

TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism

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ACTIVIST NUNS & MONKS

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PLUS: Robert Aitken on Grassroots Organizing • **Paul Haller** on Northern Ireland



From the Editor

In the West, progressive people often think of Buddhists as being apolitical, just contemplating their navels. Within our own ranks of socially engaged Buddhists, many lay Buddhists have a similar misunderstanding about Buddhist nuns and monks, suspecting that *they* are mainly contemplating *their* navels, unconcerned about social suffering.

This issue of *Turning Wheel* brings activist nuns and monks out of the margins, and recognizes some examples of the remarkable work they do. There are many activist Buddhist nuns and monks, both in Asia and the West, and we owe them respect and gratitude. (There are several monks and nuns on BPF's advisory board.)

People who live in monasteries also make a contribution. They keep the practices and traditions alive and pass them on. They create a place of peace for others to visit, and they inspire others by their example, modeling the possibility of liberation. But for our present purposes, we highlight nuns and monks who work outside the monastery.

Monks and nuns take some serious vows, to help them let go of attachment. The vows vary depending on the tradition, but they may include eating only what is offered, not eating anything after noon, not going to the movies for entertainment (this would be a rough one for me), not possessing anything but one's robes and bowls, not handling money. Even in a monastery, where everything supports those vows, it's a challenge to keep them. It must be harder still for those who work in prisons and soup kitchens, who walk long distances for peace and sit in trees to protect them from being cut down.

Often, the first thing that comes into a layperson's head on meeting a monk or nun is the vow of celibacy—how hard it must be to live without sex. (Sometimes one has the opportunity to know this without being a monk or nun. Can one take a retroactive vow of celibacy?) But it seems to me that letting go of self-clinging, of personal ambitions and plans, is a wider and deeper vow, and harder to keep. Not to try to advance your career, or buy a bigger house, or take up photography for the fun of it. One doesn't have a personal life in the ordinary sense. And this practice of renunciation, of putting oneself aside, makes possible a powerful focus that can be applied in the prison or the soup kitchen.

Ordained Buddhists also remind us of the importance of sangha. As activists, we need community. An individual working alone doesn't have the strength or the courage to change the world.

Nuns and monks take their place in the lineage with a sense of historical continuity, of being a part of something larger than themselves. They remind us to be grateful for our ancestors, elders, and mentors, like Thich Nhat Hanh and Maha Ghosananda, who in his 80s still leads an annual peace walk across his native Cambodia.

From our monastic brothers and sisters we can learn about renunciation, and take a few steps in that direction. We can try to simplify our lives at least a little bit and bring more focus to our work. We can make up some vows for ourselves: not to drive the car on Sundays; to devote one evening a week to writing letters for peace.

We can learn patience, not expecting to fix everything now. We can put ourselves into the lineage of human beings working for peace. ♦

—Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*: [Please note revised deadlines.]
Summer '03: **African American Buddhists**. Deadline: March 3, 2003
Fall '03: **Food**. Deadline: June 2, 2003

TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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

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Single copies \$6.00 postpaid from:

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Tel.: 510/655-6169 Fax: 510/655-1369

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ISSN 1065-058X

Cover photo by Skip Schiel
Jun Yasuda at a vigil, with Louise Dunlap
behind her. (See Dunlap's article "Walks Far
Woman" on page 24.)

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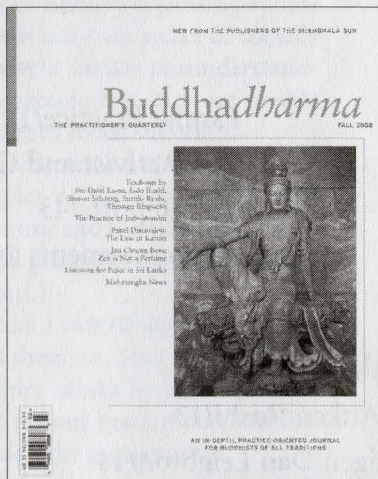
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FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF THE SHAMBHALA SUN.

Indra's Net

In the image of the "jeweled net of Indra," found in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels, each of which reflects all the others. The following reports from near and far remind us, as we work for peace, that we are all connected.

What Future for Tibet?

For the first time since 1985, a delegation from Dharmasala's Tibetan Government-in-Exile visited China and Tibet last September. The Dalai Lama's envoy heading the delegation said he was impressed by the "flexibility" of the Chinese.

The Dalai Lama has long advocated a "Middle Way" for Tibet: not full independence (China would manage foreign policy and defense), but with "all affairs relating to Tibet and Tibetans" decided by a democratically elected government.

The Dalai Lama envisions Tibet as a zone of *ahimsa* (non-harming): no manufacture, testing, or stockpiling of armaments; the entire country designated a national park, with strict laws protecting animal and plant life; development policies exploiting natural resources without damaging ecosystems; no technologies producing hazardous wastes.

China's reasons for resuming dialogue have been the subject of much speculation. After the cultural revolution (to Tibetans, a time when "the sky fell to earth"), then-president of China Deng Xiaoping declared that all issues concerning Tibet—except independence—were open for discussion. New policies encouraged Tibetan culture, language, and control of local government.

It soon became clear, however, that "everything but independence" excluded the Dalai Lama's Middle Way.

In 1989, after independence riots in Tibet and the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, China turned to hard-line repression of Tibet's cultural and religious expression, including tight control of monasteries; adopted an accelerated development policy linking Tibet's economy inextricably with China's; and encouraged a massive influx of Chinese settlers. In 1993, the Chinese government broke off all dialogue with Dharmasala.

Renowned emigré author Jamyang Norbu argues that China's recent overture was timed so that President Jiang Zemin, during his October visit to the United States, could claim that China is pursuing dialogue with Tibet.

Norbu has sometimes called for a "Tibetan Intifada." Younger Tibetans inside and outside Tibet are increasingly impatient with the Dalai Lama's unwavering commitment to nonviolence. Tibetans in Tibet lack adequate education (an estimated 40 percent are illiterate), and unemployment is high, while the Chinese control a broad segment of the economy. Melvyn Goldstein, a leading Western scholar on Tibet, warns that "nationalistic emotions coupled with desperation and anger make a powerful brew."

Tibetans are not China's only restive national minority. Uighur Muslims in the northwest—who have also seen a massive influx of Chinese settlers, economic exploitation,

discrimination, religious repression, and environmental degradation—are actively fighting for independence. In fact, President Bush, coaxing China into supporting his "war on terrorism," designated the Uighur resistance a "terrorist organization."

Discontent smolders elsewhere in China's impoverished west. With a new generation of leaders set to take power in Beijing, there may well be policy changes.

A peaceful path has been suggested by a former Tibetan resistance fighter. Phuntsog Wangyal now runs small-scale development projects in Tibet through the Tibet Foundation, with China's cooperation. For Phuntsog, education and health care come first. He argues: "What is China afraid of?" It fears that if it does not occupy Tibet, India will; and that it will run out of essential resources in 20 years. What if India guaranteed not to invade, and an independent Tibet pledged to share its vast mineral and oil resources with China?

Phuntsog remains firmly committed to independence: "People have to have some hope—whether they achieve it or not. For example, I am a Buddhist and so enlightenment is my ultimate objective. When I light a butter lamp, do prostrations, chant *om mani padme hum*, I am putting something into the cup that might in the end lead to the cup overflowing and to enlightenment. Yet I know my ultimate goal of enlightenment is unrealistic. It is even more unrealistic than the prospect of independence for Tibet."

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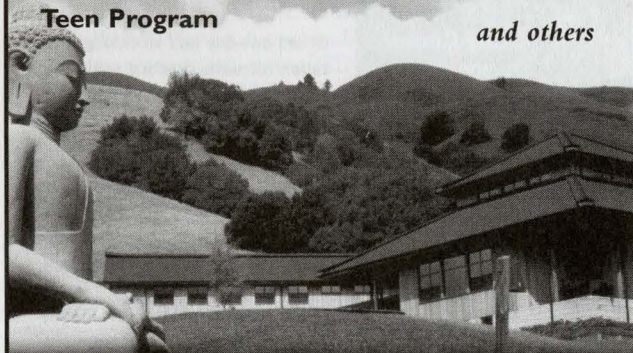
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The Education of Palestinian Children

In Nablus, a West Bank Palestinian city of 110,000, the occupying Israeli army has imposed a curfew since June 21 (close to five months at this writing). The curfew is essentially house arrest for entire families—no one is allowed out except for a few hours a week to buy basic necessities. At dawn, loudspeakers on the streets blast a warning: “Whoever steps out will die.” Children, forced to stay inside, become quarrelsome and cranky; parents watch older children closely, terrified they might slip out to throw stones at the Israeli soldiers or their tanks.

In this same period, most West Bank cities have experienced curfews at least half the time.

Army regulations authorize Israeli soldiers use live fire to enforce curfews—and some have done so: in the four months before October 15, at least 15 Palestinian civilians were killed in this way.

During curfews, schools are closed. On August 31, when one million students in the West Bank and Gaza were to start school, curfews were lifted in most Palestinian cities—but not all. In Jenin and part of Hebron, 30,000 students could not attend class. In Ramallah, schools were open for only one hour before curfew was reinstated.

Under international law, Israel, as an occupying power, must ensure every Palestinian child's access to education. In October, according to UNICEF, curfews and closures

were keeping 226,000 children and over 9,300 teachers from their classrooms.

The UN also reported that when the Israeli army reoccupied six of the largest Palestinian cities last spring, it destroyed 11 schools, vandalized nine, and used 30 as military outposts and for detention. In Ramallah, soldiers entered a secondary school for girls, destroyed books and files, smashed musical instruments, threw copies of the Q'uran into the toilets, and wrote obscenities on the blackboards.

Palestinians put great stock in education, and underground schools are springing up everywhere—in homes, shops, and mosques. Children slip between buildings to reach the schools. The Israeli soldiers usually look the other way but, as one child said, “We go out afraid and come back home afraid.”

Parents from Ramallah and El-Bireh have formed “Jaras” (“bell” in Arabic). Insisting on children's right to education, they demand schools stay open. They plan to give a bell to every child in the West Bank. At the hour when they should be going to school, children will ring bells from every home. This might touch the conscience of Israeli soldiers, as “some have children of their own,” explained one parent. If schools do open, children will use the bells as a kind of white flag to give them safe passage. Israeli friends are looking for bells, which are unavailable in the West Bank.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has said, “They [Palestinians] must be hit and it must be painful. We must cause them losses, so they feel the heavy price.” But a growing number of the victims are children, both Israeli and Palestinian. At least 282 of the Palestinians killed from September 2000 through October 2002 were under 18, 70 of them 12 or younger; over 7,000 children have been injured, 500 permanently disabled. And 70 Israelis under 18 have been killed.


The Palestinian children are so traumatized by fear they have difficulty concentrating in school. And, as one teacher said, “They also feel that the subject matter is irrelevant.” One 17-year-old said, “Our first ambition is to survive.”

⇒ It is possible to sponsor a child in Palestine, where poverty and malnutrition are reaching catastrophic levels. E-mail or call the Middle East Children's Alliance: <meca@mecaforpeace.org>; 510/548-0542.

Ritual for World Peace

The Dalai Lama has repeatedly criticized the U.S. war on terrorism, stating that “terrorism cannot be addressed by the use of force because it does not address the complex underlying problems. In fact, the use of force may exacerbate them.” Asked about Afghans' apparent welcome of the U.S. invasion, he commented, “These are very temporary sorts of measures.”

Last September, as media filled with news of the bloody bombing in Bali and President Bush daily threatening war



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against Iraq, the Dalai Lama conducted an ancient initiation ritual "for world peace" in Austria. The 12-day Kalachakra (Wheel of Time) ceremony drew 8,000 participants from all over Europe. Many non-Buddhists attended. As one woman from a French group said, "If a large number of people get together in the name of peace, that could help."

The ritual's central feature is the creation of a sand mandala depicting Kalachakra, a deity symbolizing aspects of the enlightened mind, and 721 other deities, in their sacred palace. The mandala, once secret, was first exhibited publicly in 1988 in the New York Natural History Museum, after the Dalai Lama decided sharing it would promote peace.

Monks create the mandala over eight days; participants may not view it until the ninth day. In the following days, the Vajra Master (the *vajra* in Tibetan Buddhism is a ritual implement that symbolizes cutting through delusions) guides the initiates through the palace along the path of enlightenment, using the mandala as a map. The teaching helps participants realize that they are no more important than all other beings and it empowers them to work for the benefit of all.

On the 12th day, the mandala is swept into a vase and the blessed sand poured into a river, illuminating the truth of impermanence. The water's flow will bring the energy of wisdom and compassion to the whole world. ❖

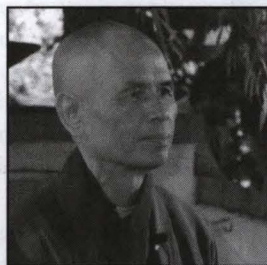
Indra's Net is researched and written by Annette Herskovits.

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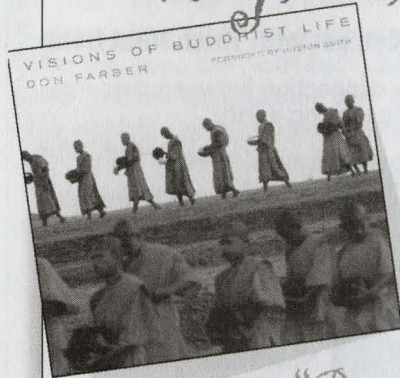
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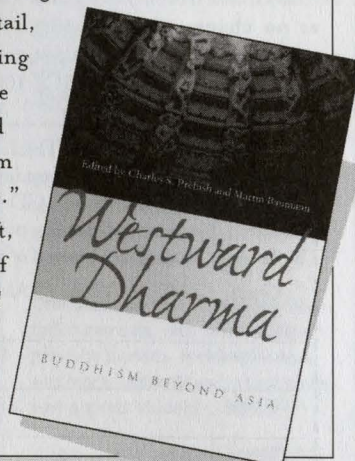
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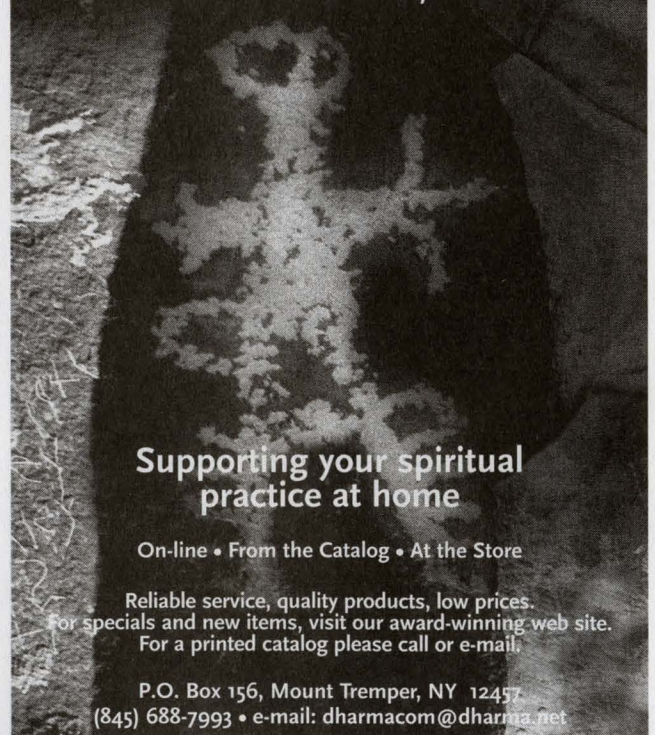
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Human Rights

A Burmese Prisoner of Conscience Keeps the Precepts

by Judith Stronach

U Win Htein is senior assistant to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the largest opposition party in Myanmar (Burma). He was detained in May 1996, and in August was found guilty on two counts. The first was for organizing farmers to gather information on the agricultural situation so that Suu Kyi could use it in her weekend address to NLD supporters and for planning to smuggle a video of dry rice fields to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The second count was for instructing Suu Kyi's bodyguard to be interviewed by a foreign journalist about the torture of political prisoners in Myanmar's jails. Win Htein was sentenced to 14 years in prison on grounds that he intended to disrupt the morality of the general public and to disrupt the stability of the union.

Amnesty International considers Win Htein to be a prisoner of conscience, detained for his peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of assembly and expression. Amnesty is further concerned that the conditions of his detention and trial violated international standards. In one trial Win Htein was not allowed to meet privately with his lawyer, and his lawyer was not allowed to cross-examine witnesses during the trial. In the second trial Win Htein was not allowed a lawyer. Amnesty is also concerned that the legislation under which he was sentenced criminalizes the right to freedom of expression and is being used by the government to detain nonviolent critics of its rule.

Win Htein is being held in Insein Prison, where he was previously detained as a prisoner of conscience from 1989 to 1995. During this period he was subjected to physical and psychological torture—he was often deprived of water, made to kneel on the floor for days at a time, and also made to lie on his stomach, handcuffed and with a hood on his head. He contracted a painful spinal condition, high blood pressure, and migraines, for which he requires medical attention.

For two years and eight months he was not allowed to leave his cell or to receive visits from his family. He said that meditation, or what he calls “mental culture,” learned in a Buddhist monastery, helped him survive this form of imprisonment. “I always tried to occupy my mind with something, sometimes reciting the suttas, sometimes meditating, sometimes keeping my consciousness on whatever I was doing.” He believed that through mindfulness he could keep his mind free of negative emotions like anger, and thereby keep his precepts intact.

☞ Send politely worded appeals urging the immediate and unconditional release of U Win Htein, and asking that pending his release he be given adequate medical care, to:

Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1, State Peace and Development Council c/o Ministry of Defence, Ahlanpya Phaya Street, Yangon, Union of Myanmar.

Young Tibetan Nun Released

The Human Rights column in the Summer 2002 *TW* highlighted the case of Ngawang Sandrol, a young Tibetan nun imprisoned as a teen in 1992 for “counterrevolutionary” crimes. Good news! Ngawang Sandrol was released by the Chinese government on October 18, 2002. Sandrol had been sent to prison for taking part in protests on behalf of Tibetan independence. While in prison she and 12 other nuns made a clandestine recording of songs praising the Dalai Lama, which was smuggled out of prison and earned Sandrol international recognition. In reprisal, the Chinese authorities added 16 years to her initial three-year sentence.

Sandrol's release, nine years ahead of schedule, came just weeks before China's President Jiang Zemin was to meet with President Bush. Sandrol is the latest of a number of Tibetan political prisoners released this year, possibly indicating improvement in relations between China and the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. The action may be a goodwill gesture prompted by China's wish to strengthen relations with the U.S. But credit is also due to the steady pressure exerted by human rights advocates over the years—including *Turning Wheel* readers who wrote letters on Ngawang Sandrol's behalf. ♦

(Adapted from a New York Times article, October 18, 2002.)

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History

Dosho

by Diane Patenaude Ames

In 629, the year that Dosho (629–700) was born (probably into a family of Korean or Chinese technocrats imported by the rulers of Japan to make such things as doors), the Japanese did not yet have money. Funerals of the more conservative aristocrats still featured animal sacrifice and dancers wearing red paint. The imperial court was frequently moved, often to escape aggrieved ghosts. For example, relocation became necessary in 645 because an estimated 800 people, mostly members of the imperial family and their attendants, had been murdered in or around the palace in a typical dynastic spat. Dosho, who had probably already been ordained a Buddhist monk, may have found this unseemly in a court which had supposedly embraced Buddhism some 50 years before.

Either to escape the court or to help fill Japan's need for trained Buddhist teachers, Dosho volunteered for a dangerous voyage to China around 653. There he studied under the learned pilgrim monk Xuanzang, who had journeyed to India to collect Buddhist texts and was translating them into Chinese. Dosho seems to have been particularly interested in the teachings of the Yogacara or "consciousness only" school of Buddhist philosophy.

Around 661 Dosho returned to Japan, bringing with him

some Buddha relics and Japan's first complete Mahayana Tripitaka. He presented these treasures to the Asukadera, the oldest Buddhist temple in Japan, and moved into the temple himself to teach the Yogacara (or Hosso School, as it came to be known in Japan) to student monks. A more political monk would have moved closer to the imperial court, whose peregrinations had taken it some distance away from the Asukadera, but under the circumstances Dosho may very well have preferred to stay away from politics.

In 672 Emperor Temmu seized the throne over the usual heap of corpses who were his own relatives, necessitating another move for the court. He chose to build a palace in Asuka, near Dosho's Asukadera. Dosho then moved on again, announcing that the bodhisattva ideal required monks to work for the welfare of the common people, traveling great distances to do so if necessary. For much of his remaining life, Dosho traveled all over Japan, organizing projects to build irrigation canals, bridges, and roads. This basic infrastructure was needed by the peasants for economic survival but had been neglected by the government in favor of building an endless series of palaces—and, one must add, Buddhist temples.

Dosho is remembered today not only as the founder of the Hosso School but also as the first Japanese Buddhist monk to take an active interest in social welfare. Among his disciples was Gyogi, who became known as a bodhisattva in his own lifetime because of his work for the poor and needy. ❖

Christopher Ikeda-Nash, CPA

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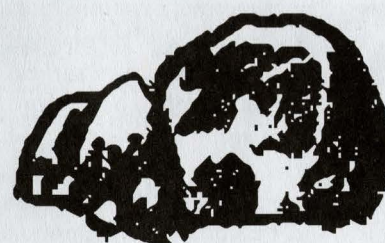
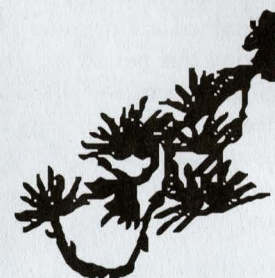
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Ecology

Drawing from the Well of Silence

by Stephanie Kaza

The second Buddhist-Christian Intermonastic Encounter at Gethsemani Abbey opened last spring with a formal dedication to the pioneering work of Thomas Merton. Father Skudlarek led our silent group of Buddhists and Christians through the cemetery of plain white markers, placing the large, colorful wreath of April flowers on Merton's stone. We were there at the Trappist monastery in Kentucky to carry on Merton's work of deep inquiry into the nature of human suffering. For five days I felt the long shadow of this spiritual giant who was such an important model in engaged practice.

Thomas Merton lived from 1915 to 1968. While at Columbia University studying English and developing his writing, he gradually underwent a religious conversion to Roman Catholicism. The strict monastic discipline of the Trappist order at Gethsemani appealed to him and he was accepted for admission in 1941. Setting aside his writing for a life of prayer, Merton was surprised to be assigned the task of producing a spiritual autobiography. In the tumultuous and uncertain times of World War II, his book *The Seven Storey Mountain* became a bestseller, thus inaugurating Merton's public life. News of the outside world penetrated his silence at the monastery, bringing war and social justice issues into his field of contemplation. How best to respond to these cries of the world?

Merton felt contemplative prayer flourished best in solitude and silence, free from distraction. He described this state of mind as "a sudden gift of awareness, an awakening to the Real within all that is real..., a deep resonance in the inmost center of our spirit in which our very life loses its separate voice" (*New Seeds of Contemplation*). When Merton stumbled onto Zen Buddhism, he quickly recognized the common ground between Christian contemplation and Buddhist meditation on emptiness.

While in residence at Gethsemani, Merton practiced verbal silence. But he used his writing as an outlet for expressing his concerns about racism, war, and social injustice. From his own well of silence, he offered encouragement and support to others struggling for civil rights and an end to the Vietnam War. The anguish of the contemplative seeking God became the anguish of activists seeking justice. Merton defined the call to love God as a call to act; he understood faith itself as based in struggle. The spiritual process was, for him, the struggle to cope with "turbulent, mysterious, demanding, exciting, frustrating, confused existence in which almost nothing is really predictable."

The moral courage and leadership of Gandhi and Martin Luther King were inspiring to Merton. He saw nonviolence as the obvious spiritual grounding for activist work. Yet he knew how challenging a spiritual practice this

is. He wrote: "the most difficult and the most necessary of renunciations [is] to give up resentment." Activism driven by anger might galvanize action but it carries a residue of self-importance that narrows one's capacity for effectiveness. Merton's voice was central in articulating a conscience for the Vietnam-era peace movement. Because he believed Christians and Buddhists had much to offer each other, his words on engaged spirituality are very accessible and relevant today. Such monastic voices are once again much needed to deter the stampede to war with all its devastating consequences for the earth and its peoples.

Nonviolence seeks to "win" not by destroying or even humiliating the adversary, but by convincing him that there is a higher and more certain common good than can be attained by bombs and blood. ♦

—Thomas Merton

For more information on Thomas Merton, see www.mertonfoundation.org.

Stephanie Kaza is associate professor of environmental studies at the University of Vermont. She took a leave from writing the ecology column a couple of years ago, and we are glad to welcome her back with this issue. This column reflects the fact that she has become more involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue through her environmental work, and she chose to write about Merton to complement this issue's theme of monasticism and activism. She will return to a more ecological focus in coming issues of Turning Wheel.

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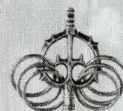
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Family Practice

We Have Met the Enemy: On Family Practice and War

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

*Give up the old ways—
Passion, enmity, folly.
Know the truth and find peace.*

—from *The Dhammapada*

Growing up in Ohio during the 1960s, my brother and I often watched black-and-white World War II movies on television. The heroic, ultramasculine white American soldiers would shout, “Kill the Japs!” Even as young kids, we understood the complete irony of our situation. Because we were Japanese Americans, we had never been accepted as being “real” Americans. People would say, “So you were born in Ohio, but where are you *really* from?” Yet we weren’t Japanese. We didn’t speak Japanese and we’d never been to Japan. The tragic absurdity was that we embodied both “sides” of the war. This early experience of nonduality wasn’t Buddhist, it was biological. After all, it’s possible that the Japanese plane that shot a bullet through the side of the bathtub in my mother’s childhood home near Pearl Harbor was piloted by a distant relative. My mom, a young girl at the time, was outside the house, and she remembered the electrifying moment when a low-flying airplane banked overhead and she saw the rising sun painted on its wings.

It’s also possible that a distant relative might have piloted the kamikaze plane that crashed into my father-in-law’s American Naval ship during the war. The ship was damaged but not destroyed. After my father-in-law died, his children divided up some of his personal effects, and my husband brought home a twisted piece of gray metal that his dad had saved from the airplane wreckage. As soon as I saw it I felt an overwhelming sadness and revulsion, and asked Chris to take it out of our apartment immediately. Chris did some research among his Japanese friends, and when he went to Japan for a martial arts retreat, he took time to deliver the

piece of metal, respectfully wrapped in a cloth, to a shrine that collected war relics. I was relieved that the airplane fragment had found its way home at last.

“We have met the enemy and he is us,” Pogo, Walt Kelly’s comic strip possum, proclaimed. As a Buddhist parent, I try to transmit to my child that there never has been and never will be an “Other” whom we can kill in good conscience. Again, as a Japanese American, I have always felt that I was both the bomber and the bombed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I want my son, who is 13 and a half, to understand this now, as the U.S., armed with weapons much more advanced than those that leveled the Japanese cities, heads for war with Iraq. I also want Joshua to know that he and his peers are not solely responsible for trying to fix the violence and destruction in the world; as an adult, I have to show him I’m doing my share of peace work.

Meeting Joshua one day after school last year, I asked him how his day went.

“It sucked,” Josh said—his standard reply. I gave him a “Because of?” look and he continued, “Some people with a gardening project for school kids keep harassing me, wanting me to sign up for the project. They won’t take no for an answer.”

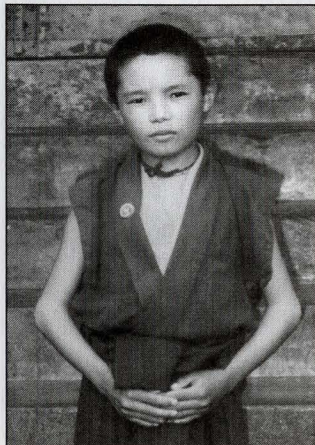
“It might be fun,” I ventured.

“Oh come *on!*” my 12-year-old shouted at me, losing all patience. “Adults want kids to learn about the environment, and recycling, and peace. But who is responsible for war and racism and pollution? Is it kids? No, it’s adults! And then you want us to find solutions for the problems *you* created.”

“You’re right,” I said, taken aback by his vehemence.

“Give up the old ways—passion, enmity, folly,” the Buddha said. But how? The other day Josh came home complaining that someone had thrown a marble and hit him in the back of the head during science class. He’s been hit in the throat and knocked down in the gym locker room. He doesn’t want me to tell the teachers or the principal, and he doesn’t tell them either. These are commonplace occurrences, he says, and nothing can be done about them, just as nothing can be done about the restrooms that are often locked or so dirty that kids try not to go to the bathroom until they get home. Our family has been dealing with the Oakland public schools for nine years, and it’s easy for me to get furious over lots of things that are wrong with them. But there’s never any “enemy” to be found, no one person or group of people to hate, to eliminate. To the contrary, the deeper I have looked into this seriously dysfunctional school system, the more good teachers, hard-working administrators, and wonderful children I have met.

There is no enemy. I want my son to grow up with a deep understanding of this. But I wonder if I can grow up, too, enough to dissolve the separation between “us” and “them” at its very root. Can we give up the old ways, and find new ones? Is there time? ❖



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In It for the Long Haul

by Robert Aitken Roshi

It seems that despite international opposition and strong expressions of doubt in our own country, American bombers will soon appear above Baghdad and wreak havoc on Iraqi people. I can't predict what will happen next, what the international response will be, or how the Muslim and Arab nations in particular will react. But I can make an educated guess, and so can you.

Let me make three points. First, we're in it for the long haul. In 1962, I joined the Hawai'i Committee to End the War in Vietnam. We sponsored rallies, marches, and teach-ins. The war ended in 1974, 12 years later. The committee had by then morphed into other movements, and its members had joined countless other activists throughout North America and the world, until finally the administrative will to pursue the war collapsed in Washington.

Second, we need to organize. Even before the Vietnam War, the Movement for a New Society set up models for antinuclear campaigns that proved very effective in the antiwar movement that followed, models which were at the same time faithful to ideals of participatory democracy. The building block was the affinity group of 12 to 15 people that networked through a spokesperson with other affinity groups. The spokescouncil made decisions by consensus, checked back with the individual groups, then finalized decisions.

I suggest that we take a leaf from the Movement for a New Society, not just in our rallies and marches but in our ongoing campaign to bring peace and social justice to the world. Let's take a leaf from the sovereignty movements of our Hawaiian sisters and brothers. It is time for all of us to be sovereign, to distance ourselves as much as possible from the benighted brokers of terror and destruction who would lead us into further ruin.

Let's also take a leaf from Liberation Theology. In Latin America, Spain, and the Philippines, Liberation Theology partisans meet in small groups called Base Communities. In living rooms and parish houses, they gather to share their concerns and pool resources. They study the Bible and are empowered by the realization that Jesus was a man of the poor. They network with other Base Communities to form coalitions for mass movements. Some years ago, a priest from Cuernavaca, Mexico, speaking in Honolulu, reported that there were 1,200 Base Communities in Cuernavaca alone. The Base Communities in the Philippines were vital to the movement that overthrew Marcos.

We can use the Base Community as a model. Instead of studying the Bible, we can study Buddhist sutras to

find the ground for social action. We can study the texts of Judaism, the Q'uran, our own Federalist Papers, and the speeches of Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt. We can mine the wisdom of our Hawaiian elders and of traditional peoples throughout the world.

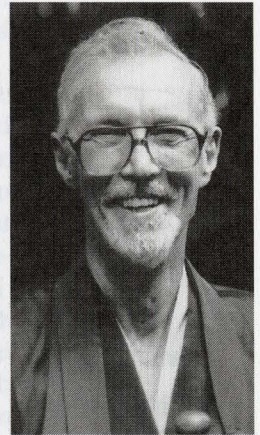
From this foundation, let's network to bring decency and dignity to all peoples, and protection to our fellow beings—animals and plants—who have no one to speak for them, and to their sacred habitat, which is also our sacred habitat—the air and waters, the mountains, forests, and meadows.

Now the third point: the war will have a huge effect on all of us. Some experts say the stock market is going to tank, and maybe before the end of the year we'll drop into a fearful depression. Facing expenses of billions of dollars a month, just pissed away, with no clear end of the war in view, this prediction seems possible. However, in recent history, the market has risen at times of war, stimulated by all the industry that war requires. Either way, the ultimate vanity of our acquisitive society is clear. The system has no clothes. We are poised to create karma of bitter hate that will be passed from generation to generation endlessly.

Disaster is upon us, and now is the time for us to prepare. The Wobblies, who worked to bring peace and social justice to mines and factories a hundred years ago, rallied under the slogan, "Build the new within the shell of the old." This is what we must do. Each Base Community can set up a project. It might be a financial cooperative that would loan money to families that are down and out. It might be a community garden to provide fruit and vegetables to food banks, or a kitchen to feed the poor. It might set up carpooling, or cooperative child care or elder care, or family counseling, or car repair. It might be a musical group with songs of liberation. It might be a media center to publicize the wrongs of the world and how to right them. It might be a combination of some of these. The possibilities are endless.

The great Wobbly Joe Hill, about to be executed for his work to bring justice to miners in Utah, told his followers, "Don't mourn me—organize!" Let's not waste time harping on the evils of Bush and his monstrous cabal of criminals. Let's organize! It's time to help bring decency into our nation and to the world. It's time to take charge of our lives and to help enable others take charge of theirs. ❖

Robert Aitken Roshi is one of the founders of BPF and serves on our advisory board. He is founding director of the Diamond Sangha. This piece is adapted from an address given at the Mo'ohau Park Peace Rally in Hilo, Hawai'i, October 26, 2002.



Let's not waste time harping on the evils of Bush and his monstrous cabal of criminals. Let's organize!

Putting the Precepts to Work

by Taigen Dan Leighton

**“Evil” is “live”
backwards.
Evil is what
opposes life,
opposes vitality.
And we all have
the capacity to
do evil.**

We live in very difficult times. I happen to feel that spiritual teachings are not worth much unless they respond not just to our individual needs but to the problems of the world. And we should apply our spiritual practice to the problems of the world and our fears for the world.

We all know that terrible things are happening, and we have all sorts of encouragements to be fearful. These include tension between India and Pakistan, the horrible ongoing conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, and increased militarism in this country—President Bush has declared that the U.S. will not honor the nuclear treaty that has been the basis for peace for the past 50 years, and seems determined to launch unilateral “preemptive” first-strike assaults against Iraq and any other country that might threaten U.S. world domination. And of course there are terrorists out there and we do not know what they will do. Analysts recently reported that we are closer to nuclear war than at any time since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

My personal koan has been how to talk about this. When I start to talk about these issues some of my Buddhist colleagues get nervous that I am talking about politics. To me this is not about politics. It is not about Democrats and Republicans or this candidate and that candidate. It’s about responsibility to precepts. The Buddhist precepts offer us guidance in how to think about what is going on in the world and how we, as Buddhists, can respond.

I have been thinking about which precepts are really essential in terms of responding to what is going on in the world, and I would like to focus on five. The first is the first precept, the most basic: a disciple of the Buddha does not kill. This does not mean only that we personally do not go around killing but that we support life and support non-killing. The second one is related but it goes a little further; this is the basic Buddhist principle of non-harming, or *ahimsa*.

A lot of our practice is about understanding ourselves, because we are all capable of causing a great deal of harm. The more deeply we see ourselves, the more we realize how capable we are of harming others and ourselves. The conditioning of family dynamics and various social patterns is part of us, and this conditioning also contributes to our capacity to cause harm. So we need to know ourselves well enough to do no harm—and it is not just that we should not ourselves harm others but that if we see someone else harming another we try to stop that harm from happening. This

is a fundamental part of Buddhist practice.

The third precept, which is very important, is that we act to benefit all beings. We talk about this in terms of time—we include all beings in the past and future in our present practice, we do not turn our backs on them. It is fine to benefit from spiritual practice ourselves, but we also do this for all beings. We might find a way to benefit ourselves and our friends and family—an exclusive group of people—and that will work for a while. But the reality is that we have to consider all beings, we have to see that we are not separate from them. Palestinians and Israelis are closely related, yet they are trapped in a cycle of vengeance, and many are not willing to listen to each other’s pain. Some are doing the work of peacemaking. But there will never be lasting peace until they can share with each other. Israelis have to hear the pain and suffering of the Palestinians, and Palestinians have to hear the fear and suffering of the Israelis.

The fourth precept that applies to our situation is telling the truth. A disciple of the Buddha does not lie. We try to speak our own truth as best we can, and that includes knowing that we do not know the entire truth. We do not know all the answers. The more we are willing to say what we see, and hear each other, and communicate and consider other perspectives, and actually work at hearing the truth, the more aware we will be of what is really going on; not just accepting what the mainstream media presents but really investigating and sharing information. This is the practice and the precept of telling the truth. So I must not be afraid to say that it seems to me that our government’s threats to bomb people in Iraq have nothing to do with events on 9/11 or any real threat of attack against us, but seem like a cynical exploitation of that tragedy to enrich oil companies and weapons manufacturers. But I keep listening to other perspectives.

A fifth precept is that a disciple of the Buddha refrains from evil or, as some of us now say it, “embraces and sustains right conduct.” In Buddhism there is evil conduct but there are no evil people or evil beings, no absolute “Evil.” Evil is simply ignorance. We all have this fundamental ignorance, greed or craving, and anger or aversion.

My teacher pointed out that “evil” is “live” backwards. Evil is what opposes life, opposes vitality. And we all have the capacity to do evil. This does not mean that we are evil, only that there is a human tendency, out of ignorance, greed, and hatred, to act in ways

that oppose life and cause harm. This is part of our human equipment. We can bomb civilians; we can hijack planes and fly them into buildings. There are innumerable ways that we can act harmfully. Evil is just what increases suffering in the world.

Yet we would prefer there to be some ultimate Evil being or force out there, because then we would be off the hook, we would be the good guys. Osama bin Laden has said that Allah is on his side and America is evil; George W. Bush says God is on his side and the terrorists are evil. There is a very strong tendency to create an "axis of evil" that exists out there apart from us. We all have this tendency to make someone or something else into the source of evil.

A politician from Ohio named Dennis Kucinich says that we should create an axis of hope instead of an axis of evil, and has proposed a cabinet-level Department of Peace. I heard the Dalai Lama tell a story about a meeting that took place a few years ago between himself and England's Queen Mother, who recently passed away. The Queen Mother was born in 1900 and lived more than a hundred years; at the time the Dalai Lama met with her she was in her mid-nineties. She was an aware and alert person, a good person, and she had seen an entire century. He asked her, "Have things gotten better

or worse?" She said, "Oh, definitely, much better." The Dalai Lama asked her how she could say that, with all the wars and cruelty of the last 100 years. She replied that even if they do not know what to do, people all over the world *know* when bad things are happening, and they care. They may not know what to do, but they want to help—and that makes a big difference. So she said yes, things are better.

Our spiritual teachings should help us find hope, increase our awareness of what is going on, and find ways to respond—even if we do not know the answers, even if we might make mistakes. We have to listen closely to different points of view. The Buddhist teachings affirm that all beings are capable of awakening, that all beings possess Buddha-nature.

So, as terrible as things are, I am hopeful. Things can shift, seemingly suddenly, in our own lives and in the lives of others. It is possible to actually let go of an addiction or change a way of behaving or overcome a great personal sorrow. This happens to us individually and it happens in the world. After many people worked very hard for a long time, apartheid ended in South Africa, seemingly suddenly, and relatively peacefully. This had been unimaginable a few months before. The Berlin Wall came down. So it may be possible that Palestinians and Israelis can talk to each other; such things have happened.

We do not always know how events will transpire in our lives and in the world, but we can pay attention, share information, and recognize our tendency to make others evil so we will be seen as good. We can recognize the fear we do have, and not run away from it but allow ourselves to become aware, both of our inner struggles and of the systemic realities in the world that increase suffering. ♦

Taigen Dan Leighton is a Soto Zen priest and Dharma heir in the Suzuki Roshi lineage, and the author and translator of a number of Zen texts. He teaches at the Berkeley Graduate Theological Union, and leads the Mountain Source Sangha in the San Francisco Bay Area, www.mtsource.org. This article is based on a talk given at Green Gulch Zen Center in June 2002.

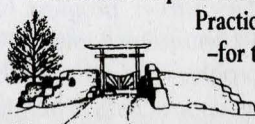
Becoming a Spiritual Warrior

Contrary to popular opinion, spiritual practitioners need not lead meek and submissive lives, spending many hours every day in prayer and meditation, though that may be a priority at times. True practitioners are willing to go to war. As spiritual warriors they do not fight to destroy the lives and habitats of men, women, and children; they make war on greed, hate, and fear, inwardly and outwardly. In the spiritual life, there is often a great deal of emphasis on working on oneself first before daring to venture to help others; spiritual warriors are concerned with inner and outer situations equally.... Both in Buddhism and the world of psychotherapy, there are far too many voices that settle for inner calm and a noncritical attitude, rather than extolling the fearlessness that is needed to transform the most painful of situations. As warriors, we can rise to the challenge of championing the rights of others through noble intentions and action. We make ourselves willing to endure the sufferings of outrageous misfortune and apparent defeats and ridicule by trusting that the spirit for real change will triumph over terror. ♦

—Christopher Titmuss

From *Transforming Our Terror* (Godsfield Press, UK and Barrons Educational, 2002).

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On the Far Side of Revenge

An interview with Paul Haller on Northern Ireland

by Jon Stewart

Paul Haller, a Zen priest and Dharma heir in the lineage of Suzuki Roshi, is currently head of San Francisco Zen Center's outreach department. He will be installed as co-Abbot of SFZC on February 2, 2003. Paul was born and raised in Northern Ireland, and he has made four trips there in recent years to share tools of Zen practice and conflict resolution.

Some historical context may be helpful here. The "Troubles" that Paul is confronting in his homeland date back more than 300 years, to Elizabethan England's conquest of Ireland, in which English colonists who were mostly Protestant were transplanted upon a conquered Catholic, Gaelic-speaking land. By 1703, less than 5 percent of the region now called Northern Ireland was still in native Irish hands, the dispossessed Irish having been consigned to the mountains and bogs. Thus, the same land came to be occupied by two hostile groups, one believing the land had been usurped and the other believing their tenure was constantly under threat of rebellion.

The history of Northern Ireland since the Plantation has been a series of spasms of violence. The latest spasm, pitting Catholic nationalists against Protestant unionists, lasted for 30 years, from 1968 to 1998, and claimed some 3,600 lives, the vast majority being civilian bystanders. This period ended with one of the most hopeful events of the last 300 years—the signing of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 by the main political groups in Northern Ireland.

The agreement, which brought about the restoration of a Northern Ireland Parliament and stipulated details concerning demilitarization and other conditions for peace, was overwhelmingly approved by Irish voters. Since then, progress has been painfully slow, with continuing violence in the streets. And even that progress ran aground this fall (after this interview was conducted), when the main Protestant unionist leader pulled out of the political power-sharing agreement, following allegations of a major spying scandal involving the main nationalist party, Sinn Fein. Once again, the local government in Belfast has been suspended, and the province is being ruled from Westminster.

I talked with Paul Haller in August 2002, at San Francisco Zen Center. —Jon Stewart

Jon Stewart: Let's start off by talking about where things are at in Northern Ireland today.

Paul Haller: It's both better and it's worse. Palestine is like this, too. They're having active negotiations at the same time that there's active conflict, violence, and aggression. People have learned to hold on to both of these things at once. They learn to negotiate with people to whom, in another setting, they're aggressively opposed. Since the 1995 peace accord in Northern Ireland, they've been doing that more and more. What's happening is that the paramilitary groups who agreed to the ceasefire have a cohesive system of command. And so they have more or less held to the agreements, despite some infractions. But then there's a whole new element, which is the street violence, and it's creating more sectarianism. It's being fed by these 18-year-old kids who've never known anything other than civil unrest. They're just out there doing their thing, and they're being used to achieve political ends by the different hardline factions among the paramilitaries. The city's actually becoming more ghettoized in terms of Catholic and Protestant.

Jon: How did you get involved there?

Paul: I went over there three years ago, in close collaboration with Bernie Glassman's Peacemaker Order. I was born and raised in Northern Ireland, but I never thought of working there until a good friend of mine, Michael O'Keefe, who's a priest with the Peacemaker Order—formerly a student of Maezumi Roshi—suggested it, and that's what sparked the whole thing. I hadn't lived in Belfast for almost 30 years, but I still had family there, which was very fortuitous. My original idea was much more conventional—just to go there and set up a Zen center and do zazen. The approach we've taken was really Michael's idea.

Jon: What is the approach?

Paul: We've done several things. First, we set up an initial retreat at St. Clement's in Belfast, with about 30 participants. With that group, we've tried different things. We did a meditation walk up the Falls Road [through a Catholic ghetto], looking at the street murals [which include graphic depictions of the conflict], and then we crossed over to the Shankill Road [in a nearby Protestant ghetto], looking at the murals there. We wanted to take in the ambience of violence in a meditative silence.

Another element was a dialogue in which we had some people who were nationalists and some who were loyalists, all of whom had experienced violence, and we asked them to talk about suffering, how they had suffered personally. And the rest of us just bore witness to that. The dialogue was extraordinary—hearing someone say “My high school was blown up five times.” Or hearing someone talk about having people battering on his front door while he was sitting inside with a shotgun, with his mother behind him, ready to live or die.

Jon: I’ve heard that something like half the people of Northern Ireland have had direct experience of someone close to them being killed or injured in the violence.

Paul: Yes. A relative of mine was killed. Some people kicked open his front door and shot him dead while he sat on the sofa watching TV with his son. Just burst in the door and shot him. One of the participants in our dialogue on violence and suffering had his car stoned as he was leaving that very meeting.

Jon: What kind of an impact have you had?

Paul: We’ve gotten some local attention—a BBC radio story and a newspaper story, which were very respectful. But since those first events, we’ve tried to shift modes, to do something that reaches into the community. We’ve been developing an advisory council with a diversity of views. We’ve met with the full range of politicians—everything from the Sinn Fein Lord Mayor to David Irvine, who established the PUP (Progressive Unionist Party), and even some of the hardline paramilitary leaders. Essentially we’re both creating relationships and being educated about what would be an effective way to offer something to the community.

We don’t want to offer anything without local support, so a lot of what we’re doing now is building that support and creating credibility.

We’re still deep in the learning mode. What Northern Ireland has experienced in the last 20 years, you know, is a lot of groups coming from all over; they arrive, bringing something wonderful, and then they leave. What’s needed is to build an ongoing relationship that can provide a ripening of practice.

So we started a sitting group in Belfast, and now one in Lyme. We’ve also created a council of people with different views. We’re scheduling some activities with Sinn Fein (the nationalist party that is allied with the illegal Irish Republican Army), which is very well organized, and we’ll try to set something up with the Progressive Unionists on the other side.

Jon: What’s it been like to work with the Protestant unionist leaders?

Paul: I had an engaging exchange with the PUP leader, David Irvine. David was a paramilitary—active, violent—who acknowledged that he has killed people. He got a long sentence, and then was released in the general amnesty when the peace accord was signed. But the intriguing thing is that he went through a transformation in prison. He went through an inner search and became a peacemaker. That’s not to say he’s a saint, but he came out of prison and started the Progressive Unionist Party. He’s been advocating peace and moving toward a new way of doing things. He’s asking questions like: How can Unionists have a progres-

sive policy? And I think that’s exactly what’s needed. When I saw him he’d just returned from spending time with the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, who he had coached on negotiating for peace.

The interesting thing about him is that he went through this process in prison, where he and another leading unionist were asking each other, “What is important in life?” And this exchange prompted some kind of breakthrough.

Jon: How did you talk to him about what Zen has to offer in this situation?

Paul: I told him that Zen had crafted a process that ripened the same investigation he had stumbled across in prison, and had developed a certain craft of predisposing body and mind in order to engage in that process. Also, Zen has developed a way to alleviate the preoccupying stress—and distress—that our everyday suffering creates. I offered to formulate programs that would provide this craft in a way that would be accessible to different audiences. That was our offer.

*All beings tremble before violence.
All fear death.
All love life.*

*See yourself in others.
Then whom can you hurt?
What harm can you do?*

*He who seeks happiness
By hurting those who seek happiness
Will never find happiness.*

*For your brother is like you.
He wants to be happy.
Never harm him
And when you leave this life
You too will find happiness.*

*from The Dhammapada: Sayings of the Buddha
translated by Thomas Byrom*

Jon: And has he agreed to work with you?

Paul: Yes, Irvine's right-hand man is now a member of our council. We want this group to be so diverse that it can't be pigeonholed like the North Belfast Loyalists or the East Belfast Republicans. Because once you're pigeonholed, a certain group of people will be with you and nobody else will speak to you. So the objective is to have a credible person from each of the camps, and to have them all come together and meet every few weeks, and meditation will be a part of that. We think this is the way to create an enduring forum. The participants will teach us what to do, how to make it work.

Jon: Are you personally looked upon as an oddity there, a Belfast-born Catholic who is now a Zen priest? Do people have to get past the exoticness of that in order to hear you?

Paul: I think we've gotten a remarkably appreciative and respectful reception. I've been heartened and encour-

The hatred is just chilling. How do you reach a group of people who can kick someone to death?

aged. I've talked with the Lord Mayor and even he was encouraging, so there's a fair amount of support.

Jon: That's interesting, because one thinks of the religiosity—and the religious prejudice—of the Northern Irish as being stronger than almost any place in Europe.

Paul: I completely agree. But having to sit down and talk with your enemy is wonderful. The people there know that if they can't make the political system work, the power in Northern Ireland will revert to Westminster, and none of them wants that. They want the power in their hands. So they have to sit down with people with whom they have a great ideological difference, people with whom they've engaged in violence. I find that impressive, and I find that the people who can do that are receptive.

Jon: You've set yourselves a very difficult challenge—to come in from the outside, as you are doing, and yet fit in and not look like an outsider with a solution.

Paul: Yes, anyone can bring together 30 like-minded people and have an inspiring retreat. But at the end of it, someone's throwing bricks at your car as you drive away. So what do you do? It's necessary to understand the complexity of the situation, because it would be absurd for us to come charging in on our white horse with a simple notion of what's going to make it all better. It's going to be a long, long learning process. In the meantime, we can offer sittings and workshops, we can get out and meet people. And

we keep learning. That's very important to what we're trying to do.

The challenge is huge. I was talking to this guy who's been working in a wasteland of a public housing area—a big place utterly fraught with violence—and he said that the latest thing there is to kick people to death. The hatred represented by that is just chilling. How do you reach a group of people who can kick someone to death?

Jon: Where there are substantive problems, like equal housing and jobs, you can attack them with solutions, political or financial or whatever. But how much substance is really left after 25 or 30 years of conflict, during which time a lot of the problems have been addressed? How much of today's conflict just comes down to elemental, residual hatred?

Paul: Exactly. So you come back to the very basis of Buddhist practice: *dukkha* and what causes it. It really comes back to that. But you're not going to get these people to come and listen to a Dharma talk. They don't want to hear some nice quotes from the Pali Canon. That would mean absolutely nothing to them. It's like a nasty koan: How do you deal with this? Things are worse than ever. Kids are completely wild—they're savage.

Jon: But as you say, to sit and bear witness is to let that violence burn a hole in your heart. It really is a searing koan.

Paul: That's *bodhicitta* practice. It's to hear the cries of the world. It pains you because there's no clear answer. You can't just go over there and tell them what they need to do. The situation demands that you go in with an open heart and an open mind and sit down in the middle of it and see what it is.

Jon: Is there a growing sense of despair and resignation?

Paul: You'd think so, wouldn't you? But there's a tenacity about the Irish, for better or worse. And what else can they do? When their kids are out there night after night throwing bricks at each other, they don't have the luxury of saying, "Well, let's just forget it. Let's give up." No, they need to reach down and try again.

Jon: Many people believe that the extreme religiosity of the Irish, both the Catholics and the Protestants, has been a major source of the troubles. Is it also a potential source of the solutions?

Paul: Well, if we say that religiosity is about the universal goodness of spirituality, then of course it's a source of solutions. But if it means a hierarchical orthodoxy that's in the business of preserving itself against its enemies, then it's not.

For someone who grew up Catholic in Ireland, as I

did, the Church did serve a purpose, despite all its faults, as a place of great faith. The lack of that in today's environment has left a great vacuum—a place of widespread disillusionment.

It's interesting, because St. Patrick introduced the hierarchical church to Ireland. But the monastic church was already there, with its monastic order and its adherence to the Bremen Laws, which were a much more compassionate system. And now this kind of Celtic Catholicism, in contrast to hierarchical Roman Catholicism, is creeping back in. I was there on the last summer solstice, and there was a nine-day solemn novena at the solstice, and the church was packed—about 15,000 people attending every day. This is a kind of faith practice as opposed to hierarchical practice.

So when I think about spirituality, and when I think about what Zen has to offer, faith practice has a big place in my heart. I have a fondness for Ireland as a spiritual country. I figure that when the Irish get hold of Zen, the world had better watch out. Fifty years from now, they'll be sending out Zen missionaries.

Jon: Let me close this interview with a brief quotation from a Seamus Heaney poem, "The Cure at Troy," and ask you to comment on it.

*History says Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.
So hope for a great seachange
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further share
Is reachable here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.*

Is this the time for hope and history to rhyme in Northern Ireland?

Paul: This is so close to my heart, it almost brings tears to my eyes. When I first started going back to Ireland, it was very hard to see my homeland in spasms of hate. It's a bewildering paradox to me, because they're good people, with a good sense of humor and friendliness. And, ah, what sadness. That's there for me, too, this brokenheartedness that makes me want to shake my head and ask: How can this be? And then I realize, well, this is the world. This is why we practice. This is *in* the world. To me, it's about the bodhisattva vow: "This is impossible, I vow to do it." ❖

NO TEACHERS

What is it that makes it possible to go beyond our conditioning? What opens our eyes and opens our hearts?...

When you go somewhere like Northern Ireland, you discover that war-making and peacemaking are paradoxically very close. They require the same dedication and devotion. They are of the human spirit. They both represent our best efforts to live, to respond to this human life.

Will someone else tell us whether it's most appropriate to bomb Saddam Hussein? Or to march in the streets protesting that very notion? Can we give that responsibility over to anyone else? Are there any Zen teachers? Would we want there to be any Zen teachers—someone who says, "I'll tell you what is and what to do"?

Can we look at life without being driven by our own convictions and agendas, but somehow notice what's going on? Can we meet it with the mind of not knowing, with the ear of listening to suffering and hearing the path to peace?...

Zazen—zen meditation—is simply being in the middle, with not knowing. And with a question: "What is going on?" It's not asked from the mind of anxiety but is something more innocent and direct. What is going on?... Is there any point of view that describes all of existence? Is there anything about which I can stand up and say, "I know I'm right, and anyone who doesn't agree is wrong"?

Yet we have to step into this world and do something, because even not doing is doing. Maybe you can say, "Well, I'm not the one who's going to fly the plane over Iraq and drop that smart missile." But even if you're not, you're still involved, because we're all part of this world. There's no such thing as not acting....

What is it to live a human life? What is it to be your own person? What is it to live in a land where there are no Zen teachers? Where there is no abiding wisdom that can say, "Let me tell you exactly what to think and what to do."

What is the expression of your compassion? When do you plan to live it? Next year? Next life? Tomorrow?

In Zen, we take each moment to be completely in the middle of what is. To bear witness with not-knowing mind and open heart. That's peacemaking.

[Excerpted from a Dharma talk given by Paul Haller at San Francisco Zen Center, August 17, 2002.]



Valerie Linet is a Zen student, poet, and freelance writer living in New York's Hudson River valley. Currently, she works in an arts program designed for at-risk girls. She has taught creative writing to inmates, and now volunteers for a local radio show dealing with criminal justice issues. She is 25 years old.

Learning Compassion in Shackles

by Valerie Linet

*Inside one potato
There are mountains and rivers.*

—Shinkichi Takahashi

Table Number 13

The corrections officer points to a small wooden table bearing a large number 13 in blue paint. The metal detectors and guards have put me on edge this morning. I have driven 90 minutes to visit John Mackenzie at Woodbourne Correctional Facility in Sullivan County, New York.

It's 9:20 AM. I take in the scene: about 15 men, all wearing dark green state-issued clothing, are seated at various tables around the room. One man leans in close as an older woman, perhaps his mother, holds his hands in hers. A couple in one corner speak softly and kiss—they will continue kissing the entire five-hour duration of my visit. Several young children, mostly African American and Latino, are visiting their fathers today. Near the bathroom is a small area designated for playing, with a few books and toys strewn about. I last saw John three years ago. I wonder if he'll look different, if he's aged since being denied parole.

25 Years to Life

John greets me with a big grin. He seems even taller than I remember; I have to reach up on tiptoe to hug him. John is serving a 25-years-to-life sentence for murder. In 1975, under the influence of various prescription drugs, John shot Nassau County police officer Matthew Giglio when Giglio arrived on the scene of a late-night break-in in Hempstead, Long Island. Officer Giglio died 10 weeks later, leaving behind his wife, Phyllis, a son, and two daughters.

By age 29, John was leading the life of a criminal, stealing things large and small. He was addicted to Valium and took a combination of other drugs, including an antipsychotic, prescribed and supplied to him by a doctor. In the year leading up to the shooting, John started having progressively more frequent bouts of amnesia. He would have violent episodes and not remember them. He said that his girlfriend once told him he had hit her, but he had no recollection of it. "The more medicated I was, the bolder I became." He stole jewelry, a power lawn mower, a boat. He remembered stealing some things; others he would discover in his possession the next morning.

John claims it was in this state, during a week of sporadic memory lapses, that he broke into Thelma Jay's Boutique and shot Officer Giglio. John does not make excuses for himself, although he maintains that the medications he was on "changed my personality and caused me to act irrationally." He says he doesn't remember shooting Giglio but has come to acknowledge that he did so. In 1975, John was sentenced to 25 years to life; he went to Attica Prison, leaving behind three daughters. Only recently have some memories of that night and the events surrounding the shooting come back to him in sporadic flashbacks.

Vacant Apartments

John grew up with his mother in New York City; his father was absent. When he was four years old, his mother taught him how to pick a lock with a bobby pin. With John in tow, she would break into vacant one-room apartments and live there for a few days or weeks at a time before moving on to the next flat.

At age six, John was removed from his mother's custody by court order. He recalls that the Department of Social Services was involved; someone had filed a negligence suit against his mother, though John didn't understand this at the time. Reenacting the traumatic scene for me in the prison visiting room, John mimics how a guard dragged him away from his mother. He remembers screaming at her, "How can you love me and let them take me?"

John was in and out of foster homes for years. Twice, on New Year's Eve, his mother dropped him off at the Catholic Charities office in Manhattan. Each time, he escaped and found his way back to her. "I was a homing pigeon," John says, smiling. When I ask him why he thinks his mother kept giving him up, he doesn't answer. When I ask if she was mentally ill, he replies, "No, she was beautiful."

Auspicious Meetings

John describes himself as very frustrated and angry during his first 10 years behind bars at Attica Prison. "Up until '84 I thought I got railroaded by the system and that they abused the shit out of me. All I could think about was beating the system." Then he had two pivotal encounters that profoundly influenced the course of his life.

In 1984, John was an inmate participant in a conference on Alternatives to Incarceration hosted by Attica. There he met George Grobe, former chairman

of the Crime Victims Board, who spoke passionately about victims' rights. John vehemently argued with Grobe that it was he who was the real victim, sentenced to prison for a murder he couldn't even remember committing. He recalls, "Grobe told me that if I put as much energy into victims as I did into myself that I'd be a worthy proponent of victims' rights. I thought: maybe I don't think that much about victims.... So began my journey into [the world of] victims and how they are treated, how they feel, how they are in fact mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters—how they are family."

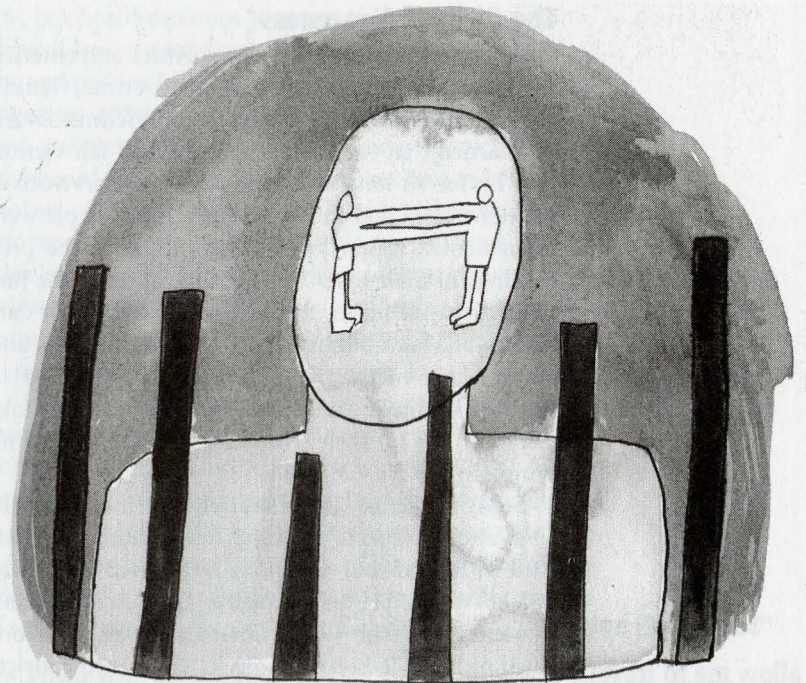
Shortly after the Attica conference, John was transferred to Green Haven Prison. There he met Zen master John Daido Looi and had his first encounter with zazen. Daido, abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, New York, had come to lead the newly formed Buddhist group at Green Haven. John describes how Daido sat silently, unflinching, on a small wooden bench. All the other prisoners did the same. An endless 30 minutes passed. John's knees burned. He shifted around, looked at his watch. Zazen was more difficult than he ever could have imagined. He remembers Daido saying, "The hardest thing you'll ever do is sit."

This was the beginning of a lifelong spiritual journey. Daido introduced John to a spiritual path that emphasizes selflessness, the interconnectedness of all things, and taking personal responsibility for one's thoughts and actions. These teachings complemented and gave life to the realizations John was beginning to have on his own, as he reconsidered his position on victims' rights. He was getting in touch with the pain he had caused the Giglio family, and he was also experiencing the compassion that arose out of understanding that pain. Employing Zen Buddhist terms, John says, "I have learned to be the pain." Mostly, he is pained by the destructiveness of his own past, and the life he ended with a bullet.

John keeps a paper image of the Buddha and a pinecone on the altar in his cell. He usually rises at 6:00 AM for meditation, chanting, and bowing. On weekends he sometimes does intensive retreats, spending long hours in meditation. Listening to John describe his spiritual life of the last 15 years, I momentarily forget that he is incarcerated. He keeps me in check by saying, "The reality is, I'm still in prison no matter how much Zen I practice."

Full Prostrations in the Mud

John's commitment to Zen practice and to victims' rights developed hand-in-hand. The more he got in touch with his own humanity and suffering through zazen and his work with a spiritual teacher, the more responsible he felt for the welfare of victims. He finally had a window into the pain caused by violent



crimes, into the hearts of those he'd wronged.

In the midst of this personal transformation, John's estranged mother, Julie Steinmetz, wrote to him, out of the blue, after 10 years of silence. They began mending old wounds through correspondence, and she expressed her wish to visit him. John said that he sensed something was wrong by the urgency of his mother's communications.

Four months after John received her first letter, his mother died of cancer. "For three days, all I could think about was what she had done for me, not to me. I loved her." He requested that the funeral be held at Zen Mountain Monastery. After a long, bureaucratic process to work out the terms of his attendance, John was cuffed, shackled, and transported to Mount Tremper. It was his first and to date only visit during his incarceration to the monastery that supports his practice.

John describes his first impression of the monastery: "It was awe-inspiring. I felt a connection—like this is me...this is my home. I felt like I belonged there." The event was a first for everyone involved. The monks had never held a funeral with armed corrections officers in attendance, and the guards had never accompanied a prisoner to a Buddhist funeral. Asked not to enter the main meditation hall, the zendo, with their guns, the guards waited outside.

John's leg shackles were removed but he remained handcuffed. When it was time for the ceremony at the monastery's cemetery, a silent procession led the way. John describes how the robed students and monks resembled a "gray centipede" as they snaked their way to the burial site. John did full prostrations in the mud and offered incense with cuffed hands.

Tiffany Sankary is a visual artist, writer, and activist living in Oakland, California. She is currently training as a Feldenkreis practitioner. Her Web site is www.movement-building.org/tiffany.

The Birth of Awareness

After meeting George Grobe at Attica and entering Zen practice, John began writing to crime victims' groups, gathering information about victims' issues. He learned that the same system he had felt victimized by for so long also victimized the survivors of violent crimes and their families. These people were often denied access to information about the proceedings of their case. Their participation in the justice system set up to protect them was severely curtailed. John also began talking to other inmates and realized that many prisoners were so caught up in feeling victimized themselves that they couldn't take responsibility for their crimes. As a result, they felt no sympathy for the victims.

Studying victims' issues spurred John into action. In 1997, after 15 years of planning, bureaucratic struggles, hard work, and soul-searching, he received authorization to start a prison discussion group, the Victims' Awareness Program (VAP), at Green Haven. VAP consisted of 16 three-hour sessions in which men convicted of violent offenses were challenged and supported in their efforts to take total responsibility for their crimes. For the program to be successful, John was clear about one thing: the prisoners had to stop placing the blame on society, the legal system, or anyone but themselves. "The key to change is taking responsibility," he says. "Once your defenses come down and you take responsibility, there is no choice but to be honest."

In 1998, during VAP's second year, I was one of three student interns from Vassar College who joined the group. One of my fellow interns, Carolyn, was a young woman whose older brother had been murdered in 1991. Once a week for four months, the three of us passed through Green Haven's metal detectors, left our keys and jewelry at the door, and entered another world. We had opportunities to interact with the prisoners, share ideas, challenge stereotypes. Many group members were young men struggling to acknowledge the full impact of their crimes. They grappled with their horror, sadness, and the desire to trust one another.

After many weeks of preparation in the group sessions, John arranged to have some victims visit the prison to meet with the inmates. For many prisoners, this was the most poignant part of the journey. John invited judges, family members of murder victims, and an assemblyman to participate in this part of VAP.

My fellow intern Carolyn's presence in VAP was treasured, partly because of her experience as the family member of a murder victim. Carolyn's older brother was murdered during a holdup at the NYC bar where he worked. Since then, his mother, Mrs. Carolee Brooks, has been an active member of a support organization, Parents of Murdered Children. Carolee attended one of the last VAP sessions, which she describes as

"the most extraordinary interaction with humankind."

John had been involved in VAP for years, but it wasn't until he met Carolee that he fully understood what a murder victim's family goes through. She reached a part of him that had previously remained untouched. "David's murder happened years ago, and she was talking like it happened yesterday. I looked at Carolee and I could actually feel..." he paused, reliving the moment, "her pain. And for a split second, I saw Matthew Giglio's mother. For years I had been trying to say I was sorry. I started to choke up. I couldn't say I was sorry to Mrs. Giglio, so I apologized to Carolee."

John recalls that Carolee brought in a lot of pictures of her son, and he was affected by her description of the trial. She spoke of the lawyer who referred to her son not by name but as "the bartender." Carolee corrected him: "My son's name is *David*." She has been very sensitive, from the beginning, not to dehumanize the men who were involved in the murder. She always refers to them as "the two young men," or "Donnie and Sean." Even in the wake of her son's death, in the midst of grief that must have been overwhelming, Carolee noticed that there was never anyone in court for Donnie White, the man who shot her son. She has not permitted rage and grief to blind her to their humanity. "Anger interferes with healing," she says. "It's like an irritant. It constantly gnaws at the wound." Carolee has vowed to try to help make a difference in people's lives, and she believes in forgiveness. "In my life, I've been forgiven. People have had to give me a second chance," she says. "I know the mistakes I've made are on a different scale, but still.... I think people deserve it."

"People Don't Change"

Meanwhile, John had begun his own process of contacting his victim's family in 1994. With the help of a childhood friend, a former NYC police detective, John tried to locate the Giglios in order to express his remorse to them. In a letter to Matthew Giglio, written more than 20 years after the murder, he wrote:

"Sorry" will not allow me to travel back in time and undo the damage I've done, or correct my mistake. When compared to your life, which was so precious and short, an apology seems totally meaningless. Nonetheless, my heart burns with the pain, and the reality of what I did tortures and torments me. It never lets me rest, or forget that it is because of my thoughtless act that you're no longer alive.

John's letter has never been seen by the Giglios. His efforts to contact the family were unsuccessful. He was unable to tell them in person how sorry he was, though he did do so during a television interview in October 2000. Right before his first parole hearing, John was interviewed by Connie Conway of Channel 12 News in

"Sorry" will not allow me to travel back in time and undo the damage I've done, or correct my mistake.

Long Island. About five minutes of the nightly newscast was dedicated to Conway's story on John and the Giglio family's grief over the loss of Matthew Giglio. During the interview, John said, "All the forgiveness in the world is not gonna relieve me of responsibility. I just wish it was me that night instead of him. Then I wouldn't be sitting here, and they wouldn't be in pain."

The Giglios had a hard time believing John's claim that he did not actually remember the shooting. They firmly maintained that he should not be allowed parole. Matthew Jr., Giglio's son, said, "He killed my father. He destroyed my family. He doesn't deserve a chance." At a press conference, one of Giglio's daughters said, "People don't change. They don't change. They stay the same."

John later saw this on television, surrounded by other inmates. He tells me that the other prisoners were all very angry, but he had to hold back tears. That statement denied all the work he had done on himself over the past 15 years, and it stung John to the core.

Vanishing Parole

John Daido Loori often says that being human covers the whole spectrum, from Buddha to Hitler. We can choose what we want to be, and then manifest that in our daily lives. John's story is important because it demonstrates the capacity for great transformation. Draconian sentencing laws or mandates like the death penalty are devastating in their blindness to the human potential for change.

Though successful, VAP had a brief lifespan at Green Haven. The program was cut after only a few years, when John was transferred to Woodbourne. John has since been attempting to start another VAP, but he has encountered many bureaucratic roadblocks. In a statement about his years of work, John wrote:

Why care at all about this? Because most people in prison will eventually return to their communities, more specifically, the very same neighborhoods they left. How they return is not only your concern, but also your responsibility to ensure they reintegrate with a different attitude, one that encourages them to sublimate their energy into more productive lifestyles. The only way to accomplish this is to offer them a chance to effect positive change, and to do that, you must provide a vehicle—a vehicle guided by a sincere desire to make amends for one's immorality.

As a long-term prisoner, John has seen many inmates go through the devastating and nerve-wracking parole process. New York is known for its draconian sentencing laws. In 1991, before Governor Pataki took office, 24 percent of violent offenders were granted parole after serving their minimum required sentence. By 1998, only 8 percent of the same population was released after a first meeting with the parole board. Certainly not every person convicted of a serious crime has transformed their

life, but board decisions to grant early release seem to depend less on a prisoner's rehabilitation than on funding and politics. In 1994, the U.S. Congress began granting states additional funds for the construction of prisons, and then allotted even more money to states that toughened their sentencing laws. In New York, parole for violent offenders has been eliminated, and Pataki has expressed a desire to abolish parole for all felons. The idea of "presumptive parole," in which a prisoner is released if he or she fulfills the educational and rehabilitative requirements imposed by a judge, jury, and/or a corrections counselor, has been rendered moot.

It was in this conservative "tough on crime" climate that John Mackenzie came up for his first hearing with the parole board, in the winter of 2000. He was denied parole; his next hearing will not be held until April 2003. The fact that he murdered a police officer overshadowed the reality of his rehabilitation. John was denied parole for the one thing he will never be able to change: the nature of his crime. ❖

∞ Please send letters of support for John Mackenzie's parole release to: Brion Travis, Chairman, New York State Division of Parole, Albany, NY 12206, and send a copy to: John MacKenzie #76A3447, Woodbourne Correctional Facility, 99 Prison Road, P.O. Box 1000, Woodbourne, NY 12788-1000.

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Walks Far Woman

by Louise Dunlap

It is late December, the darkest time of winter in one of the coldest spots on this continent—Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota, where 300 unarmed Lakota people were mowed down by U.S. cavalry 100 years ago. After a week riding across this frozen, windswept land, some 400 Native people on horseback are making the final descent to the massacre site for a ceremony called Wiping the Tears and Mending the Sacred Hoop.

A bitter, cleansing wind from the north brings stinging snow and a chill factor of 80 below as I walk the same road, behind a smaller group whose ancestors made the fateful journey on foot. With them, ahead of me, is a wiry Japanese-born Buddhist nun with a small prayer drum and a voice that carries. Honored with a white eagle feather and the Lakota name “Walks Far Woman,” she is making this journey for the fourth year. Now she is fasting along with many of the riders and supporting their ceremony by chanting *Na Mu Myo Ho*

Ren Ge Kyo—the opening words of the *Lotus Sutra*.

It is my first experience with Buddhism or chanting of any kind, but I find my voice joining in. These mysterious seven syllables steady my heart in the numbing wind and help me feel my own emotions more keenly as we approach Wounded Knee—pain and anger, and also the possibility of healing. The violence of the world has deepened steadily since the Wounded Knee Massacre. Our leaders now have the weapons to destroy the earth many times over, and the willingness to use them. This is certainly what the *Lotus*

Sutra calls an “era of declined law.” How do we live in such times? Jun Yasuda, the Buddhist nun walking at Wounded Knee, has an active answer.

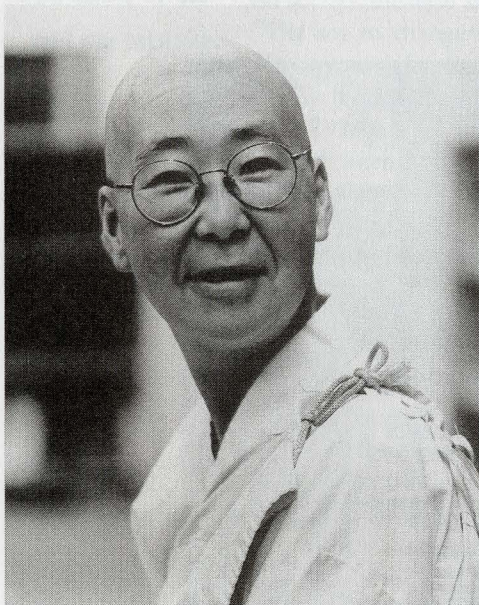
Her order, Nipponzan Myohoji, is better known to activists in this country than to Buddhists, perhaps because it is not a “sitting” order. As her friend, Native leader Dennis Banks, puts it, “Most of us like to go to the movies, but their only mission is to walk and to pray for peace. Maybe when the last nuclear bomb is dismantled and the last treaty is signed, maybe then

they can rest and quietly meditate.” Nipponzan Myohoji’s founder—dubbed Guruji by his friend Gandhi—developed the practice of walking and drumming with the *Lotus Sutra* to proclaim the message of nonviolence, as Japanese imperialism returned in the early 20th century. (Like his predecessor, the 13th-century Buddhist reformer Nichiren, he attempted to hold political leaders accountable.) The practice also includes fasting and hard physical work—all of it as public as possible, especially in times of crisis.

Jun-san (as she is called in the Japanese way) has fasted and chanted for days in rough weather outside the prisons of Leonard Pelletier and Mumia Abu Jamal. She has walked to challenge the root causes of nuclear weapons, the African slave trade, and many injustices to Native people. With community volunteers and scavenged materials, she has built a resplendent Peace Pagoda in the rugged mountains east of Albany, New York—the only woman-initiated project of its kind. Local people report that their first view of this huge white dome rising out of the forest brings mysterious tears to their eyes. (When she’s not walking, Jun-san lives in an adjacent temple, where simple living includes woodstoves for heat and cooking and one cold water faucet.) And she has stitched together an intercultural network of friends and supporters. Her acute political sense; her creativity, wit, and charisma; and her deep connection to allies—especially Native Americans—are exemplary.

This past year alone, Jun-san has organized three major walks—four months across the U.S. carrying a live flame from Hiroshima (*Turning Wheel*, Fall 2002); two weeks from Albany into New York City linking Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Native American prayers for September 11; and three weeks from Hiroshima to Nara, site of Guruji’s vision quest. In that walk she was joined by a family member of someone lost in the World Trade Center catastrophe.

In her widening circles, Jun-san has become a legend; yet, as one friend says, she manages to skirt the kind of attention given to other Buddhist leaders in America. Those of us who know her love to entertain ourselves with “Jun-san stories.” How *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo* kept an old car running. How people helping build the Peace Pagoda found her after a long day’s work sitting in a deep hole with a spoon. “I was tired using pick,” she explained later in her own evocative grammar. “I very always hitting stone. It hurt. I can sitting do something. Digging with spoon.”



Jun-san in the early '90s.
Photo by Skip Schiel

Jun-san herself will often dazzle walkers with rest-stop stories of fast motorcycles, artistic dancing, and radical student organizing against the Vietnam War during her twenties in Japan or dumpster diving in California when she first came to this country.

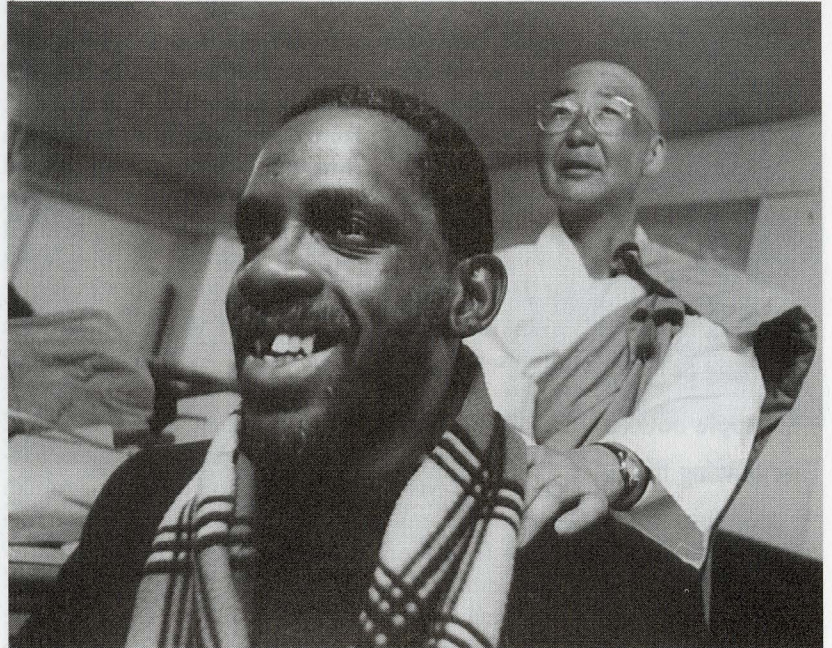
Many Jun-san stories are about her thoughtfulness, service, and dedication. On a midwinter walk into Canada, for instance, plans changed at the last minute and walkers headed into an unscouted area with few arrangements for hospitality. "You're going to learn the power of 'thank you,'" Jun-san told one uneasy young walker. Sure enough, he watched her honor those who stepped forward to help—with heartfelt bows and small gifts of paper cranes—and learned a life lesson from their joyous response. He also noted her "eye for people with a need they're not sharing." I remember her skillful shiatsu massage, especially with a proud but infirm African American man who insisted on limping every single mile of Schenectady pavement to honor the Underground Railroad. A walker with insomnia remembers lying awake among 50 pilgrims sleeping on a floor in Mostar, Bosnia, and seeing a small light in one corner. It was Jun-san, wide awake, sewing repairs on another walker's clothing. Someone else remembers a fabulous meal she cooked that same night for those same 50 walkers on one feeble burner with one water faucet in a war-torn city where there was virtually no food.

Other stories show Jun-san's uncanny intuition, the synchronicity that swirls around her as she "connects" with people and puts them in touch with each other. "I always do whatever she tells me to do," says one old friend, "even if I don't understand why." Jun-san once asked him to drive an hour out of his way to visit a couple recently arrived from Burma. No reasons were given, but the mission soon became clear. Forced to leave their country suddenly, without their children, the Burmese couple were desperate. The friend just happened to know an international agency that was able to reunite the family within days.

The walk atmosphere stimulates fairy-tale synchronicities. Hearing the drums, a Japanese friend from 20 years ago unexpectedly meets Jun-san on a suburban California street corner, and turns out to have information vital to the walk. Twelve years after the Wounded Knee experience, I find myself walking the streets of Manhattan to the World Trade Center with someone who was just a few steps ahead of me on that snowy day.

Stories also touch on the deep transformation possible on Jun-san's walks. Vigiling at one of New York's proliferating prisons, a friend (now ordained himself) told me how Jun-san bowed to a particularly tough-looking guard, who, to everyone's amazement, bowed back with deep sincerity. The one seen as the enemy may not be the enemy when we are tuned to the *Lotus Sutra*.

I asked Jun-san recently how she came to ordain. From the age of 10, she told me, she always questioned "where go after die?" From childhood reading in Buddhist philosophy, she realized that "everything moving. You cannot hold it." Unlike her friends, she was not attracted to material things: "Getting rich,



getting boyfriend is not interesting to me. You cannot hold." On family outings, she was drawn to poor people, starving people—and always "wanting to change it." By the time Jun-san was 16, the pull of radical anarchist activism created a break with her family that has only recently healed.

In deep confusion, with no thought of Buddhism, Jun-san went to India with her then-husband. "Sitting under trees, drinking tea in New Delhi," they met another young Japanese (who would later ordain also) and traveled to Bodh Gaya. A guidebook revealed that "If you have no money, you can stay at Nipponzan Myohoji," so they did. But it was only later that Jun-san's "religious mind started to grow." On one occasion she accompanied monks walking, chanting, and drumming in the slums of Bombay. There, extraordinarily poor people, people living in cardboard houses, came out bowing to the monks and giving precious offerings—"tiny rice, one cent, two cent." Their deep respect and their smiles were very beautiful to Jun-san. From that time, she "saw the world differently.... If people bow, then peace," she told me.

Without researching Buddhism or comparing her order with any other, Jun-san ordained in 1976. She was just under 30 years old. She is comfortable, now, with her "choice." Since Guruji's death (at age 100) in 1985, the order continues without a systematic hierarchy, a sangha that supports Jun-san's heartfelt

Shiatsu for Underground Railroad walker, 1997.
Photo by Skip Schiel

approach to justice without violating her innate sense of freedom.

The verb “to connect” is big in Jun-san’s vocabulary. Perhaps her most profound connections—during her 24 years as a Japanese monastic in the United States—have been with the indigenous people of this continent. Not long after ordination, Jun-san found herself, less by choice than by a series of coincidences, crossing the Pacific to participate in the “Longest Walk.” This fabled journey across the U.S. in 1978, from Alcatraz Island to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., brought urban and traditional Indian people from many tribes together into their own civil rights movement. Gurujī had long realized the importance of Native American teachings and must have felt their congruence with Buddhism. When he learned of the Longest Walk, he urged his monks and nuns to be there—not to convert or spread Buddhism, Jun-san recalls, but “to support Native Indian people because they have a history of struggle, respect for the land, living things all in harmony.... If ever the world back to peace way—Indian people very important teacher.” The monastics’ role was to lend courage and strength to this process by “drumming and walking behind Native people.” This assignment suited Jun-san perfectly. “I just become nun and I don’t know Buddhism much. I feel I can do this job. I understand how Native people important.”

On that walk Jun-san became lifelong friends with Dennis Banks, cofounder of the American Indian Movement, who had carried a gun at the government’s siege of Wounded Knee in 1973 but by 1978 was moving toward nonviolence as a long-term solution. (Banks has his own history with Nipponzan Myohoji, having once held a cocked rifle “defending” an expanding U.S. airbase against vigiling monks and farmers during the Korean War.) Sought by the law for his 1970s activism, Banks had to leave the sanctuary offered by a California governor who was stepping down from office and go underground on the Onandaga Reservation in New York. Jun-san accompanied him. It was there, during her monthly chanting vigils at the state house on his behalf, that a Native supporter offered her some wild mountain farmland for a peace pagoda.

Native Americans respect Jun-san’s style of prayer just as she does theirs. She recalls a long bus journey with Indians to an antinuclear conference. At sunset, she looked out her window and bowed to the sun. People noticed. “Jun-san is praying,” they said. “Let’s stop the bus.” Everyone got out so they could support her as she sat on the roadside drumming and chanting.

With this kind of solidarity, people don’t need a translation of *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo*. Gurujī and Nichiren had taught that these syllables embody the teachings of the entire *Lotus Sutra*, making them

accessible for ordinary people. Buddha nature is in all beings, even “evil” ones, and when the law of the Dharma is followed, even this violent world can become the Buddha land. Jun-san explains that “when you pray from inside your heart, many emotions come up. Each of us will feel it differently,” but all of us will be praying for peace. “If you want to know [what the words mean],” she says, “please try the chant.”

When Gurujī brought it to India, Gandhi understood *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo* immediately without translation and incorporated the chant into daily prayer at his ashram. Noticing big differences in chanting styles among the Nipponzan monks and nuns, I asked Jun-san once if Gurujī had ever instructed them on how to chant. “He say best way—*loud*,” she told me, her eyes twinkling. Her own throaty voice I would recognize anywhere.

Of the 150 or so monks and nuns of Nipponzan Myohoji, many others besides Jun-san are also “free spirits” with interesting stories behind their commitment. This small number has spread out to the global trouble spots of our century, chanting the *Lotus Sutra* in this “era of declined law”—in Zambia, war-wracked Nepal, Sri Lanka, Nicaragua. I have seen news photos of Nipponzan Myohoji monks and nuns with their picturesque drums in the thick of violent post-apartheid elections in South Africa and outside the besieged Church of the New Jerusalem in Bethlehem. A friend says their presence at the Great Peace March of 1982 (where over a million people gathered to say no to nuclear weapons) filled the streets of Manhattan with the sound of their drumming.

In the U.S., where so much global violence has its source, 11 monks and nuns have put down roots (including four European Americans, two ordaining this past year). Besides the Peace Pagoda near Albany, there is a New England Peace Pagoda (in Leverett, MA), one under construction near the Oakridge Nuclear Weapons Lab in Tennessee, and another being discussed at the nuclear submarine base near Seattle. Temples also keep the practice going in Atlanta, Rocky Flats (Colorado), Bainbridge Island (Washington), New York City, and the nation’s capital. Each temple, with lay supporters, is active in coalition-based peace and justice organizing in their region. We can be sure that Walks Far Woman and her brother and sister monks will keep on sounding the call to nonviolent social change in the hard times ahead. ❖

For more information visit www.dharmawalk.org and see Paula Green’s essay, “Walking for Peace: Nipponzan Myohoji,” in *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, edited by Christopher Queen (Wisdom Publications, 2000).

Louise Dunlap teaches yoga, meditation, and writing in the Boston area. She is a member of the Old Path Sangha.

Native Americans respect Jun-san’s style of prayer just as she does theirs. On a long bus journey, people noticed her bowing to the sun. “Jun-san is praying,” they said. “Let’s stop the bus.”

Working with Buddhists Behind Bars

An interview with Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron and Santikaro Bhikkhu

by Andrew Clark

A native of the Los Angeles area, Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron has studied Tibetan Buddhism with Ven. Lama Yeshe and Ven. Zopa Rinpoche since 1975, and received full bhikshuni ordination in Taiwan in 1986. She is the author of *Open Heart*, *Clear Mind*, *Working with Anger*, and other books. Santikaro Bhikkhu was born in Chicago, grew up in the Peace Corps in Thailand, and ordained as a bhikkhu in 1985. He translated *Mindfulness with Breathing* and other books by Ajahn Buddhadasa. Andrew Clark recently spoke with Thubten Chodron and Santikaro in Mississippi about their prison work. They are co-founding a monastery in the Midwest.

Andrew Clark: What do you make of the fact that with roughly 2 million people currently incarcerated, the United States has the largest inmate population in the world? What does this say about us?

Thubten Chodron: We're suspicious of others, we're fearful, and we don't want to think about what causes people to get involved in crime. It seems like voters are more interested in protecting themselves from people who they think will harm them than preventing young people from growing up to be criminals. So citizens are willing to vote for a new prison, but they don't want their tax money spent on schools, education, and after-school projects for youth. They aren't making the connection that if young people grow up in poverty, without education, without skills, if they grow up in a family that's a mess, it's very natural for them to get into criminal activities. It makes perfect sense why they landed where they did. I think we have to start looking at the cause and remedying that.

Also, I think the idea of "Punish them!" reflects a broader American policy of "Use might to solve problems." This is the same kind of attitude we have toward how to deal with Al Qaeda, the Palestinians, and anybody else who does anything we don't like. We use force against our own citizens, and other countries, and there seems to be this idea that "I'm going to treat you really badly until you decide to be nice to me." It doesn't work on a foreign policy level, and it doesn't work with people who have gotten involved with criminal activities.

Punishing people doesn't make them want to be nice. It makes them bitter and angry. They stay in prison and don't learn skills. Later they're released without any kind of preparation for facing the world. It's a setup for recidivism, which is one of the reasons

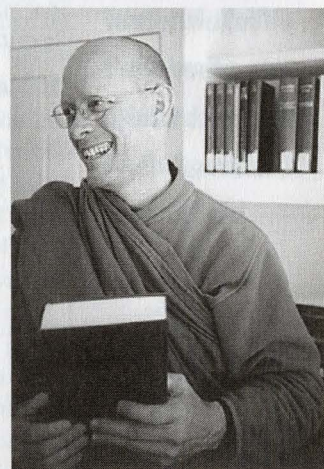
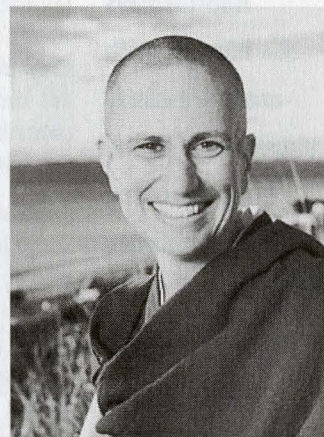
why prisons are so crowded. People get out and go right back in because they don't know how to live in the world. The prison system doesn't teach people how to live in the world; its only focus is punishment.

Santikaro: And the punishment doesn't just happen within prison, it continues after they are released. They are highly restricted as to jobs they can get; many of them come from neighborhoods where work is hard to come by anyway. And some of the jobs that do exist aren't open to them because they're convicted felons. Well, they have to eat; they might have a wife who wants child support, and the only way some of them know how to make money is illegally. Also, supposedly they've done their time, but for the rest of their lives they can't vote. What does that say about our belief in democracy?

There's an assumption here that people can't be rehabilitated. If we really believed that people could be rehabilitated, we would send them through a rehabilitative program; we'd let them vote and get jobs. But the punishment continues—in some cases, throughout their lives.

Can society make some effort to create jobs for felons, who will then have a chance to show that they can do the job? For example, let's say a felon is out of prison for five years, has a job, and doesn't cause any trouble. That should be enough proof that he's changed. Society should create opportunities, such as giving tax breaks to employers who hire felons, just as we should do for employers who hire disabled people. There could even be foundations that specialize in this. After all, we let white-collar crooks get away with murder.

Blaming and scapegoating is a major part of why people don't look at the causality behind crime. Drugs is a clear example. African Americans, especially, go to prison on drug charges with sentences that are two, three, or four times what whites serve for the same crime. That to me is clearly scapegoating. We have yet to deal with our racist heritage, and that includes us liberals. Many white people have a knee-jerk belief that blacks commit more crimes, and that's not based on evidence. We're afraid and we don't want to look into the causes of the fear. It's a lot easier to scapegoat blacks



Top: Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron

Bottom: Santikaro Bhikkhu

A lot of guys identify with me more easily than with the lay volunteers. They can't have sex, I can't have sex; they have to follow lots of rules, I have to follow lots of rules; they don't have much choice of clothes, I don't have choice!

or, if you're in the middle class, poor people. It functions as denial: we don't want to look at the violence in our own lives and that our lifestyles perpetuate.

Andrew: I want to ask you about some disturbing statistics I've seen: 65 percent of people committing felonies lack a high school education, 50 percent were under the influence of either alcohol or drugs when they perpetrated the crime, and another 33 percent are unemployed. How do you think these statistics contribute to the typical stereotype of felons—that they were born to be criminals?

Santikaro: If 50 percent are under the influence of something, how do we interpret that? One interpretation could be that these people are all lazy bums, they're drunks, they're druggies, they're scum. My way of looking at it is to ask why they are using drugs or alcohol. What are the causes of that in their social background?

We should also remember that alcohol is the drug of choice in our society, and all classes are abusing it. So if you're drunk while you're committing white-collar crime, does anybody keep that statistic?

Thubten Chodron: There's a difference between violent crime and white-collar crime. White-collar crime is carried out over a period of time. You don't just fudge the books one day, you fudge every day—for years. The people who are in prison for violent crimes, something got a hold on them, then "Boom!"—there they were. It's a very different type of activity. In a violent crime, there's a lot of strong emotion, and the strong emotion catches people's attention, it makes them afraid. Whereas when people hear about a business that is dumping toxic waste into a river, it doesn't produce that powerful, immediate effect the way it does when people hear about murder or rape.

Andrew: Given that half of the 2 million people in jail or prison in the U.S. are African American, while African Americans make up only 13 percent of the total population nationwide, have you found that many of the inmates who attend your teachings/meditations are African American?

Thubten Chodron: It depends a lot on the group, but generally, no. In some prisons a group will be half, or sometimes two-thirds African American, but mostly a group is predominantly white, with a few African Americans. Some prisoners have remarked about that to me, saying that they'd like more people of color to come. But often the African Americans, if they're looking for another religion, will look to Islam, where they feel their identity or their roots are.

Santikaro: Another factor is that there is strong pressure on blacks to stay in the church, the various Protestant denominations, because that's such a part of

many black communities. Also, the Nation of Islam created an African American identity for itself. To convert to Islam is acceptable to some black families, but to become a Buddhist may be considered a betrayal of both family and the whole race, because they see the church as so much a part of their identity. I haven't heard this from people in prison but I have heard it from other African Americans.

Andrew: Have you seen any correlation between the type of people attending the teachings and meditations, and the type of crime they are doing time for, or the length of sentence?

Thubten Chodron: Almost everyone I write to in prison is in for violent crimes. The last time I was at San Quentin, of the roughly 40 people that came, most were lifers. Afterward, I asked them about this. They said that most of the people who are in for life are much more likely to seek out spiritual things, and also programs for change, because they recognize that their whole life will be spent in prison. So they want to make the most of it. People who are in for shorter periods of time—say, for robbery, or a short drug term—are often angrier. They're already thinking about what they're going to do when they get out—all the fun they're going to have. Also, the people who are in with short sentences tend to have more contact with the outside because their families haven't cut them off. They are also more related to gangs and what's happening on the outside.

Santikaro: In many cases, we don't know what the individual crimes are; prisoners tend not to talk about that in front of the group. When I find out, it's usually through private communication.

Andrew: How has this work affected your practice?

Santikaro: I find these guys inspiring. When I hear them talk about the situations they struggle with, and I meet people who are committed to practicing in much more difficult circumstances than I have to deal with, that's inspiring. So are those who are dealing with AIDS, cancer, extreme poverty, or rape. I think of these people when I'm feeling lazy or complaining.

Thubten Chodron: Some of the guys I write to have committed the crimes that most terrify me. What is interesting is that I'm able to go beyond my fear of what they've done and see them as human beings. When they write letters, the stories they tell me pull at me sometimes. For example, someone in solitary will write about his loneliness and being cut off from his family. Then there's the pain of those who live in the big dorms. People are constantly in their face, day and night, in very dangerous situations. The fact that they turn to the Three Jewels for refuge, and that it helps them, inspires

me about the efficacy of Dharma practice. Seeing how some of these guys change over time and learn to deal with their stuff, that's very inspiring also. They tell me what they used to be like, and yet here they are, open and willing to look at stuff inside themselves. I always feel that I receive much more than I give.

Andrew: Do you think that being a Buddhist monastic changes the way you go about doing the prison work, or the way prisoners respond to you?

Thubten Chodron: Sure. You're wearing the "Buddhist uniform," so, just as in the rest of society, they relate to you in a different way—whatever their preconceptions happen to be. Some people are more suspicious of you, others respect you more. The men I write to get a sense of commitment from the fact that I'm a nun. Many of them have had difficulty with commitment in their lives. Also, they may feel starved for sense pleasure, but here we are, we've voluntarily given it up and we're happy! They think, "Oh, they're happy and they're doing without the same things I'm doing without. Maybe I can be happy without that stuff too!"

Santikaro: A lot of prison staff perceive me as clergy, and to some extent give me more respect than if I were a layperson. Prison is a very hierarchical system. Also, a lot of guys identify with me more easily than with the lay volunteers. As they've put it, they can't have sex, I can't have sex; they have to follow lots of rules, I have to follow lots of rules; they don't have much choice of clothes, I don't have choice! Some of the men picture their cells as monastic cells, even if they don't really know what a Buddhist monastery is like.

Andrew: How does this work fit in with the life of a Buddhist monk or nun?

Santikaro: Prison is a good place to practice socially engaged Buddhism. Prison brings together a lot of social issues in this country: racism, poverty, class, violence in society, rigid hierarchy, and militarization. Also, it's challenging for me as a monastic in this country, where it's still so easy to get away with a middle-class existence. Our Buddhist centers are overwhelmingly middle class, or even upper middle class. We have a lot of places with nice gourmet food and all kinds of little privileges. Working with prisoners is one way I'm trying to have a connection to people who do not have middle-class privileges or backgrounds.

Another aspect of my life as a Buddhist monk is to share Dhamma, and these are just more human beings who are interested in Dhamma. A prison is such a brutal, hierarchical, paramilitary system—and here we are meditating! And it's not just about the prisoners, by the way. The guards are not very privileged people either. They are, for the most part, poorly paid and not

well respected. How many people want to grow up to be a prison guard?

If some of the big companies were to invite me to go in and give Dhamma talks, I'd go there too. If Dubya invited me down to Texas for some meditation discussions, I'd go.

Thubten Chodron: If prisoners were on the outside, they might not go to Buddhist centers, which often are not in neighborhoods where prisoners would feel comfortable going. So prison work is a very precious opportunity to connect with and touch people in a way that you don't have on the outside.

Some of the most moving experiences I've had in prison were when I've given refuge, or precepts. When I give the precept not to kill to someone who's killed, it really moves me. I've been so amazed at the discussions I have with the men in the prison groups. They are in an environment where nobody wants to listen to them, where nobody cares about what they think. When they come in contact with somebody who's genuinely interested and wants to know what they think, they open up.

Sometimes I have the choice to teach at a Dharma center or drive three hours to see a prisoner. I'd rather go see the prisoner! We know that person is going to take in what we say, whereas often people on the outside act as if the teacher has to be entertaining. They don't want the talk to be too long. They have to be comfortable. Sometimes people on the outside aren't quite as motivated to practice as guys on the inside are.

Andrew: What would be your advice to someone who is interested doing prison work?

Thubten Chodron: Be very patient with the bureaucracy. Be firm, don't give up, be patient. Push, but push gently. Be respectful of the staff.

Santikaro: Don't think you can cut corners or not follow the rules, because the one who will pay the price isn't you—it will be the prisoners. Examine your class and race issues. I've met volunteers who come off as superior because they're more educated or from a "higher" class. Effective volunteers are willing to look into their own class bias and lingering racism.

Thubten Chodron: And look into your own fear, your own prejudice against "criminals," and your own fear of being hurt. Look at your motivations. Are you thinking that you're going to convert these people and put them on the right path, or are you going in there with respect for them? ❖

Andrew Clark, 27, is an aspiring monk in the Tibetan tradition. He began his monastic training in Augusta, Missouri, with Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron and Santikaro Bhikkhu, and now lives with the Eight Precepts at Nalanda Monastery in southern France, where he is continuing his training for ordination.

Most of the people who are in for life are much more likely to seek out spiritual things, and also programs for change, because they recognize that their whole life will be spent in prison. So they want to make the most of it.

Taking a Stand for Dhamma

by Santikaro Bhikkhu



Ajahn Buddhadasa

Ajahn Buddhadasa (1906–1993) was one of Thailand’s most revered and influential Buddhist teachers. Born in southern Thailand, he ordained as a monk at age 20. After a few years of study in Bangkok, he returned to the south and founded Suan Mokkhabalarama (Grove of the Power of Liberation), at that time the only forest Dhamma center and one of the few places dedicated to vipassana meditation in southern Thailand. His Dhamma talks and writings have been published in numerous volumes.

What makes a Buddhist monk an “activist”? Is there more to it than being an activist who also happens to be a monk? Is there is a certain activist role especially suitable for a monk or nun? What if she never did grassroots organizing, was never involved with activist organizations, never had a political agenda, and never took part in protests? These are questions I often ask myself, a monk who—like my teacher, Thailand’s Buddhadasa Bhikkhu—is often accused of being an “activist” or worse.

In her book *Power Politics*, Arundhati Roy considers the assumptions and disparagements that occur when “writer” is hyphenated with “activist.” Essentially the same occurs when “monk” and “activist” are joined by a hyphen. The implication is that the two roles don’t normally or naturally go together.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and many others rejected that assumption, which has helped to silence the moral and spiritual voices of monks, lest they show up the corruption of the ruling powers. The official Sanghas of all Asian Buddhist countries have accumulated prestige, wealth, and security at the expense of their independence from the state. In Siam (Thailand), the creation of a modern nation-state on the European pattern was made possible by using Buddhism as the sole unifying element within an ethnically and linguistically diverse population. Monks were granted many perks to go along with the state’s nation-building objectives—wholesome and not so wholesome. After World War II, military regimes added threats and violence. For a Thai monk to go against the powerful status quo was courageous and controversial.

One of the great triumphs of Ajahn Buddhadasa’s life was that he remained himself rather than become

the kind of monk defined by power, wealth, and tradition (despite the efforts of disciples to remake his image). His life encompassed things that are nowadays associated with activism. He took critical stances toward social forces taken for granted by the mainstream, such as issues of development, technology, and globalization; he spoke out as a public intellectual on the issues of his day, calling elites to task for violence, dishonesty, selfishness, and immorality; and he advocated alternative economical and political structures.

Herein, I’ll look at some of the ways, including “activist,” that Ajahn Buddhadasa was himself as a monk. He didn’t expect others to be the same sort of *bhikkhu*; after all, each must find his own Dhamma, that is, duty. Ajahn Buddhadasa practiced his Dhamma by letting go of self, serving Dhamma and humanity, and responding to worldly suffering and violence.

Dhammic Socialism

In 1946, Ajahn Buddhadasa spoke on “Buddha-Dhamma and Democracy,” part of a series of sometimes controversial public lectures given by the young reformer from southern Thailand. He discussed how the Buddha-Dhamma is fundamentally “democratic,” more so than the Western political version then being pushed onto Asian societies. “Fraternity, equality, and liberty” are each more perfectly developed through Buddhist practice, he claimed. Within Asian Buddhism this view was not unique—leading monks in Sri Lanka and Burma had been saying similar things in their countries’ struggle against British imperialism. But in Thailand, Ajahn Buddhadasa was unique. The Thai Sangha had long been reluctant to comment about politics except to echo state-sanctioned views, whether the country was ruled by a monarchy, a military regime, or a pluto-democratic system.

Pridi Panomyong, then–prime minister and a leading progressive of the 1932 coup that created a constitutional monarchy in Thailand, attended Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s democracy lectures and, deeply impressed, requested a meeting with him. Regrettably, Pridi’s ouster by right-wing generals ended hopes for an awakened democracy in Thailand. Nonetheless, the two men maintained a lifelong affinity. One can only wonder what path Thai society would have taken had the genuinely decent and democratic Pridi remained influential, with Ajahn Buddhadasa as an adviser.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s political thinking continued to develop through the decades of U.S.-sponsored

military dictatorships. He read the works of Hegel and Marx, though he found in them much that he did not accept, especially the notion of “class warfare” that seemed motivated by vengeance. Later, these kinds of books were burned during one of Thailand’s anti-Communist witch-hunts.

In the polarized situation of the 1960s and 1970s, when Thailand was hosting U.S. Air Force bases, rapidly modernizing, and shipping heroin, Ajahn Buddhadasa did not overtly take sides with one movement or another. He counted among his students high-ranking government officials, and he also received regular visits from insurgents in the jungles around Wat Suan Mokkh, his monastic community in southern Thailand. There were decent and sincere participants on both sides, and there was also violence, greed, dishonesty, and a lack of respect for the basic Buddhist teachings. Nonetheless, he did not remain neutral but took a stand for what he came to call “Dhammic socialism”:

We can see that there are many kinds of socialism. For example, the socialism of Karl Marx is just the revenge of the workers. There’s nothing to it other than revenge by the workers or laborers. Such socialism of revenge is angry and acts through its anger.

Whereas the socialism of Buddhists must include the word Dhammic, which means consisting of or having Dhamma, that is, correctness. Then acting and practicing correctly in line with Dhamma principles, not acting out of anger or revenge. “Dhammic” means connected with and proceeding according to Dhamma.

Dhammic Socialism according to Buddhist principles holds that nature created beings which must live in groups. Both plants and animals live together in groups or communities. This system we will call “socialism”: the correctness necessary for living together in groups which nature has dictated. In short, for the benefit of society, not for the individual benefit of each person. (From *Buddhism and the Ideal of Dhammic Socialism*, Bangkok, c. 1991.)

By overtly linking Buddhism and socialism, Ajahn Buddhadasa partially neutralized the propaganda against “godless Commies.”

I have tried to follow Ajahn Buddhadasa’s example by being a monastic voice for, among other issues, feminist perspectives. I have received some public attention from Thai Buddhists due to my being an American monk, and because of my connection with Suan Mokkh, where I lived for many years and acted as Buddhadasa Bhikkhu’s translator, and because I possess a creative facility in the Thai language. I have used my voice to link feminist perspectives and issues with Dhamma. I argue that domestic violence, the sex trade, women’s right to ordination, and other issues are moral concerns appropriate to all Buddhists.

Protecting Social Progressives

When I was a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 1980s, the labels “Communist” and “socialist” were considered derogatory. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, it was even worse: people who were suspected of being these things were chased into exile, imprisoned, or tortured. It was not just a semantic game—political scapegoating led to the killing of thousands.

Ajahn Buddhadasa had various reasons for speaking of “Dhammic socialism” during those turbulent times. His insistence that Buddhism is inherently socialist helped remove some of the danger from the label “socialist.” He consciously used his reputation and stature among the educated classes, many of whom worked in government, to protect social progressives. This is genuine skillful means (*upaya*).

The case of Phra Pracha Pasanadhammo (now Pracha Hutanutrat), who ordained as a monk in the mid-1970s when many of his student friends went into the forest—a euphemism for joining the Communist insurgency—is illustrative. Phra Pracha spent most of his monastic life either at Suan Mokkh or closely associated with it. Some of Ajahn Buddhadasa’s more conservative disciples, including a prime minister, believed that Phra Pracha was a Communist and suggested that the Venerable Ajahn send the young monk away in order to protect Suan Mokkh’s reputation. Ajahn Buddhadasa refused, partly because he knew that Phra Pracha was a sincere monk and not a Communist (though in sympathy with some Communist perspectives) but also because he wasn’t one to sell out anybody for personal convenience or advantage. But then, shouldn’t all Buddhists be troubled by militarism, capitalist greed, and class oppression?

“Nationalist”

Another issue in which Ajahn Buddhadasa chose to take a principled stand concerned the intellectual, ideological, cultural, and spiritual onslaught that Thailand suffered at the hands of the West. Influential voices conspired to belittle Thai culture and promote Western cultural values. The obvious colonizers were Western bureaucrats, businessmen, and soldiers, but there were also unconscious colonizers among Thai elites who received Western educations and wished to “civilize” Thailand as defined by the West.

A Thai student in England, Sanya Thammasak, corresponded with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu when Suan Mokkh was still an upstart new monastery in the boon-docks of southern Thailand. Sanya could not believe that his own culture was as inferior as his English hosts made it out to be. He and other students struggled to counter European chauvinism and racism. Sanya was influenced by Ajahn Buddhadasa’s pioneering *Buddha-Sasana Quarterly*, in which he argued that Buddhism

and the Thai culture based on it was not only equal to European culture and religion, but that Buddhism was even more rational and scientific than Christianity. Sanya Thammasak went on to be a lifelong disciple of Ajahn Buddhadasa, Chancellor of Thammasat University, a prime minister, a privy councilor, and president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

In Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's stance we can see a healthy sort of nationalism that does not need to look down on other cultures, because it has a natural pride and satisfaction in what is good and decent about itself. The kind of nationalism that depends on disparaging others really has little faith in its own decency. Look, for example, at how imperial America must point to an "axis of evil" to pretend to itself that it is good. Throughout his career, Ajahn Buddhadasa was the most prominent voice of this wholesome Buddhist nationalism.

I wonder what sort of nationalism might be healthy for an American Buddhist. I am looking for the wholesome values that were influential among the founding fathers, the New Deal, the civil rights movement, and more recent environmental, feminist, and other movements. What can I take pride in as an American? Are there skillful ways to be proud of my country and my Anglo-Saxon ancestors?

Influence on Buddhist Activists and Monks

Luang Por Dom, now in his 70s, has been active in Phra Sekhiyadhamma, a network of monks working on development issues, for years. He was born in Mothai, not far from Suan Mokkh, and lived his whole life in the area. When I once brought a German environmental journalist to interview him, Luang Por Dom described how in the 1950s, while a young monk, he heard Ajahn Buddhadasa warn that Thailand would lose its forests and an important part of its spiritual heritage if current development strategies continued. (In fact, they accelerated.)

Long before the Western environmental movement had any influence in Asia, the young monk began discussing the problem with the small-scale rubber planters of his village. Over the years, they set aside 20 acres here, 100 there. Now Luang Por Dom's township, an area mainly planted in rubber, is sprinkled with parcels of natural forest. Similar small-scale "movements" were undertaken by other Thai monks doing environmental work, rural doctors who are important activists in many areas, and NGO networks. These individuals and groups attribute their inspiration to the Buddha's teaching as pointed out to them by Ajahn Buddhadasa. His influence has been both intellectual (a Buddhist critique of development ideology and globalization) and grassroots practical. His forest monk lifestyle and moral clarity gave added weight to his teaching.

"Wild Monk"

Suan Mokkh was the first modern "forest monastery" in southern Thailand, and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu sometimes described himself as a "wild monk." The simplicity, discipline, and intimacy with nature (Dhamma) of the forest monk lifestyle provided an invaluable vantage point from which to view modernity and capitalism. Life in the woods, far from the cities, allowed space and freedom to think, speak, and write things that elites, including monastics in the institutional Thai Sangha, did not have. Ajahn Buddhadasa lived on intimate terms with peasant farmers and took care of many of his own needs, a life of independence that was reflected in his thought and teaching.

This wild monk lifestyle was in tune with the cycles of nature, and Ajahn Buddhadasa believed that it facilitated understanding of basic Dhamma principles. In the cities and suburbs, one is more likely to tune in to greed, anxiety, competition, delusion, and selfishness. This is one reason why the young Buddhadasa left Bangkok to found Suan Mokkh in an abandoned, overgrown temple near his hometown of Pum Rieng. In doing so, he helped foster the lesser-known currents of the Thai forest tradition that are less beholden to the powers-that-be and more involved in the basic survival issues of the poor and the ecosystems on which they depend.

This perspective is important to me as I ponder how to live as a Buddhist monk in America, the heartland of consumer capitalism. While my dream of settling into a patch of forest somewhere near Chicago is unlikely to happen easily and quickly, I am committed to this vision. Living simply in the woods as an honest renunciate offers important images and challenges to society. I hope to live out the values I learned in the woods of Suan Mokkh, because they bring me joy and may also contribute something healthy to the social discourse of a decaying pseudo-culture.

What might "Dhamma is Nature" mean in the midst of a big American city? How do we teach the Second Noble Truth to fledgling meditators still immersed in consumerism? How can the live-and-let-live ethos of the forest influence a frightened, decadent, nuclear empire? Truths that seemed clear and certain in an environment such as Suan Mokkh must be tested, and what better place to do it than in "The Jungle"? Like my teacher, Ajahn Buddhadasa, I will rely on the simplicity of the Theravada monastic lifestyle, the renunciate path outlined in the Vinaya, and the communal ethos that are key counterpoints to the egocentrism and consumer hedonism of modern American society.

Taking a Stand for Dhamma

Arundhati Roy speaks of the activist taking sides. I

continued on page 40

The Forest Way

by Satyavayu

Wilderness and spiritual practice have always been linked for me. My earliest spiritual insights occurred during childhood experiences of nature. Hiking into the mountains was entering the temple. So it was natural that as my interest in spiritual practice grew, so did my passion for environmental protection. As I learned to channel my spiritual hunger into formal meditation practice, I was also learning to express my love for the natural world through forest activism.

After participating in the “Redwood Summer” of 1990 in Northern California, I decided I needed to concentrate on formal meditation training. I practiced in Zen monasteries in California, Japan, Korea, and China, and after a few years I ordained as a Zen priest. But as my Zen training developed I started to feel that I was too focused on self-development and self-concern. I wanted to express my practice in the larger sangha—to share my spiritual work as compassionate action in the wider world.

I returned to the States in 2001 intending to reengage in activism, but I didn’t know how to integrate it with my spiritual practice and my role as a Zen priest. Talking with Julia Butterfly Hill, famous for her two-year stint sitting in a giant redwood tree, I came to see that meditation and activism need not be separate endeavors.

I visited forest activist camps and sat in trees myself, in the redwoods near Santa Cruz and the national forests near Eugene, Oregon, where I participated in a tree sit in the Fall Creek and Winberry tree villages. Living in the 150-foot canopy of an old-growth forest is an experience of startling perspectives—dawn light through branches as birds begin singing and fluttering all around, the swaying and creaking of the platform as winds weave through the trees, the night visits of the flying squirrels. Being confined to a very limited space, with little diversion or work to do, makes for an ideal solo meditation retreat. Inspired by the abundance, diversity, and sheer beauty of the natural world, my self-concern more easily melts away.

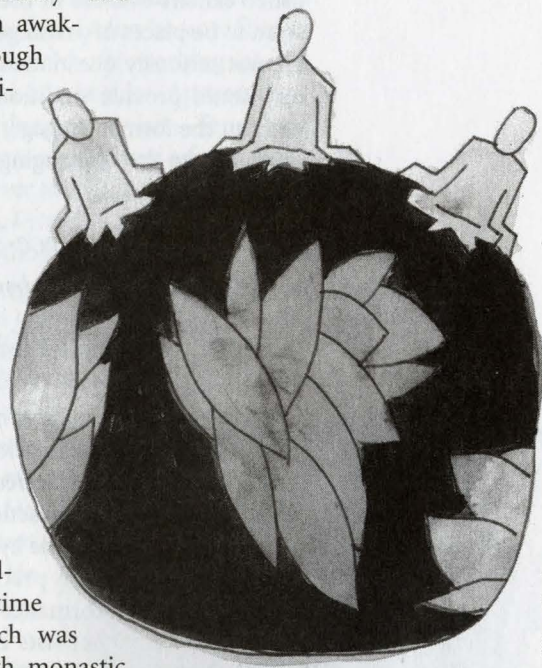
I was inspired by the spirit of renunciation and the heartfelt commitment to creating a new culture that I found among the forest activists. Whether or not they are interested in formal meditation, they all share a deep awareness of the phenomena of interconnectedness or “interbeing,” evident in their interest in every aspect of the natural world, from giant trees to lichens, herbs, and red tree voles.

In the face of global oppression against marginalized peoples and the natural world, these young forest activists see the necessity of stepping out of the system that creates that oppression. They seek to abandon a consumerist lifestyle for a new life of simplicity and intentional poverty.

My immersion in these communities led me to reexamine the Buddha’s renunciation of his own privileged status, and the movement of forest yogins that surrounded him and formed the first sangha. The Buddha encouraged his followers to wander widely throughout society and spread the vision of an awakened life—largely through the example of their radical lifestyle and the promise of trusting, friendly community. For them the creation of a new enlightened culture included the renunciation and dismantling of the old.

In his book, *Buddhist Saints in India*, Reginald Ray reveals a long tradition of forest yogins, extending from the Buddha’s time until the present, which was often distinct from both monastic and lay communities. These full-time renunciants lived in extreme simplicity outside the bounds of civilized society, focusing on meditation and an awakened life without ties to monastic institutions. Freed from the ceremonial or academic duties that occupied monastics, they embodied the innovative spirit of the Buddha’s original mission.

As Buddhism spread through Asia, the monastic institutions eventually grew to form strong alliances with the ruling powers, and they tended to support the status quo. Forest yogins have often emerged to challenge the ethical compromises of state-sponsored Buddhism. It was probably forest yogins who were the main inspiration for the Mahayana and Vajrayana reformations in India. Mountain hermit yogins seem to be at the heart of the original Zen movement in China



Tiffany Sankary

as well. And in present-day Southeast Asia, forest monks have been involved in social activist movements for human rights and environmental awareness. [Editor's note: see article on Ajahn Buddhadasa, p. 30.]

Studying this history, and from my experience of forest activism, I envision the reemergence of a forest tradition in the West. An ongoing wilderness retreat camp, for example, would provide meditation practitioners an opportunity to experiment with the rigorously simple lifestyle of the original renunciants, and would offer an intimacy with nature that's rare in more formal settings. Masters of many traditions, such as Longchenpa and Milarepa of Tibet or Han Shan and Ryokan of the Zen tradition, extolled the advantages of practicing in the wilderness.

Many young people with activist leanings are drawn to meditation but are turned off from established centers because of the expense or because they seem to be places of privilege where status-quo values are not seriously questioned. A forest yogic community could provide traditional wisdom and practice without the formal baggage, in an environment more conducive to the challenging outlook of these youth.

*In a retreat camp at a tree-sit site,
spiritual practice and protection activities
could be pursued side by side.*

Most important, a forest retreat would be a natural arena for bringing meditation and activism together into one practice. In a retreat camp at a tree-sit site, for example, spiritual practice and protection activities could be pursued side by side. Experienced meditators could put their practice of compassion and gratitude into "performance" for the preservation of the environment. Activists could learn how meditation helps bring the aspiration for a more just and peaceful world deeper into our hearts and minds, clarifying our motivation and vision.



This past summer I attended activist training camps in the forests of Oregon and Washington to gauge interest in such a project. Amid courses on forest activist history, plant identification, wilderness first aid, legal training, and so on, I offered a class on "forest meditation." I gave basic zazen instruction and initiated discussion about the importance of spiritual practice in activist campaigns. Participants responded positively, and our late-night discussions around the campfire engaged the wider activist community. At the Round River Rendezvous, a weeklong annual national gathering of Earth First! activists, I organized daily meditations on a ridgetop overlook-

ing the glaciated volcano Pahtoo (Mt. Adams, Washington).

When a new tree sit began in Mt. Hood National Forest outside Portland, Oregon, I joined the base camp and just started practicing. Some activists who were interested in meditation soon joined me. We usually sat three times a day, in between supporting the tree sit, cooking, eating, and engaging in lively discussions about wilderness, spirituality, and activism. It was a humble—and pleasant—beginning. Since then I have received many more messages of interest, both from those in the local community and others around the country.

There are many ways such a community could develop. Instead of laying out a plan, I would rather trust the organic unfolding of whatever sangha appears. The structure would be up to the consensus of the participants. Experienced practitioners with something to teach, as evidenced by their behavior and wisdom, would naturally emerge. A forest community would be an ideal arena in which to experiment with this approach.

As for money, from my own experience of living without it, I am convinced that securing the material needs of a simple life is not difficult for the renunciant whose intentions are altruistic and who is willing to work through community.

Forest activism works to preserve the very home and inspiration of the forest yogin. The wilderness is a place of refuge for anyone who wishes to step outside the reach of industrial society. In the natural world we can clearly perceive our place in the deepest, widest sangha—the earth itself, the source of life. Without this grounding, our human sanghas will go adrift. We must not forget the story of Buddha's touching the earth as confirmation of his awakening.

Whatever projects these new renunciants may undertake, however, will benefit from the influence of trained spiritual practitioners. And members of established meditation communities may be inspired to keep their vows real by taking up activism and reconsidering lifestyle choices. Together, an engaged spiritual/activist community could generate tremendous power for awakening, and could help to restore a healthy relationship with our natural environment. Forest activist yogins would exemplify the joy and clarity of living lightly, responsibly, and compassionately on the earth.

This is not just an abstract idea for a distant future. It is possible right now. I am doing my best to live and practice this way, and I invite like-minded people to contact me and join in the creation of a new and ancient vision of sangha. ❖

Satyavayu has no permanent home, but he can be contacted c/o No Abode Hermitage, 8 Friars Lane, Mill Valley, CA 94941.

He Traveled Light

by Susan Moon

I met Ladon Sheats in 1982, in the basketball court of the Livermore Weapons Laboratory. We were not there to play basketball—we had both just been arrested for sitting in the road and blocking the entrance to the lab, and the police were using the basketball court as a kind of holding pen before they took us to Santa Rita Jail. It was my first arrest for civil disobedience, and so the whole experience is burned into my memory. I saw my neighbor, Diane, there, and she introduced me to her friend Ladon. That was the first time I met this bodhisattva. And the last time I saw him was in June. I won't be seeing him again.

I got to know Ladon because he periodically visited Diane and her family. I learned that he spent a good part of his adult life in prison, serving long sentences for doing things like pouring his blood on missile silos. He was a Christian, a person of faith, and completely committed to nonviolence. He had no home, few possessions, and no spouse or children. He said he couldn't ask anyone to have a family life with him, because he saw it as his vocation to bear witness in this way.

Each time he came out of prison, he would stay with friends, and do what he could to help, like paint their house or do some construction. He also spent a lot of time at the Catholic Worker House in Los Angeles and at a Trappist monastery in Colorado, resting and praying. A homeleaver, he made the whole world his home. When he had regained his strength, he'd bear witness again.

As a young man, Ladon had worked for IBM. He lived in Manhattan and drove a fancy sports car. Then he went to a retreat at a place called Koinonia Farm in Georgia, a Christian community dedicated to racial equality and nonviolence. He had a change of heart. He quit his job, gave away his possessions, and turned to a life of radical discipleship.

I continued to see Ladon when he came to stay with Diane and her family. Then Diane, who was an unusually vital person, was diagnosed with kidney cancer, and she got very sick. So in 1992, ten years after I met him, Ladon came to stay with the family for the last few months of Diane's life. He shopped, and cooked, and chauffeured the three school-age kids, and supported Diane's husband John.

After Diane died, John remarried and he and the kids moved away. I didn't see Ladon much any more, and gradually I lost touch with him.

Last spring, I got a call from a woman in Vermont. She said that Ladon Sheats had asked her to let me

know that he was terminally ill with pancreatic cancer, and was in hospice care with a family in Santa Maria, in southern California. I could call to arrange a visit, and I could check the Web site a friend of Ladon's had created to learn of his condition.

It was a five-hour drive to the little house in Santa Maria. A sign was tacked on the door, written in magic marker on a piece of brown paper bag: "Welcome! Language spoken here: Laughter." Inside I met Dennis and Tensie and their two preschool children. They are part of the Catholic Worker community in the nearby farm town of Guadalupe. Tensie is a healthcare worker, and she and Ladon became friends years ago when they were both working at the Catholic Worker house in Los Angeles. Apparently—Ladon told me this later during our visit—Tensie said to Ladon about seven years ago, "I have a favor to ask you, Ladon. If you are ever sick and you need somebody to take care of you, I want to be that person."

And I met Faustino, who had come to Santa Maria a few weeks before, on loan from the Catholic Worker house in Los Angeles, to convert the garage into living—and dying—space for Ladon.

Tensie said, "He's ready to see you." In great excitement, I walked through the back yard to Ladon's new quarters, and he greeted me at the door with a hug. He looked just the same, except that he was very yellow. He was wearing jeans and a work shirt, and he had a bandanna tied around his forehead. We talked for an hour and a half. It was 10 years after Ladon had helped Diane with her dying.

Ladon had learned he had cancer two months earlier, while he was taking care of his father in Lubbock, Texas, and making arrangements for him to move into a nursing home. One morning Ladon got out of the shower and looked in the mirror and said to himself, "Gee, I look kind of yellow." It turned



August 9, 2002. Photo by Susan Moon

**A homeleaver, he
made the whole
world his home.**

out to be pancreatic cancer. It was time to take Tensie up on her offer.

Now people were coming to see Ladon from all over the United States. Some stayed for a while to help out with his care. Ladon said it was like connecting up the dots—friends meeting friends in a big mandala.

I was impressed by Ladon's willingness to let a lot of people go to a lot of trouble for him. It was hard work preparing his food, providing for his physical and medical care, even building a building for him to live in—nobody knew for how long—and he received all this with gratitude.

He told me the outpouring of all this love had given him a spiritual awakening. "I suppose in Buddhist terms it was a kind of enlightenment experience." The love was so healing he thought it might even bring a remission. "But if this is the last paragraph, then I can accept it. If God wants to heal me, she will. If not, I will try to die as I've tried to live." And then he quoted Wendell Berry, saying, "When I rise, let me rise up like a bird, without regrets, joyfully. And when I fall, let me fall like a leaf, without regrets, joyfully."

I gave Ladon a little Jizo figure that had been glued to my dashboard—I had pulled it off just before coming into the house—and we said good-bye. I think our parting was harder for me than for Ladon. After all, this was his project now—saying good-bye.

As the road unfolded on the long drive home, I thought about karma, and how all the love that was coming to Ladon was the natural result of the way he'd lived his life. I felt blessed to be part of that unfolding, the unfolding of his generous heart.

I followed Ladon's condition on the Web site. I read of his 68th birthday party with friends and family, of his declining strength, and of his continuing faith.

On August 7, Ladon died, and I made the long drive down there again.

The night before the burial, Ladon's body was laid out in his little hospice room, and I took a turn to sit with it. His bare face flickered in the candlelight, his bare hands were folded on his chest, and his bare feet extended from his blue jeans like tender shoots.

Next morning, about 70 of us gathered before dawn in the cemetery, where three angels stood tall on their pedestals, like guardian deities. On one side of us was the little town; on the other, the celery fields stretched away row after row toward the sea, and trucks trundled by on the road.

We stood in a circle in the foggy dark, holding votive candles, around the open grave that had been dug the day before by Ladon's friends. No hired people in suits and ties were present. The entire ceremony was created by friends.

Six pallbearers slid the coffin out of an old station

wagon and put it beside the open grave. There were songs, poems, prayers, and tears. As the light came I saw the grave deepen. The fog cleared just as the sun came up.

A friend of Ladon's who is a sheep farmer in Montana climbed down into the grave and laid the skin of one of his own sheep on the dirt.

Then came the shroud of blue denim. Tensie wept as she leaned over the coffin and carefully tucked the cloth around Ladon's body, from head to feet; gently, she tucked him in for the night.

Then, most amazing, six friends, three on either side, lifted Ladon's body out of the coffin in a kind of sling, and lowered it down onto the soft sheepskin, right down deep in the dirt. It was what he had asked for. No coffin. Just the earth. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. (It was against the rules not to use a coffin, but a kind sexton had agreed to look the other way.)

Ladon's old canvas traveling bag (with a Greyhound bus ticket inside) and his walking stick went down there too. This was a man who traveled light.

Friends passed a basket of paper cranes, and each of us was invited to put one into the grave with our own silent goodbyes. I picked a red one, and dropped it in. It fell on his chest.

While some stayed behind to fill in the grave and plant an olive tree in place of a headstone, most of us went back to the Catholic Worker house for a huge Mexican breakfast. Another blessing awaited me there: For the first time in ten years, I saw and talked with Diane's three children, and heard about the good lives they are growing into. It was Ladon who had brought us together.

We are all more connected than we realize most of the time. Ladon's community, his mandala, was already there, unnoticed, before he got sick, and his illness made it visible.

When you meet a person like Ladon, it's easy to think, "Gosh, I should be more like that. I'm so selfish compared to him!" I caught myself at the edge of such thoughts. But Ladon had grace; it was somehow given to him to be a bodhisattva. Ladon came into my life as a gift, not a judgment.

In 1992, in a *Turning Wheel* article called "Spiritual Practice in Prison," Ladon wrote about what gave him hope during the hardest times. "I do not hope for measurable results.... At the end of our time of prayer inside the high security fence at Pantex, while security guards with rifles yelled for us to stand, I prayed in silence: 'Into your hands I commend these moments as our best response to these difficult times.'... Not once during the ensuing year of imprisonment did I wonder if it was worth it." ❖

See www.bcm-net.org/ladon.htm for more about Ladon.

Book Reviews

Knee Deep in Grace: The Extraordinary Life and Teachings of Dipa Ma

by Amy Schmidt

Present Perfect Books, 2003, 173 pp., \$12.00 (paper)

Reviewed by Diana Winston

Stepping into the "Gratitude Hut" at Spirit Rock Meditation Center, in Woodside, California, one is transported by a feeling of just that—immense gratitude for the lineage of predominately Theravadin Buddhist teachers whose colorful photos line the wall. One instantly feels connected to the great heritage, all the way back to the Buddha. Except for one thing. Very few woman teachers sit in the array.

We know that in the Theravadin lineage, as in other Buddhist lineages, male masters far outnumber women. Perhaps this is due to the patriarchal cultures from which they emerged, in which women's stories were scarcely told. In any case, an absence of enlightened female role models can be demoralizing to the growing number of contemporary Western practitioners, the majority of whom are women, as any meditation center will tell you.

Thankfully, Amy Schmidt has come to the rescue. Her new book, *Knee Deep in Grace: The Extraordinary Life and Teachings of Dipa Ma*, tells the life story and teachings of Dipa Ma Barua, a Bengali woman and an enlightened master of the 20th century.

Dipa Ma, who died in 1989 at 78, was teacher to many senior vipassana teachers and students in both the East and West. She was revered for her extraordinary meditation skill, having attained high levels of enlightenment. She was also renowned for her unceasing compassion with her students, encouraging them to reach their fullest potential and doing so with a loving hand that never lost faith in them. Under her guidance, many students had profound realizations.

The book weaves together Dipa Ma's life story, anecdotes gathered from her students over the years, and excerpts from her meditation teachings. The seamless synthesis can be read in one sitting. It's spellbinding—a joy to read. The book deepened my own faith and my sense of what is possible. It is essentially a selfless book—the author never knew Dipa Ma, but her love and admiration shine through.

I never knew Dipa Ma, either, although I have been enchanted by stories about her over the years, including one related in the book, when Jack Kornfield asked her,

"What is it like in your mind?"

Dipa Ma answered, "In my mind there are three things: concentration, lovingkindness and peace."

Jack, not sure if he had heard correctly, asked, "Is that all?"

"Yes, that is all," Dipa Ma replied.

Each story brought me closer to Dipa Ma's loving pres-

ence. This book is an important addition to the canon of spiritual biographies. Dipa Ma was a true modern-day saint who challenged patriarchal notions. When told that only men could become Buddhas, "Dipa Ma bolted upright, eyes wide open, and said in a tone of spontaneous and utter conviction, 'I can do anything a man can do!'" Her story is a lesson to us all. ❖

Diana Winston's new book, Wide Awake: A Buddhist Guide for Teens, will be published in summer 2003.

Dipa Ma once said, "Women have an advantage over men because they have more supple minds. It may be difficult for men to understand this because they are men. [Joseph Goldstein] asked her, "Is there any hope for us?" She answered, "The Buddha was a man. Jesus was a man. So there is hope for men too."

—from *Knee Deep in Grace*

Women Living Zen: Japanese Soto Buddhist Nuns

by Paula Arai, Ph.D.

Oxford University Press, 1999, 233 pp., \$39.95 (cloth)

Reviewed by Grace Schireson

Women *Living Zen* is an academic book filled with nuggets of wisdom for Buddhist practitioners and for students of social change. The story of how the order of Soto nuns in Japan confronted and reformed the sexist restrictions of the establishment from within the bounds of religious practice, is a wonderful amalgam of Buddhist thought and realistic protest. The book details the history of this nuns' order in Japan, their daily monastic practice, and the exciting changes in status that they demanded and won through the activities of two generations of gentle-mannered yet tough-minded women.

Of particular interest to Western Buddhist students is the life history of Kojima Kendo Roshi (1898–1995), a powerful Zen master little known outside Japan. Kendo Roshi (and the other founding nuns of the Aichi Semmon Nisodo) fought for equal rights for nuns based on the teachings of the Soto Zen sect's founder, Dogen (1200–1253). Returning to the original intent of the Buddha's teaching, and in particular to Dogen's words, the nuns reclaimed their right to full participation as religious leaders. Even though Kendo Roshi did some unrelenting table-pounding at Soto sect meetings, the nuns' approach to establishing equal rights was traditionalist and conservative rather than revolutionary. They staked their claims on religious statements made by Dogen, a highly revered Zen

patriarch who praised women's religious abilities, and men who could see through gender stereotypes and take women as their Zen teachers. (See, for example, Dogen's essay "Raihaitokuzui" ["Attaining the Marrow"] in his masterpiece *Shobogenzo* [*Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*]).

Women Living Zen was originally constructed as a doctoral dissertation, and both the flaws and benefits of the academic format are evident. At times the writing is somewhat dry. Yet the content is also rich in details about many previously unknown nuns' lives, their personal histories, and their contributions to Zen practice and to supporting women's rights. Arai also names and describes the early female pioneers who studied Zen with Dogen Zenji and with his male successors.

In terms of blending religious practice with social action, we cannot do better than to hear Kendo Roshi: "To accomplish the spirit of an independent way of life, it is important to realize this strength from the outside, but even more important is the inner strength." For me, Kendo Roshi's words mean that efforts to correct injustice must be based on refinements of our own character, through honest, meditative, spiritual self-inquiry. Political action without self-knowledge is not enough. ❖

Grace Schireson is a Soto Zen 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.

Jizo Bodhisattva: Modern Healing and Traditional Buddhist Practice

by Jan Chozen Bays Roshi

Tuttle Publishing, 2002, 284 pp., \$34.95 (cloth)

Reviewed by Virginia Hickey

In some Buddhist traditions a bodhisattva is an enlightened being who has vowed not to enter nirvana until all beings are saved. In this engaging book, Jan Chozen Bays Roshi introduces the reader to Jizo Bodhisattva and to his emerging role in Western Buddhist practice.

She explores four aspects of Jizo. The first is as a figure of history dating back to the beginnings of Buddhism. Second, Bays looks at some of the myths surrounding the bodhisattva, revealing his aspect as a protector of those who suffer. Third, Bays describes how Jizo practice, such as making vows, chanting to Jizo, and creating Jizo images, opens the way to a deeper understanding of one's own heart and mind.

Jizo's fourth and best-known role is as the beloved guardian of children, especially of unborn children and those who have died. Bays, a practicing pediatrician as well as the spiritual leader of Larch Mountain Zen Center in Corbett, Oregon, was particularly drawn to this aspect of Jizo, and it was from here that the book took shape. Accordingly,

the book opens and closes with accounts of the *mizuko* ceremony of remembrance for children who have died.

A poem by Zen Master Ryokan or Dogen Zenji heads each chapter. An appendix adds further insight into Jizo by providing excerpts from talks by several Zen masters.

This excellent book will appeal not only to those wanting to learn more about Jizo Bodhisattva but also to Buddhists seeking to deepen their practice. ❖

Virginia Hickey is a retired social services administrator and a student of Zen. She has a long history of volunteerism and activism in environmental causes and has visited many Buddhist sites in Japan.

A Buddhist History of the West: Studies of Lack

by David Loy

SUNY Press, 2002, 215 pp., \$19.95 (paper)

Reviewed by Roy Money

David Loy is a professor in the faculty of religious studies at Bunyko University in Japan and a member of BPF's Think Sangha. In this book, he surveys European and American history from ancient Greece to the present. He wants to show the variety of ways that essentially spiritual problems have been dealt with in the development of Western history. This is a very ambitious and complex task, and Loy provides fascinating observations along the way.

The key to his analysis is the concept of lack. By this, Loy means the inevitable sense of insecurity that arises when we try to create an "objective," solid sense of self, because the "self" is a mental construct that is always incomplete, conditioned, and groundless. For Buddhists, this is the definition of delusion and the root of human suffering.

In his 1996 book, *Lack and Transcendence: The Problem of Death and Life in Psychotherapy, Existentialism and Buddhism*, Loy discussed the dynamics of lack in psychological and existential terms, but here he explores the collective dynamics of this phenomenon in Western history: how different cultures, in different historical periods, express and respond to the sense of lack. In traditional societies such as dynastic Egypt, the problem of lack was addressed by various mechanisms of social integration that encouraged a collective sense of identity; the sense of the individual as the Greeks knew it did not exist. Loy argues that Greek civilization and its secular humanism are what gave birth to Western self-consciousness and atomized individualism.

In his discussion of the sacred and the secular, Loy argues that essentially sacred or spiritual elements are deeply embedded and unconsciously played out in ostensibly secular cultures. Religion is the primary way we try to ground our groundlessness, to find something solid and absolute to hold onto amid the myriad uncertainties of life. "We can never escape a religious interpretation of the

world," he says; many of our secular values and institutions have their origins in "misdirected spiritual drives." Furthermore, the dualism of sacred and secular is itself part of the cultural delusion that haunts us. Loy reminds us that for the Indian Buddhist sage Nagarjuna, there was "no specifiable difference between samsara and nirvana, only a change in perspective."

I found all seven chapters of the book very engrossing, but I took special interest in the chapter on civil society. I found it especially interesting because the concept of civil society is considered central to democracy and the flourishing of freedom, and is often evoked in discussions of globalization. This tradition of thinking, though variously understood, is usually considered to be a product of the secularization process that began with the Protestant Reformation and found its essential expression in the triumph of the nation-state. Yet Loy shows how the notion of civil society originated as a movement to reform English society and make it more moral. He argues that the problems of contemporary civil society are linked to the loss of such a collective moral purpose. Repeated transmutations of interdependent ideas and social forces have produced a privatized understanding of lack that accentuates the obstacles to community and cooperation.

Loy's objective is not to reestablish previous religious practices but to reevaluate the religious dimension of life. He takes a functional view of religion as that which "grounds us by teaching us about our place in the world." He says it is not that religion has been superseded by secular culture but that secular institutions have replaced God as representations of the ultimate. The nation-state, the market, and Western science have become new forms of idolatry that we identify as sources of vision and meaning. For Loy, authentic religion is the "alliance of our energies with the unconditioned cosmic process"—otherwise known in Buddhism as *shunyata* or emptiness—not an otherworldly transcendence, but a this-worldly transcendence of self.

This Buddhist book is quite different from most for two reasons: because it is principally not about Buddhism, and also because it attempts to understand the collective dynamics of history. It is demanding of the reader in its scope and details, but it is immensely rewarding. Loy's explorations probe beyond the psychological and philosophical domains that characterize most modern American Buddhist literature. Although the book is about cultural expressions rather than about individual practices, it nonetheless illuminates individual issues (and their emptiness) because it illustrates vividly how inseparable individual issues are from social issues. Gary Snyder has written about this book, "David Loy is opening up new territory that is of great value." May we see many additional explorers in this territory! ❖

Roy Money lives in New Haven, Connecticut, and works as a statistical analyst. He draws inspiration from his vipassana practice, his 25-year marriage, his teenage son, a Unitarian-Universalist faith community, and social activism.

Briefly Noted:

Working with Anger

by Thubten Chodron

Snow Lion, 2001, 169 pp., \$12.95 (paper)

This is a down-to-earth guide to working with the various manifestations of anger—including the anger that comes with fear, betrayal, or envy, and the anger that arises when we are victims of violence or when we see social injustice.

Chodron's sound advice is sprinkled with illustrative anecdotes. She offers specific tools and meditations from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition in which she has practiced for many years, making them accessible to all, and she shows how she has used these tools in her own work with social suffering in such places as Israel and American prisons. Her long training in letting go of self-clinging shines through as a steady compassion. A useful book for people working with their own personal anger or with the anger that arises from facing social injustice. —S.M.

Choosing Simplicity: Commentary on the Bhikshuni Pratikmoksha

by Venerable Bhikshuni Wu Yin

Translated by Bhikshuni Jendy Shih

Edited by Bhikshuni Thubten Chodron

Snow Lion, 2001, 338 pp., \$15.95 (paper)

Master Wu Yin, a highly respected Taiwanese teacher, provides in-depth commentary on the precepts kept by Buddhist nuns. She explains the history of these vows and the reasons for keeping them. This close look at ethical behavior, and at what constitutes violation of the precepts, gives insight into the deep commitment that goes with ordination. The commentary is thought-provoking for lay as well as ordained practitioners, as it invites all of us to look closely at the gray areas of our behavior around stealing, lying, and so on. —S.M.

The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964–1966

by Robert J. Topmiller

University of Kentucky Press, 2002, 224 pp., \$35 (cloth)

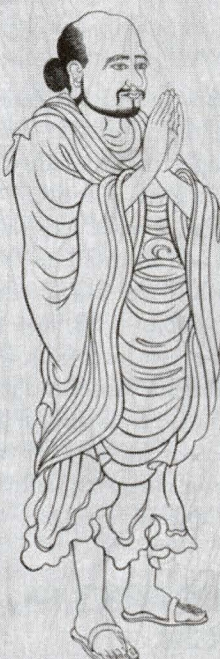

During the Vietnam War, Vietnamese Buddhist peace activists made extraordinary sacrifices—including self-immolation—to try to end the fighting. They hoped to fashion a neutralist government to broker peace with the Communists and expel the Americans. In this book, Robert Topmiller describes their courageous efforts to create a nonaligned Third Force. —S.M.

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Meditation for Life

by Martine Batchelor, with photographs by Stephen Batchelor

Wisdom Publications, 2001, 168 pp., \$22.95 (paper)

This exquisite book combines stories, instruction, and practical exercises drawn from three Buddhist traditions: Zen, Theravadin, and Tibetan. Along with chapters on meditation, ethics, and many other aspects of the path, Batchelor has included chapters on inspiration, the role of a teacher, and bringing meditation into our daily lives. She has written this guide to basic and more advanced practices in language accessible to anyone, including non-Dharma practitioners. Complementing the text are photographs that help us discover the beauty of things as they are, by Martine's husband, Buddhist teacher and writer Stephen Batchelor. Highly recommended. —D.L. ❖

Buddhadasa, continued from page 32

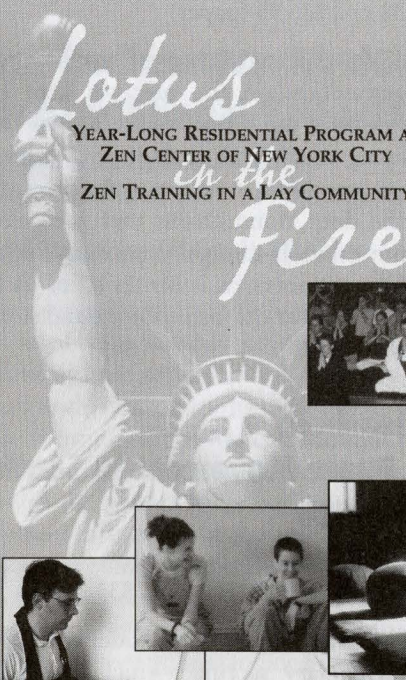






like this perspective because it counters the illusion that writers (in her article), religious folks (in this article), and human beings in general don't have to take sides. In Thailand, the monastic institution has held a pretense of neutrality that actually shores up the status quo—those in political and monastic power.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu took sides. He stood with the Dhamma and, indirectly, with those whose causes he felt were Dhammic. Overtly, he did not side with particular groups, which made it possible to not be against anybody and enabled him to focus on principles and issues. Dhamma is about natural principles, and these are the foundation on which he took his stands. Actual human beings and groups—including himself, his disciples, and his monastic community—are complex entities that only imperfectly live out the principles they espouse. Ajahn Buddhadasa used his monastic role to give voice to these principles, including those of social morality that other leading monks avoided in order to accumulate prestige and privilege under a corrupt state. Quietly, behind the scenes, he indirectly helped many individuals and groups.

Ajahn Buddhadasa's activism was not a special focus on social issues but part of a well-rounded and sophisticated understanding of Buddhist morality. His example inspires and challenges me. I need not concern myself with what it means to be "an activist." I need not limit myself to domesticated definitions of what it means to be a monk. Like my teacher, I need only be myself while exploring all the ramifications of Buddha-Dhamma. That means being true to my various commitments: to the *bhikkhu* life, to the end of suffering, to a more just and peaceful world, to my friends, and to my teachers, including the Buddha himself. Let others worry about what to call us. ❖

For more about *Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*, see www.suanmokkh.org. See p. 27 for biographical information about Santikaro Bhikkhu.

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BPF Activist News

In the last few months of warmongering, BPF members all over the country—and the world—have been walking, marching, meditating, praying, dancing, and rallying for peace. Below, Diana Lion, from the national office, writes about BPF's presence at a big peace march in San Francisco, and other reports follow from other BPF chapters.



Marching under the BPF banner in San Francisco, October 26, 2002.
Photo by Paul Ridgeway

Across the United States on October 26, 2002, hundreds of thousands of people marched against the growing momentum of war. About 80,000 of us gathered in San Francisco, with the dramatic towers of the Oakland Bay Bridge looming as a backdrop. BPF had publicized our intention to do sitting meditation at the beginning and end of the day, and we hoped people would come sit with us. The train I rode from the East Bay into the city was filled with demonstrators of all ages, races, sizes, and fashions. The multiply-pierced stood cheek to jowl with people in priest garb. We carried signs and masks (including many Bush look-alikes). Once downtown, we spilled out onto the sidewalks and joined the crowds who were already there.

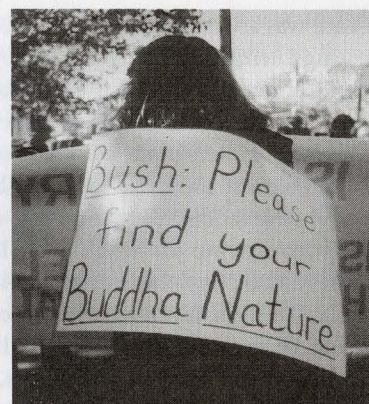
BPF was meeting in a field that was soaking wet. A supportive bagel bakery nearby supplied us with many large garbage bags to sit on, and we settled down. By the beginning of the rally almost 200 people were sitting together in silence. People kept snapping our pictures—unwittingly we had become a major photo op. We were interviewed on camera, kids and dogs played a few feet from us, and still we kept sitting. At one point we stood for 10 minutes to give our legs a break and some people spoke out loud their intentions.

After over two hours of sitting, we joined with other faith groups and started the long slow march to City Hall. The number of marchers made the pace slow enough to satisfy the most mindful of walkers, though I do confess that at several street corners we danced along with everyone else to the music of steel bands.

When we got to the Civic Center, the square was so packed there was no chance of even entering it. We reached

a street flanking the stage, where 200 fully armed riot police stood at attention. There a few of us sat down for some more meditation. More and more people were drawn to join us, so we kept sitting. Finally, Daniel Doane stood up and led us all in a short metta meditation, and then I stood up to dedicate the merit. It was the first time I had had to yell out my prayers for peace. I turned in a slow circle so that everyone would hear at least some of it, and I could see the riot police for half of every circle.

When we all got up to leave, people told us that they wanted to meditate together at every demonstration, and some said they had come only because they knew BPF folks would be sitting there together. As for me, a graduate of the “in-your-face” school of activism, I realized how much I’d been able to be fully present during this entire demonstration. I had had a chance to connect with friends, dance, laugh, and bring my most peaceful aspirations to the heart of a huge, loud, rowdy demonstration. So I hope we can continue to bring this kind of calm and joyful presence to the ongoing work of waging peace. —Diana Lion



Boston, November 3, 2002.
Photo by Maia Duerr

Chapter News

The **Boston Chapter** of BPF has organized two Walks for Peace, and is in the process of organizing a third, which will take place on December 8. (For information about the Boston chapter's events, check their Web site at www.bpf-boston.org/calendar.html.)

Christine Aquilino reports: “The October 6 Walk for



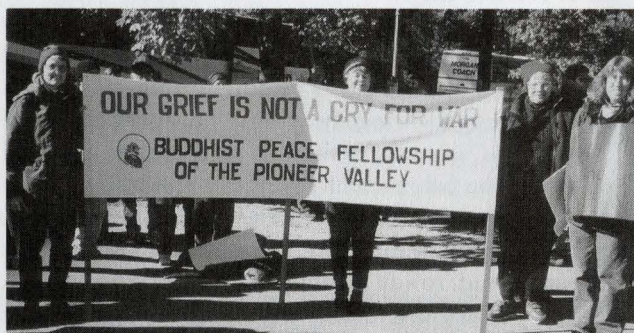
Peace walk in Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 6, 2002.
Photo by Christine Aquilino

Peace was a wonderful event, with 50 to 60 people participating during the three-hour loop. We began at Cambridge Zen Center, and walked to Harvard Square and back, passing through the Oktoberfest on the way. We carried beautiful crane banners made by one of our members, and handed out almost 400 flyers to passersby.

“On November 3, there was a massive turnout for the rally against war on Iraq at the Boston Common. More than 15,000 people were there. In the large crowd, some of the BPFers got separated from the group, but many of us managed to join Sister Clare and the others from the Peace Pagoda at the front of the march, as they drummed and chanted and provided us with their amazing loving presence. As we walked, many of us held peace crane pennants. It was a powerful experience for all who attended.”

A huge busload of **BPFers from the Pioneer Valley Chapter** in western Massachusetts were also in the mix.

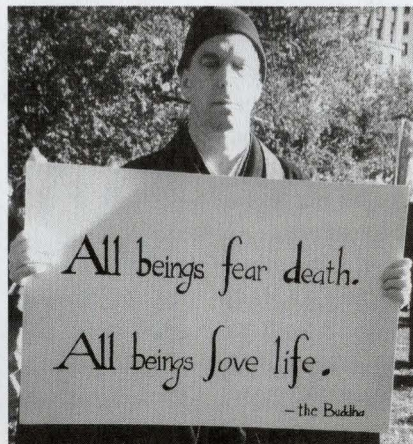
Coinciding with rallies in San Francisco, Washington



Pioneer Valley BPF in Boston, November 3, 2002.
Photo by Maia Duerr

DC, and elsewhere, the **BPF Chapter in Honolulu** took part in the October 26 “Not in Our Name” peace march in Honolulu, and the **BPF East Hawai‘i Island Chapter** co-sponsored an antiwar rally in Hilo on that day.

From Illinois, Teresa Myers writes, “On Sunday, September 15, 2002, the **Springfield BPF Chapter** sponsored the first monthly Peace Walk, to be held on the third Sunday of each month, at Phelps Grove Park here in Springfield. At least 60 people walked together in silent prayer, breathing, and meditation for peace. Some people came from as far away as Ava, Missouri. A diverse group of people with many differing interests gathered after the walk to make new friends. It was a beautiful day and a serious but joyful time. Please join us, here, or in your own community, as we walk again next month. Buddhists in Minneapolis, Minnesota, have also begun these monthly walks, and we encourage other sanghas to spread the tradition.”



Boston, November 3, 2002.
Photo by Maia Duerr



Honolulu, October 26, 2002
Photo by Barry Sullivan

Jill Jameson writes from Australia that **BPF Melbourne** helped the Victorian Peace Network plan a big peace rally on October 13, and made an effort to involve more Buddhists. She says, “It has been encouraging to hear of the voices of dissent over a possible war in Iraq coming out of the U.S., and we are wondering how BPF chapters are responding.”

On another note, Sara Sunstein sent the following report from the **Sonoma County, California, Chapter** of BPF:

“On Saturday July 27th, in its 11th year of existence, the second incarnation of the Sonoma County BPF chapter entered *parinirvana*. (The previous incarnation reached about the same age; maybe that’s the natural life cycle of Sonoma County chapters.) The chapter’s body and mind had become old and unable to sustain itself. One of us is sitting a three-year meditation retreat. Three of us are firmly settled into our engaged spiritual practice and no longer need BPF to guide us in it. We teach interfaith meditation at the Sonoma County jails and Religious Studies at the Santa Rosa Junior College. We express our love for all sentient beings through a dance band. We organize coastal clean-ups, perform political satire with the Raging Grannies, and serve on the board of directors of a retirement community

called Friends’ House. BPF was part of what led us here and we’ll always be grateful for that. For many of us it also served as our only Buddhist sangha, but we’ve now found other spiritual homes. Yet we fully appreciate the importance of BPF. We feel that both it and Sonoma County, teeming with Buddhists, deserve a local chapter. So the search for the third incarnation of Sonoma County BPF has begun. If you want to become part of its new body, vision, and energy, please contact Sara Sunstein, (707) 578-8236, whom the Tibetan oracle has already revealed as the midwife who will help at the birth.” ❖

BPF Reports

From the Interim Coordinators:

All beings seek safety. It is our deepest wish. This goes for ourselves, Osama bin Laden, Yasser Arafat, Ariel Sharon, George Bush, Al Gore, and everyone else. The last 15 months have been perilous ones for people in the United States and around the world. The terrorism we experienced on 9/11 continues to reverberate throughout the world, and it has spun into a new cycle of violence. Now we stand on the brink of war with Iraq, a war planting seeds of further violence whose fruit we cannot even imagine. Results of the recent elections and of numerous opinion polls seem to say that a large portion of the American people supports this war. Sadly we acknowledge this national mood, and hope it passes swiftly. Again we affirm our opposition to war and violence.

Many of us see the world through a lens distorted by self-centeredness and fear. Often we feel that safety lies within our grasp if we can just eliminate those we see as enemies. The Buddha's teachings say something else. In order to reach safety, we must understand how we create our enemies, how that enemy is within us and interdependent on us. And how the path of patience, nonviolence, and generosity is the way of peace. It is a difficult path, but we believe it's the only one that holds a promise of safety. So here at BPF we rededicate ourselves to this practice.

This has been a difficult and at times discouraging year at BPF. We have also been affected by the world's suffering. Some of you may have heard rumblings of problems and conflict here. There were several challenges to face: 1) The departure of an executive director of eleven years who was widely recognized in Buddhist circles; 2) employing a new executive director with limited experience in BPF and in the socially engaged Buddhist world; 3) reckoning with an unstable financial situation in the U.S.; 4) understanding and adjusting to the drastic shift in American life, a shift marked by fear and bellicosity; and 5) making BPF a truly national organization that expresses the interests and wisdom of our wide membership.

Like most nonprofits, our finances have been tight for all of this recession year, with cash on hand sinking to an alarmingly low level. For financial reasons a number of staff people, including Administrative Director Joo Eun Lee and Prison Project Co-Director Joi Morton-Wiley, were let go. For a short period the whole program staff was on reduced salary or off the payroll. These were agonizing decisions to make for everyone involved. Months of grueling work and discussion took a toll on all board members. Tensions and misunderstandings developed between board, staff, and community members.

In September, with great reluctance, and with the recognition that new leadership was needed, the board released Executive Director Sibylle Scholz. An October board/staff/community retreat, facilitated with great skill and heart by Lawrence Ellis and Keith McCandless, helped us all understand each other and untangle some knots. After the retreat, several board members stepped down, ready for a badly

needed rest. This was done with much graciousness. Board, staff, and community members are deeply grateful to them for all their energy and hard work.

Since the start of October, BPF has been in the black, on a month-to-month basis, and has begun to stabilize. It feels light in the office again. Alan Senauke was invited back to serve with new board president Bob Lyons as Interim Coordinators—part-time for six months—to help harmonize things. Board members themselves have come forward and donated substantially to keep things going. After a turn as BPF's treasurer, Bob Lyons is deeply committed to the nuts-and-bolts work of fundraising.

Currently there are seven part-time people in the office: Alan and Bob are co-coordinators, Melanie Phoenix does the membership database work (a vital and unsung responsibility!), Faith Fuller serves as our accountant, Diana Lion is working at the Prison Project, and Sue Moon and Marianne Dresser are working on *Turning Wheel*. Diana Winston has left BPF after eight years—more about Diana in the next issue!—and now BASE will be coordinated by Tempel Smith who helped organize the first BASE house in San Francisco.

The board has created a six-month leadership team of Bob Lyons, Alan Senauke, Sue Moon, and Martha Boesing (who recently moved to the East Bay after many years with the Minneapolis BPF chapter) to frame questions and then explore the future of BPF with staff, board members, teachers, chapters, activists, and others. The leadership team is also charged with creating a process to find a new director.

The challenge will be to remain open and responsive to the great variety of members' needs, all across the country. And to meet the urgent need to make peace in a time of war. We are all keenly aware of the dangerous moment we inhabit. Not so much dangerous to BPF, but to the world itself. It is hard to change, but change is the essence of dharma. We will need a great body of collective wisdom to find appropriate ways to change. So let's put our heads together.

—Robert Lyons & Alan Senauke

From the Board President:

I would like to express my gratitude to those who have gone before us, the founders, past board members, and staff, and all the teachers all the way back. Now more than ever we need their continued support and encouragement.

To outgoing board officers Terry Stein and Lee Lewis, heartfelt thanks for your leadership and guidance over the past three years; your deep commitment to the Dharma has benefited us all. To outgoing board members Mushim Ikeda-Nash, Lee Lipp, C. S. Soong, Aran Watson, Lauren Leslie, and Roger Dorris, thank you for your excellent service. We hope that you will stay close, because we may need your helping hands in the near future. To Sibylle Scholz, former executive director, thanks for the tremendous effort and resilience you put forth during these stormy months. And to the outgoing staff, Joo Eun Lee, Joi Morton-Wiley,

and Diana Winston, may we carry on your good work with the same spirit of selfless dedication that you brought to it.

To current staff and board members Sue Moon, Diana Lion, Melanie Phoenix, Marianne Dresser, Faith Fuller, Nori Fujimori, Ruben Habito, Trena Cleland, Elizabeth Cheatham, and Fleet Maull, deep thanks for your ongoing support. You have made it possible by your spirit and tenacity for BPF to weather this difficult stretch. And thank you to the BPF community—elders, chapters, donors, and members.

Finally, I would like to offer a special thank you to Alan Senauke, who after a brief holiday is back in the thick of things. We owe you a huge debt for your energy, fearlessness, and skill, and we plan to lean on you heavily over the next year.

May all beings be happy. May all beings be free from suffering. ❖ —Robert Lyons

From the Prison Project:

As mentioned above, Joi Morton-Wiley, co-director of the Prison Project, was laid off in September, due to BPF's serious budget crunch. I want to take this opportunity to thank her for her work. Joi brought a deep sense of joy and calm to BPF and the Prison Project, and was loved by staff and volunteers. She remains an active participant on our Prison Committee and is continuing her peace and diversity work through Pace Bene, a religious nonprofit working to end violence. Because Joi was directing the corres-

pondence portion of the Prison Program, we had to find a new home for it—and we have: in Sonoma County, northern California—with Elizabeth Cheatham acting as the new volunteer coordinator. Elizabeth has a longstanding commitment to prison work, and we are blessed that she is willing to take on this significant piece of the program. For the time being, the address for prisoners to write to will remain the same. I will forward letters to Elizabeth and her cadre of volunteers from the Sonoma Shambhala and Zen centers.

Death penalty news: The Prison Project has gone international! This past August I was invited to speak at the local Amnesty International group in Sete, southern France. We spent a wonderful evening together trading stories about our prison work. We compared notes and encouraged each other to keep fighting to end the death penalty. Though France has no death penalty (*peine de mort*), the group focuses on writing letters on behalf of prisoners worldwide who have been sentenced to die by the state. I am pleased to say that my Québécoise background came in handy, and I gave the entire talk in French, though I was teased about my accent! The evening's dialogue was made into a radio program for local broadcast, which apparently was well-received.

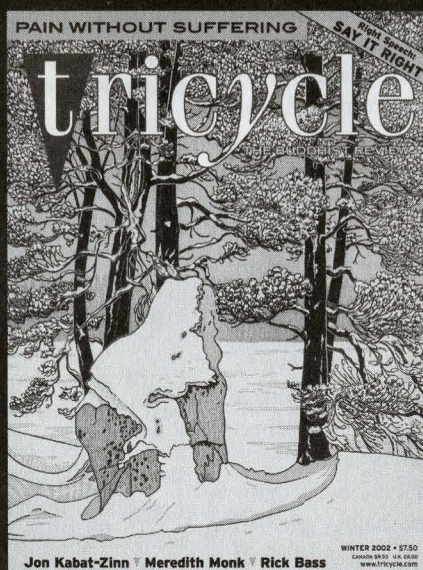
October 11-13 was Amnesty International's annual Weekend of Faith in Action, which focuses each year on the death penalty. This year I was interviewed for a Buddhist perspective on the death penalty, which played on the web for several weeks. ❖ —Diana Lion, Prison Project Director

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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.

Buddhist Psychic. Telephone consultations by appointment. Twenty-nine years' experience. <Rebecca@differentpsychic.com>, www.differentpsychic.com, 415/563-8746.

Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin, a new documentary produced by Nancy Kates and Bennett Singer, premieres on the PBS series *P.O.V.* on Martin Luther King Day, January 20, 2003, 10:00 PM. Best remembered as the organizer of the historic 1963 March on Washington, Rustin, a gay African American man, was one of the people who taught Martin Luther King Jr. about nonviolent civil disobedience. Please check local listings for program time. For more about the film, visit www.rustin.org.

Free Dharma Teaching Altar Cards for Inmates. Naljor Prison Dharma Service offers three beautiful Dharma Altar Cards: Eight Verses for Training the Mind, the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, and the Four Immeasurables. Inmates may request one Altar Card of their choice. For all others, Altar Cards are \$8.95 each. Contact Naljor Creations, P. O. Box 628, Mt. Shasta, CA 96067; 530/926-1166; www.naljor.com.

The Conch-Us Times: Journal of the Grateful Buddhists of America focuses on the Grateful Dead, spiritual, political, and environmental issues, socially engaged Buddhism, music art, poetry, etc. \$8/year (USD \$12 foreign), payable to Ken Sun-Downer, P. O. Box 769, Idyllwild CA 92549; <conchustimes@yahoo.com>, www.conchustimes.org.

The Faithful Fools Street Ministry Presents *The Witness*, directed by Martha Boesing and performed by Anna Brown Griswold. Based on the Zen Buddhist parable of the ten ox-herding pictures and on testimonies from participants in the Ministry's street retreats, *The Witness* tells the story of a young woman's journey through poverty and homelessness in search of compassion and enlightenment. The 50-minute presentation is available for touring and can be performed in your home, church, meeting hall, or school. Fees negotiable or by donation. For more information, call Martha Boesing at 510/530-6188 or the Fools Court at 415/474-0508.

GROUPS

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

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; <boc_caretakers@hotmail.com>.

Diversity and Social Change Sangha, 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>.

Peace and Human Rights in Latin America. Several of us who are active BPF members have a long history of involvement in peace and human rights work in Latin America. If there are other BPF members who share our path and would be interested in seeing BPF support peace and justice work in Latin America, contact: Judith Stronach <jlstronach@sprynet.com> or Andrea Thach <ananda3917@earthlink.net>.

Art, Buddhism, and social change group. What does it look like when creativity emerges from a Buddhist practice? How can the process of creating art be an act of socially engaged Buddhism? If you are interested in

creating a space to meet (once or twice monthly), discuss, and explore these and other related questions, contact Tiffany Sankary, 510/532-9625; <tiffany@prisonactivist.org>.

VOLUNTEER/DONATIONS/ SPONSORSHIP

Quaker prisoner, Washington state, M.A. work completed, seeks financial help for Ph.D. program. Send donations and/or biographical request to Faith Adams, 412 1/2 NW 42nd Street, Seattle, WA 98107.

Help Homeless Seniors. St. Mary's Center in downtown Oakland needs volunteers for our Emergency Winter Shelter. Call Patt at 510/893-4723 x 215 or see www.stmaryscenter.org.

Prison Dharma Network (PDN) needs your donations of dollars and used Dharma books 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, 303/544-5952; <pdn@indra.com>.

Help Ven. Suhita Dharma, social worker and Buddhist monk, create a community meditation and empowerment center in Mt. Vernon, NY, to serve at-risk youth, people with HIV, and prisoners. Send checks payable to "Mettavihara Monastic Community" to Ven. Suhita Dharma, Desert Zen Center, 10989 Buena Vista Rd., Lucerne, CA 92356-8313; <kalibhante@yahoo.com>.

Seeking Sponsorship for Jampel Yeshe, a young Tibetan monk now studying at Dzongar Institute in India. Both parents died in Tibet and he is on his own, with medical and educational expenses to meet. A warm and faithful correspondent. Potential for lifetime connection/friendship. Helping directly and personally without organizational overhead. Ongoing or one-time donations appreciated. Contact Dave Young, P. O. Box 241, Ponderay, ID 83852; <fibsquib@yahoo.com>.

BPF volunteers, wanted, needed, loved. Call us: 510/655-6169.

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See our Web site, www.bpf.org, for the most current version of this list.

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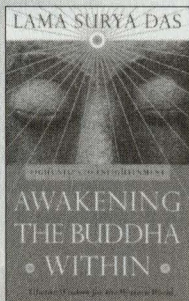


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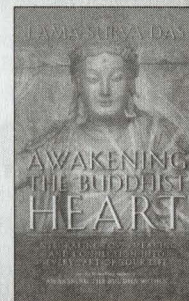
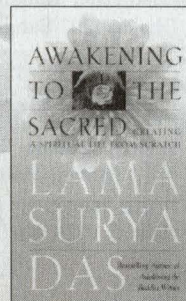


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