. The conversational style and intimate, homely detail gives the reader a sense of personal connection with the author as she shares her lived practice.

Through Susan Carol Stone's story, we also share the discovery that "whether bright, neutral, or agonizing—all experience can be infused with the same deep joy." ❖

Anna Barnard lives in Oakland and is a former oncology nurse now working in a health sciences library. She was present for her own mother's death, and has been actively engaged in the Lesbian Buddhist Sangha's service-practice group.

BPF Chapter News

Compiled by Carrie Gaiser

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, many Buddhist Peace Fellowship chapters have redirected their energies from previous projects to the current crisis. For my part, witnessing the intensity of response on the part of BPF veterans and newcomers alike has been a heartening reminder of compassion and hope in these times. Several chapters, while also holding meetings for the sharing of concerns and for developing approaches to the national situation, are involved in concrete acts of peacemaking with their local Muslim communities, as an antidote to ignorance and prejudice. And in the past few weeks, interest in joining or forming new BPF chapters has increased dramatically. The desire to take positive action for healing and reconciliation is strong among the BPF supporters I have communicated with. For readers with a similar aspiration, I am including at the end of this column a list of contacts for developing chapters. There are many more chapters in various stages of completion; please keep an eye on the BPF Web site for more news and information. Also, see the inside back cover of this issue for more contacts. It is my hope that sharing the activities of BPF chapters will help support and inspire the work that lies ahead for all of us.

The **San Diego Chapter** has joined the newly formed San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice. Ava Torre-Bueno, the chapter coordinator, is the chair of the Hate Crimes Prevention Subcommittee. The group will offer a workshop on Buddhist Peacemaking to the Coalition and hold vigils at the sites of verified hate crimes in the San Diego area. The chapter is also participating in an ongoing Friday night vigil outside of a local mosque to give a show of support and to provide a sense of security for those worshiping inside.

The **Rochester Chapter** is joining forces with Rochester Restraint, a coalition of activists urging the U.S. government to use restraint in their response to the September 11 terrorist attack. Acting in conjunction with the coalition, the chapter has prepared and disseminated a petition asking for restraint that will be sent to government representatives and the president. Chapter members were also involved in a bus trip to Washington, D.C., to protest the war, and racism against Muslims. The chapter holds a weekly Saturday gathering and demonstration and is taking steps to further its dialogue with the Muslim community.

Jill Boone of the newly formed **West Bay Chapter** in northern California reports that the chapter's October 5 meeting to discuss the recent tragedy led to deeply personal sharing and thoughtful discussion. The event was facilitated by Susan Murphy, a Quaker, skilled meditation teacher, and member of Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing. The chapter hopes to hold six-week focus groups on aspects of service and activism in the coming year, following a daylong chapter "grand opening" event in January. Members also participated in a successful Habitat for Humanity event in October.

More news: A warm welcome to new contacts—Gretchen Albrecht-Hellar in **North Idaho**, and Karen Harrison in **Toronto**...Mike Fallarino, the BPF **New York Capital** area contact, and Peter Wood, a member of the **Sonoma County** chapter, represented Buddhist Peace Fellowship at activist festivals in their areas...Paul Boyle, the **North Carolina Triangle** area contact, has started a new prison pen pal correspondence program in conjunction with Chapel Hill Zen Center...The **Sacramento** chapter, clad in purple and gold "BPF Sac" t-shirts, has been participating in a weekly downtown peace vigil, pursuing the practice of nonviolent communication, and sharing ways to be peace. The chapter held a community-building and educational supper to benefit the Adopt-a-Landmine Campaign...On September 24, the **Texas Hill Country** chapter held a peace talk to discuss reactions to the terrorist attack. Further meetings will address the development of a Buddhist perspective and course of action in response to the crisis. A walking meditation in October in front of the Texas state capital was sponsored by the chapter and attended by members of a diverse activist community...The **Spokane** chapter sponsored a public sitting immediately following the 9/11 attacks, and a three-day retreat facilitated by Jason Siff in early October.

Developing BPF Chapters

- Alison Alpert, New York, NY, <aalpert@assist-net.com>
- Ric Dunworth, Ludlow, VT, <dunworth@ludl.tds.net>
- Troy Jewell, Orlando, FL, <tjewell72@yahoo.com>
- Cliff Heegel, Germantown, TN, 901/758-4070 <bpf@askdrcliff.com>
- Heidi Enji Hoogstra, Portland, OR, <enji@earthlink.net>
- Annina Lavee, Tucson, AZ, <anninal@earthlink.net>
- Tamar Enoch, New England, <ericnsukha@aol.com>
- Shannon Turner-Covell, Puget Sound, Seattle, WA <shannonturnercovell@hotmail.com> ❖

Carrie Gaiser is a student majoring in religion at Smith College.

BASE & Education Report

BASE has had an active Fall with a new BASE program starting in San Francisco, organized by Joani Marinoff and mentored by Pam Weiss, who was in the very first BASE group. The nine-person group is off to a wonderful start exploring the precepts and their application to social change.

BASE has gone international! There will be a BASE group in Vancouver, Canada, beginning in February 2002. Harreson Sito is starting the program, and Margot Sangster, who was in Home BASE, will be mentoring it.

Diversity BASE, for support on issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, will begin this February in Berkeley. Applications are now available for the program. Contact our BPF website, *www.bpf.org/base1.html*, or Swan Keyes (<swan@bpf.org>, 510/655-6169 x310) for more information. Some stipends will be available.

For the past year, former board member Donald Rothberg and I have been designing an Education and Training Program for BPF. We are finishing a research phase and we held a modest pilot program this fall with such activities as a class in Berkeley on "Greed Management," a *Turning Wheel* salon on "Reconciliation," a class on "A Buddhist Way to Heal Racism," a socially engaged Buddhism retreat at Southern Dharma Retreat Center in North Carolina, and monthly retreats of the Community of Buddhist Helping Professionals Forum. See the next issue of *TW* for an update. ❖ *—Diana Winston*

Executive Director's Report

This is my last column as executive director of Buddhist Peace Fellowship. I am constitutionally uncomfortable saying good-bye, in part because I don't really like the idea of impermanence. That is why I have to keep practicing. But I know I'm not really saying good-bye, because throughout life, those I love and engage with are never far away. This will certainly be true when I step down at BPF; stepping down is not stepping away. The staff and board and members of BPF are my dharma family. Such connections will not fade. Over this last decade BPF has become a clear and consistent voice of socially engaged Buddhist activists. This is something that we have all accomplished together. I know that my successor as E.D. will continue this work in his or her own way, while I expect to keep teaching, writing, and meeting with many of you to deepen the vision we have all shaped.

My stepping down has been in the works throughout this year, a year that was also punctuated by the loss of my dharma sister Maylie Scott and my own unexpected illness. (By the way, I am very happy to say that I have come through unscathed, though with a keen awareness of the preciousness and fragility of life.) And now a war. It has been quite a year!

I see a terrible irony in the fact that my tenure at BPF has been bracketed by two large-scale U.S. military ventures in the Middle East. I can't recall the exact chronology, but I remember attending BPF's Gulf War town meetings in Berkeley in January 1991, and I began at working at BPF soon after, as the ground war wound down. It was a grim time. Many people were grieving and angry at the scale of U.S. military operations that left thousands of civilians dead in Iraq. Many others felt that Saddam Hussein's regime (a regime that the U.S. had long supported) was dangerous and needed to be removed. Nearly 11 years later, tragic acts of terrorism in the United States have caught us again unprepared, and we are enmeshed in what looks like a new "war against terrorism." This war is visibly centered in the already battered nation of Afghanistan, a small but tough place that has been the graveyard of two modern empires—Great Britain and the Soviet Union. I grieve for those who are already lost, through no fault of their own. I can see these hostilities extending into the distant future, with terrible consequences here at home.

Looking back on my time at BPF, the painful reality is that much of the suffering and strife that we have been addressing all these years is still going on. Ineffective sanctions on Iraq cause the death from hunger and illness of many children each day. The case of Tibet is more urgent now than ever, as a fragile culture is chipped away piece by piece. Vietnam suffers under the continuing suppression of human and religious rights. Israel and Palestine hover on the brink of civil war. Burma still teeters under military despotism that targets the ethnic minorities for special hostility.

I could go on with this discouraging litany. In a sense we have failed. As bodhisattvas we have not been able to save all sentient beings. We may not even be able to save ourselves. But our failure is in close company with the failure of teachers and heroes, like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Thich Nhat Hanh, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, none of whom completely achieved his heart's goal, at least not yet. Our own realization may be more limited than these great beings', and our talents more modest, but we share their vision of harmony and respect among all beings. This kind of failure is honorable and necessary.

The lesson is that regardless of failure or success, we must try to manifest patience, persistence, and kindness—even when we encounter great doubt, even as we see nations and peoples caught in terrible suffering. As we emulate our teachers and mentors, beneficial actions are transformed into wholesome karma and strong community. We plant some tough and enduring seeds.

I believe we have entered a new era marked both by dangers and opportunities. The dangers of hatred and mutual destruction are glaring. But the great opportunities are here too. Many dharma practitioners turn to BPF seeking to better understand what is happening and what to do. This is a responsibility we must honor, and I have great confidence in our ability to stay on the path of peace and dharma.

There is much more I wish I could express here, but maybe it is best just to say that I have great affection for you all. Please take good care and keep doing work of peace inside and out. ❖ —*Alan Senauke*

Announcements & Classifieds

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Peace-by-Peace: A walk from Berkeley, CA to Washington, DC in response to 9-11. January 21 to September 11, 2002. Contact <Peace-by-Peace@home.com> or call 510/644-9260.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Homeless and housed people meet weekly in Berkeley for meditation and discussion. Volunteers facilitate sessions oriented toward stress reduction. Tea and cookies. Mondays, 7:30–9:00 PM, off the courtyard on the west side of Dana between Durant and Channing. For more info, call 510/548-0551.

VOLUNTEER/SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

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

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

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

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

CLASSIFIEDS

Adult Care Domestic Help Needed in Palo Alto, CA. Woman severely disabled from immune disorder and chemical sensitivities seeks caregiver/housekeeper for part-time position. Salary DOE and health benefits offered. Caregiver must be environmentally conscious, wear no scents, enjoy cleaning, shopping, preparing organic/whole foods, laundry, and some personal care. If you are interested in only one area of need, please still call 650/494-3849.

Tea Circle: Full line of supplies and arts for Japanese tea ceremony. Visit our Web site *www.tea-circle.com* or call 707/792-1946 or 415/499-8431.

✣ BOOK READINGS ✣

to celebrate the publication of *Wisdom of the East,* edited by Susan Suntree

San Francisco Zen Center, 300 Page St., San Francisco, Jan. 31, at 7:30 PM, with **Melody Ermachild Chavis**, **Susan Moon**, and others.

Book Passage, 51 Tamal Vista Blvd, Corte Madera, CA, Feb. 1, at 1 PM.

Barnes and Noble, Tucson, AZ, Feb. 10, at 2 PM.

Odyssey Books, 11989 Sutton Way, Grass Valley, CA, Feb. 21, at 7 PM.

Readers' Books, Sonoma, CA, Feb. 22 at 7:30 PM, with **Susan Moon** and others.

Gratitudes

BPF gratefully acknowledges contributions above membership received between August 1, 2001, and October 31, 2001:

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To those of you who gave $1–$99 above membership: Thank you so much! Your generosity and dedication keep our work alive.

A special thank-you to our volunteers:
Jessica Baen ❖ Ann Baker ❖ Kokaku Blix ❖ Martha Boesing ❖ Francesco Bruno ❖ Melody Ermachild Chavis ❖ Scotti Clair ❖ Mark Coleman ❖ Marinell Daniel ❖ Daniel Doane ❖ Tova Green ❖ Michael Halpern ❖ Janet Hastings ❖ Lisa Hoffman ❖ Pamela Krasney ❖ Paula Kristovich ❖ Agatha Lee ❖ Erica Leverett ❖ Bob Lyons ❖ Joani Marinoff ❖ Yumi Mitsuya ❖ Douglas Nielson ❖ Clement Ng ❖ Judith Randall ❖ Joyce Rybandt ❖ Heather Sarantis ❖ Cassie Scott ❖ Aryeh Shell ❖ Joel Siegel ❖ Judith Stronach ❖ Ellen Stuebe ❖ Tor Taylor ❖ Pam Weiss ❖ Berkeley Zen Center and Weiser/Red Wheel Books for book donations to the Prison Project

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

See Page 42 of this issue for a list of contacts for developing chapters.

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