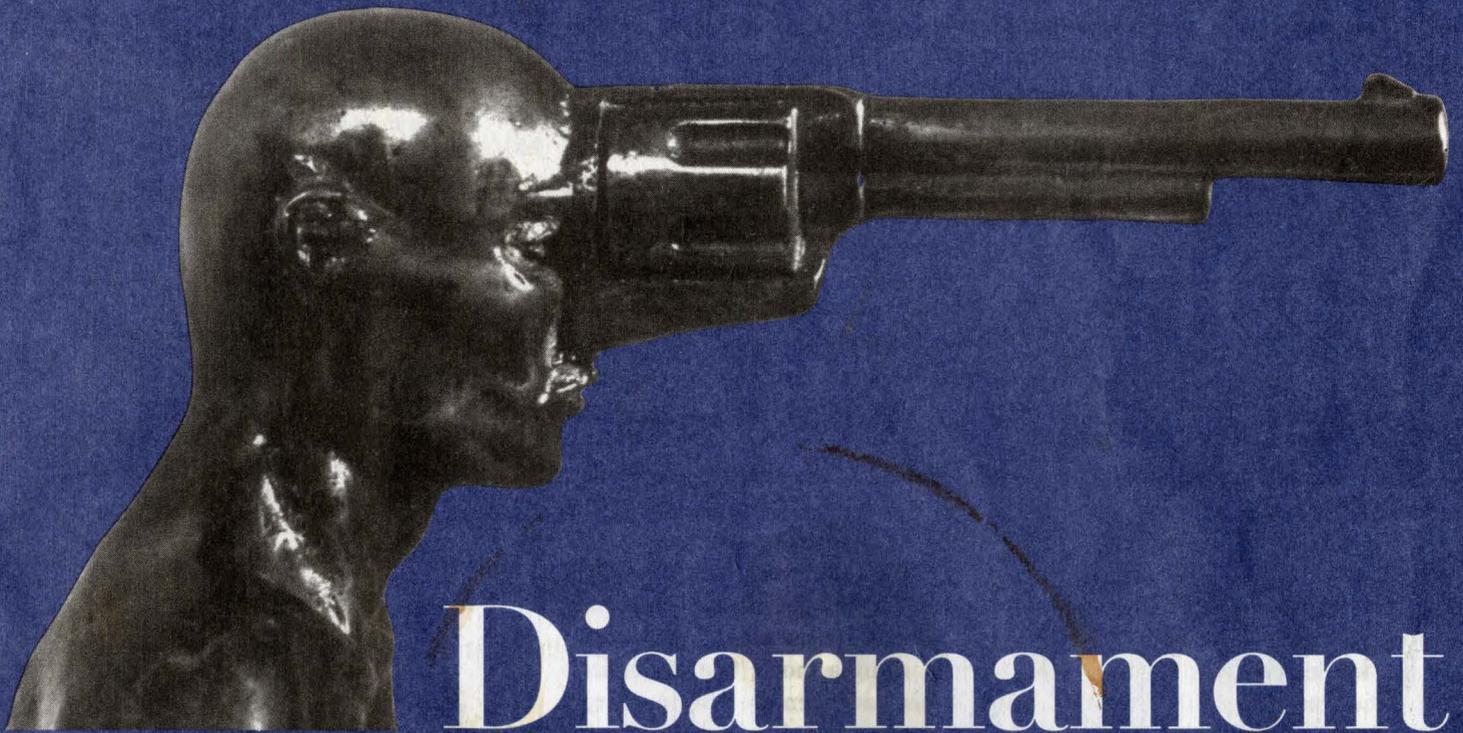


# TURNING WHEEL

*The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism*



## Disarmament

- *Nuclear Weapons*
- *Depleted Uranium*
- *Martial Arts*
- *Gang Violence*
- *Remembering Hiroshima & Nagasaki*
- *Peace Initiatives*
- *Disarming Ourselves*

## From the Editor

In this issue of *Turning Wheel*, we take on the realities of disarmament. We ask, "what would it really mean to rid ourselves of arms?" When will we, as nations, wake up to the absurdity of weapons of mass destruction? (Presently, the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, the People's Republic of China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and possibly Israel have WMD.)

When we look closely, we realize that arming ourselves is about self-preservation. Soldiers see themselves as protectors of peace. We arm ourselves, both physically and emotionally, because at our core we feel vulnerable, fragile. Put simply, we are suffering and we do not want to continue suffering. Bombs are built to defend this notion of self-preservation. They are physical manifestations of our fears, or as Danish philosopher Peter Sloterdijk writes, "the bomb is merely our unfolding, a material representation of our essence. It is whole, and yet we are split."

As Buddhists, we might want to consider that spiritual practice and disarmament have a common interest. Buddhist teachings and practices work to dissolve the illusion of our identity, which can easily become our armor. (It is also possible for our spiritual practice to become our armor.) As Geshe Kelsang Gyatso says, "There really is no reason to kill our ordinary enemies; death will come to them naturally anyway." We should strive instead, he says, to destroy the worst enemy of all: the delusions that are the cause of all suffering.

So you could say this issue of *Turning Wheel* is about letting go. You'll see that this takes on many forms: an ex-soldier ruminates while getting rid of his gun collection, a prisoner takes on nonviolence in the most dangerous of places, a woman armed by her faith and culture chooses to reconsider her beliefs and to work for "the other side," the founder of a gang—who is scheduled for execution on December 13, 2005—creates a peace protocol to end a notorious feud, and a martial artist learns to disarm herself through the study of aikido.

Since this year is the 60th anniversary of the A-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *TW* takes a look at where we have been historically, hearing the stories of survivors. And we revisit the "No Nukes" movement and the still present danger of weapons of mass destruction, to see where we are headed.

As the mother of a toddler, I shudder at the thought of explaining these realities to my daughter some day. I remember when, as a middle-schooler, I first learned what "nukes" were. After watching a movie that dramatized nuclear obliteration, I wept for hours. It may have been the first time I realized that we could all be dead in a moment, our world destroyed. It may also have been my initiation into what I recognize today as my social responsibility to work for the things that I believe in.

As nations, we are indeed armed to the teeth. But as individuals, we have the power to undo this. As people who meditate, we can continue the work of dissolving the armor of our egos. And as socially engaged Buddhists, we are moved—I hope—to work for an end to these instruments of destruction that threaten to do away with all humans, animals, and plant life. ❖

—Colette DeDonato

Where is Sue Moon? She is doing adventurous and creative things away from the office during her sabbatical this fall, and will return in January. We can't wait to have her back! I'd also like to welcome our new book review editor, Jim Brown, and give thanks to all who help keep the wheel turning.

*Turning Wheel* Deadlines: Spring '06: No Theme. Deadline: January 3, 2006. Summer '06: **Interfaith Dialogue**. Deadline: March 6, 2006. We always accept essays, poetry, and artwork. **NEW:** Send us your stories of bodhisattvas you know—people who give you the courage to work for peace and justice! Letters to the editor are also encouraged. Send all submissions to: *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703, with SASE; or to <turningwheel@bpf.org>.

# TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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Sue Moon (on sabbatical)  
Colette DeDonato

## Book Review Editor

Jim Brown

## Editorial & Art Assistants

Chenée Fournier  
Jan Eldridge

## Consulting Editors

Sandy Boucher, Jim Brown,  
Jenesha de Rivera, John W. Ellis IV,  
Annette Herskovits, Mushim Ikeda-Nash,  
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## Copy Editor

Rachel Markowitz

## Production & Design

Lawrence Watson

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www.bpf.org

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Colette DeDonato, 510/655-6169 x302,  
e-mail: <twads@bpf.org>

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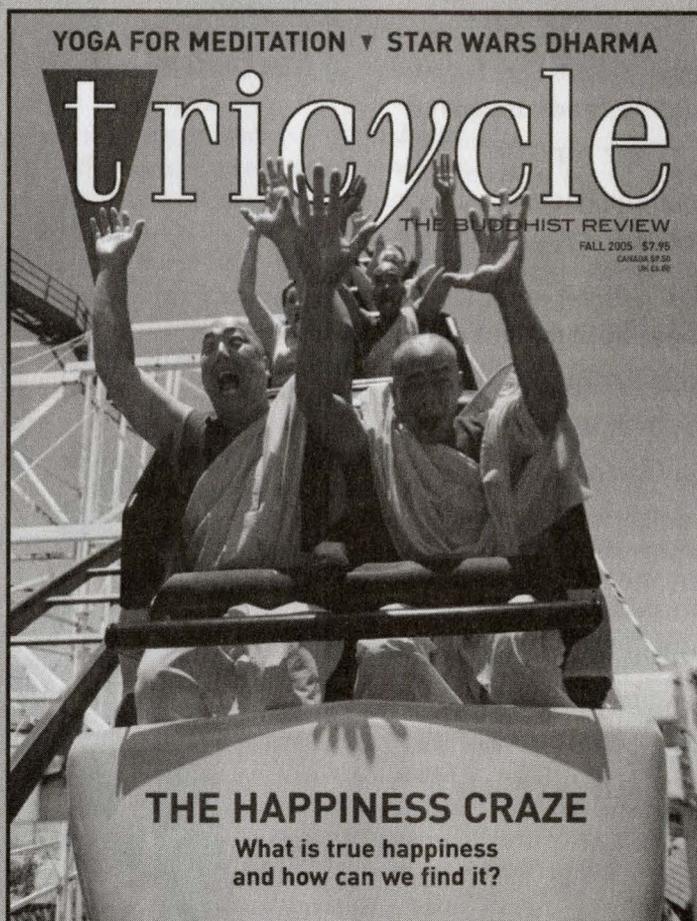
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Marc Lancet is a professor of fine art at Solano College in California, and co-author of *Japanese Wood-Fired Ceramics*. (Cover image is a detail of this sculpture.)

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## Letters

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### Waking Up to the Tragedy of New Orleans

Thanks for your piece, "Waking Up to the Tragedy of New Orleans" [by Maia Duerr, on the BPF website]. We are all in a state of shock, and certainly action is required, but I think we need to think about what it means to be socially engaged. We need to develop a daily practice, to practice the Four Noble Foundations of Mindfulness in all of our activities and to reflect on where we all are in the midst of the "great flood." We may be socially engaged but not practicing the teachings.

The U.S. is always pictured as some sort of refuge for the rest of the world. Yet for many lamas, it is considered hell on earth, even with all its wealth. Waking up to the tragedy is for me a reminder that time is not to be wasted, that we should make use of this rare and precious birth, and that we should be socially engaged while continuing to use the teachings as a guiding principle to engage from. It is fundamental that we work for the welfare of all sentient beings from a position of strength.

—Edmund Jones, Calgary, Alberta

I, too, was incredibly disturbed by what happened in New Orleans. I have faith that Buddhist practice offers us refuge as we continue to cultivate means to stay awake to the suffering of oppression. Staying awake shows us the interdependence of our shared life, the myriad tangles of causes and conditions. I'd like to offer the following "process elements" that can be helpful towards treatment of the underlying disease of racism, poverty, and the racialization of poverty:

- 1) Recognize the underlying disease by practicing non-aversion to the painfulness of what you have seen and heard during the devastation of New Orleans and other cities in the Gulf region.
- 2) Find your path to stay awake in the face of this disease, nonjudgmentally allowing what comes up in the mind to be there without resistance.
- 3) Uncover the illusion of separation, recognizing that differences are differences held in the sameness and oneness of shared life. Differences are necessary to the process of life renewing itself.
- 4) With intentionality in relation to oppression, bring gentle awareness to what is being said by people about their lived experience of oppression and to our own experience as we listen.
- 5) Cultivate sangha to help stay awake in the midst of this painful disease, being mutually supportive and present to medicine as it naturally arises.

—Lee Lipp, San Francisco

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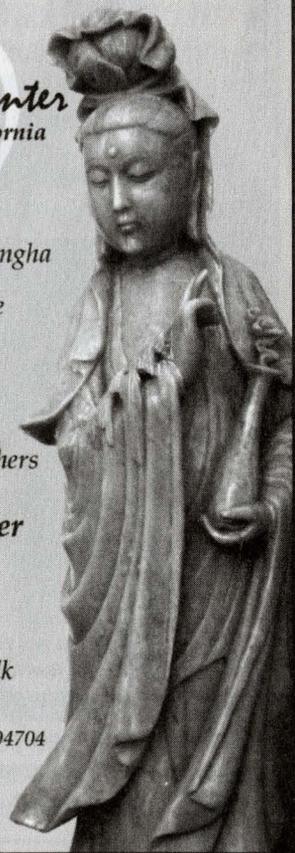
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### Raising a Son in the Dharma

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

Walk like a man, talk like a man,  
Walk like a man, my son...—song lyrics

I have one child, a son. When Joshua was a toddler, I remember well-intentioned men shouting at him in a rough, friendly way: “Hey, come over here. You don’t want to be a mama’s boy all your life, do you?” One man declared it was time for me to wean Josh from breastfeeding because, in this man’s judgment, “He’s too old to be on the titty.” I decided to politely ignore these comments. I thought they were rude, but indicative of the penalties that accompany male privilege. Boys are supposed to be rough and tough, not dependent on female nurturance.

Now sixteen and a half, my son has hair down to his waist. He’s a slender Asian American, a little taller than five feet, and people at school and elsewhere often think he is a girl. I thought that at some point Joshua would decide to cut his hair, to look “more like a boy,” but he didn’t. I guess he decided to politely ignore being called a girl, which happens mostly because people aren’t used to seeing boys with long hair. He was also called “Shorty” and “Jap” by other kids in his middle school, and he’s been pushed around by other boys because he is small.

The *Heart Sutra* tells us that “form is emptiness, emptiness

is form.” Well, yes. This is easier to play with intellectually than to truly understand and embody. Gender is a mystery the further we enter into it as a buddhaheld of inquiry, yet due to our conditioning it can seem to have clearly defined appearances and behaviors. So, what does it mean to raise a boy into a man in our culture? I’ve given this a lot of thought.

First, I’ve thrown the term “mama’s boy” out the window. Originally I was a single mother, so if my baby wasn’t a mama’s boy, he would have been an orphan. Secondly, it was fascinating to me that even though it was obvious that Josh was deeply attached to me and loved me, he seemed instinctively to seek out men as well. Although he was usually cautious around strangers, when he was two and a half he followed a carpenter down the driveway of a friend’s apartment building, his eyes on the man’s toolbelt. He had, I discovered, a passion for backhoes and tractors. And after he met Chris, his adoptive father-to-be, they spent years wrestling like puppies on the floors of friends’ homes, while I ran around trying to protect ceramics and art objects within reach of their flailing limbs.

As a parent, I know what I’m aiming for. I want to see my son grow up into a man who is caring, compassionate, and wise, who respects women and who is in touch with his feelings. And I don’t want him to link maleness with violence and the need to dominate, with having to feel alone, pretending he is invulnerable while pushing other people away so they can’t see his insecurities. I want him to be able to ask for help when he needs it, and to give help when it is asked of him.

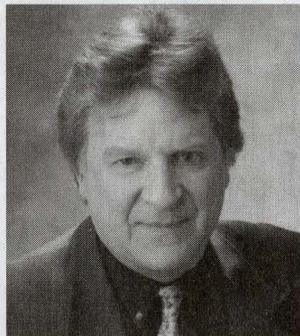
I don’t feel inclined to turn toward traditional Buddhist institutions for guidance in this regard—when I was in a Korean monastery in 1988, I saw a usually good-natured monk pounce on an orphan boy who lived at the temple, and beat him soundly. Although different cultures and families have various views toward corporeal punishment, I still remember the fear I felt as a child when my dad lost his temper and hit me with a belt or spanked me. Chris was always gentle and affectionate with Josh, preferring to guide him through humor and reason rather than the “quick fix” of a slap or yell.

We’ve done our best over the years, and like everything else in family life, it’s been imperfect, filled with love and big mistakes. But when I see the young man we’ve raised thus far, I’m happy. I like Josh and I like his friends, teenage boys who, contrary to every negative stereotype, are generally cheerful, engaging, and polite. I’m proud of all of them and I want to see all of them become socially aware, whole human beings in the world. *Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form.* And yes, parenting a daughter would probably offer some different challenges, unknown to me.

What I know is that I’m comfortable with boys, and I feel sympathy for their struggles as they negotiate growing up in a competitive, violent society. I feel my way along, a step at a time, knowing that, at 51, I won’t get another chance to raise a man in this lifetime. And this one chance is enough. ❖

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## Saburo Hasegawa: The Artist as Buddhist CO

by Diane Patenaude Ames

Saburo Hasegawa (1906-1957) must have been considered a brilliant student in his youth, for he was one of the few Japanese youths selected to study at the Imperial University in Tokyo. After earning a degree in art history, he continued his studies in Europe and the United States until 1932. In 1935 he not only wrote the first Japanese book on abstract art but created abstract paintings himself. In the next few years he became an internationally recognized artist and founded the Free Artists' Group, Jiyubitjutsu, for the Japanese avant-garde. Then free-spirited art, not to mention freedom itself, fell out of favor as a fascist government plunged Japan into World War II.

To cope with the shock, Hasegawa began to study Zen Buddhism. In 1940 he retreated to a secluded farm, poring over Zen and Taoist classics. This, and his experiences in wartime Japan, turned him against war in general and Japan's current imperialist adventure in particular. In fascist Japan, this inevitably got him into trouble. In 1944, with labor conscription sweeping up just about everybody who could move, Hasegawa was ordered to report somewhere to design war propaganda posters. When he refused, he was arrested. While

it has been difficult to find any information about what happened next, it is likely that he spent at least some time in a wartime jail in which he would have more or less starved.

Hasegawa came out of the war advocating a creative combination of Eastern philosophy with Western painting. After 1951 he painted only in black and white, using his training in Chinese calligraphy and incorporating traditional Japanese techniques into his work. In 1956 he moved to San Francisco, where he taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts and the short-lived American Academy of Asian Studies. At the latter he became a treasured friend of Alan Watts, the author of *The Way of Zen*. Through his considerable influence on Watts and on the young artists he taught and encountered, Hasegawa did much to spread the Zen aesthetic that remains so popular in the West today.

Being a true Zen practitioner, Hasegawa seldom talked about his Buddhist beliefs, preferring, as he said, to try to get his students to *feel* what he was talking about. Nonetheless, the highly verbal Watts, who was to know Hasegawa for only about a year before the artist's life was cut short by cancer, acknowledged his debt to this friend to his dying day. Watts often said that spending one afternoon in Japanese tea ceremony with Hasegawa was worth 15 sessions with a psychiatrist. ❖

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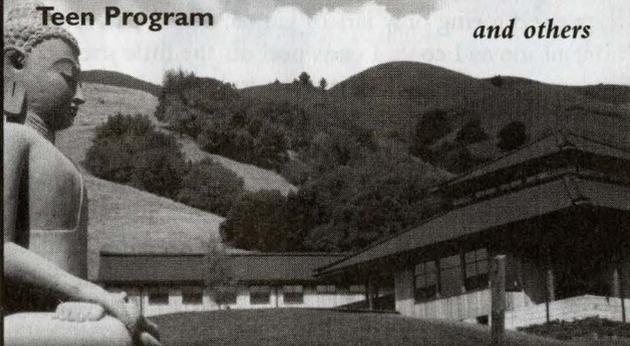
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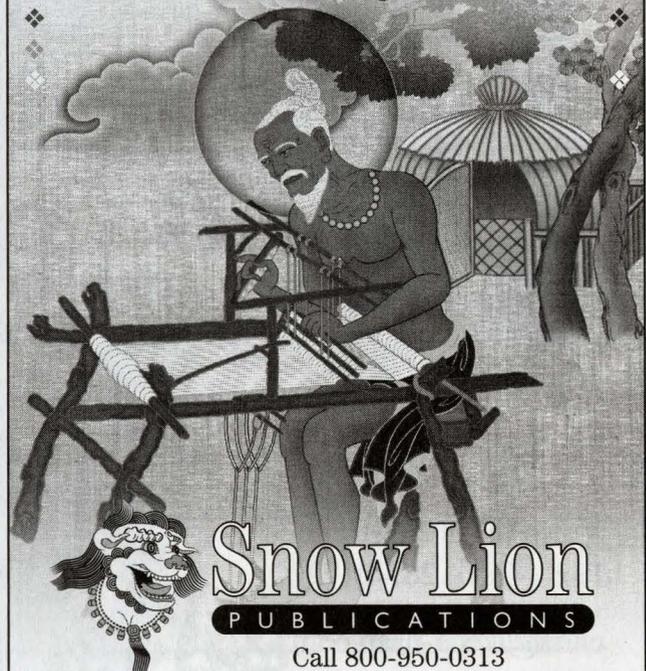
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## Experiments in Disarmament

by Stephanie Kaza

**B**uddhist practice and environmental action have a mutual pursuit: They both aim to disarm. Disarming means willingly giving up mechanisms of self-protection to foster conditions for conflict resolution that will eventually lead to peace. It means restraining from participating in the dominant cultural forces that reproduce violence and conflict on many levels. This requires examining the protective self as it engages in everyday life situations, whether that self is a nation state, a corporation, or an individual. Using Buddhist practices, we can look at the ways in which we arm ourselves and how they exploit the environment. Since this could be a lifelong project, I thought I might start by suggesting a few "experiments" in disarmament that might open the way to more peaceful relations with the natural world.

In the aftermath of hurricanes Rita and Katrina, gas and oil prices made news headlines every day, generating much needed dialogue about our national dependency on oil. We know that wars are being fought around the world for access to oil reserves. While a lone Buddhist practitioner may not be in a position to negotiate a peace treaty for these wars, he or she could consider personal disarmament practices that would pave the way for such a peace treaty. Here's an idea: think of your car as a protective shield that arms

you against aggression from other drivers, and that requires aggressive action to sustain its fuel source. Consider getting out of your car, dropping the shield, letting go of the self-identity associated with your car. Try making the choice for a week or a month to walk more or take the bus, choosing to be more naked to the world, less shielded. You might see what it feels like to withdraw, in even a small way, from the oil economy and from the social conditioning that keeps us behind our windshields and out of touch with each other and the natural world.

Consider anxiety, fear, depression, and despair. How do we deal with these mind states? Do we find relief through food, arming ourselves with a cup of coffee, some quick-pickup french fries, or a slice of pizza? The fast-food industry depends partly on impulse buying to fuel this cycle of emotional need and gratification. For a Buddhist student, this offers a splendid practice field for working with the ways that greed and desire reinforce a sense of self. Disarming the self in this case means choosing to observe our impulses rather than acting on them. If one can gain some mastery over the aggressive nature of desire, then there is opportunity for building peaceful relations with food production and consumption. Try organizing a local-foods potluck and invite people to bring food to share. Before eating the food, let everyone tell the story attached to the food. This can widen the circle, building a relationship with the local farmers and the places where the food was grown.

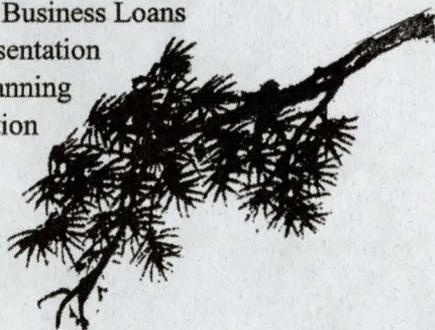
In today's marketing world, product brands have become a new form of arms, each one pitted against the others for consumer loyalty. Consumers are deeply conditioned to evaluate and choose products by brand, and this choice is most often influenced by how aggressive the brand marketing is. So, here's another experiment in disarmament: un-branding your consciousness. I have found the kitchen to be a good place to tackle this. Brands are everywhere on food products—there are labels on bananas, cereal boxes, canned goods, dish soap, everything. To disarm your kitchen, see if you can remove all branded objects from sight. No words or labels anywhere near where you are preparing and eating food. For me this has meant keeping all processed foods in the pantry (cookies, crackers, chips) and seeing only jars of grains, beans, and spices in front of me as I cook. I even peel off the little stickers on apples and lemons so I don't have to look at brands in the fruit basket. Eliminating all these noisy brands can be a great aid to mindfulness practice in food preparation.

Each of these experiments may seem inconsequential in the big picture, but the point here is to learn something about aggression and peace-building in everyday life. The laying down of arms is risky business; you want to have a strong alternative in place that makes sense and is based on evidence for success. These small experiments are a way to begin the process and develop a personal commitment to reducing aggression and building peaceful relations as a foundation for larger actions. ♦

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# Pema Chödrön and Jack Kornfield:

**The Wondrous Path of Difficulties** ❖ The Winter issue of *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly* features a conversation with Pema Chödrön and Jack Kornfield on the everyday difficulties that provoke us, reveal our habitual patterns, and ultimately transform us. **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:** A discussion of the student-teacher relationship with Norman Fischer, Sharon Salzberg, and Ponlop Rinpoche. Marshall Glickman on the benefits of doing solo retreat. Reginald Ray on the meaning of "lineage" and the question of authenticity.

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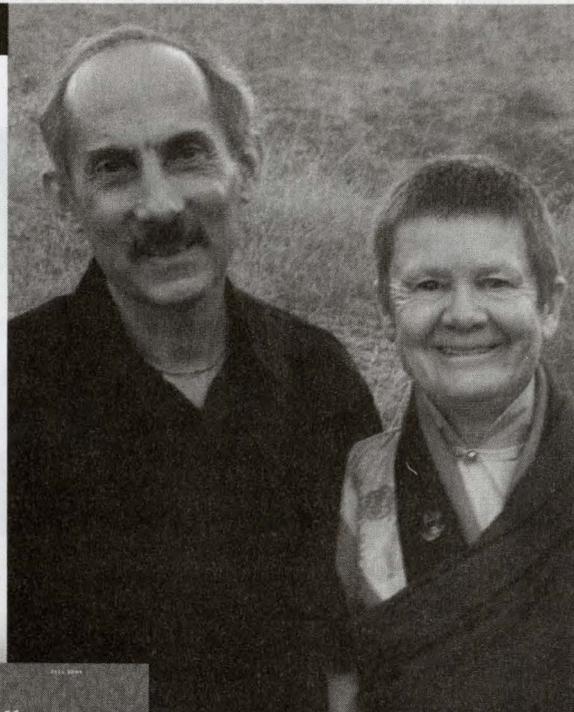
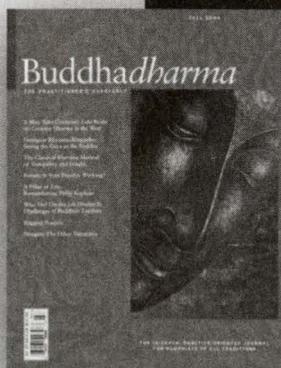


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## BPF Goes to Washington

by Maia Duerr

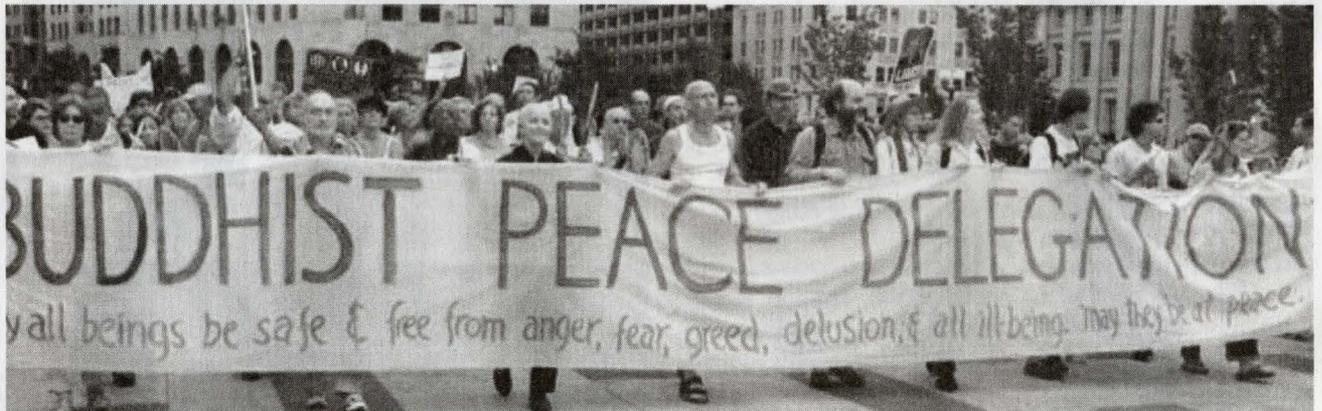
From September 22 through 26, a truly remarkable gathering of Buddhists and friends took place in Washington, D.C. Over five days, we created a sangha of compassion-based activists who joined their voices with hundreds of thousands of people to call for an end to war in Iraq, in a rally organized by United for Peace and Justice.

BPF took a leading role in helping to organize what came to be called the Buddhist Peace Delegation (BPD). Several people had planted the idea for such a delegation, including Roberta Wall and Louise Dunlap, and BPF stepped in to offer our staffing and website resources to help it manifest. Tara Brach of the Washington Insight Community, Bhante Suhita Dharma of Dieu Phap temple in Los Angeles, and Rev. Kato-Shonin and Sister Jun-San and the monks and nuns of the Peace Pagoda were among the many who offered dharma practice and inspiration throughout the weekend. From the BPF office in Berkeley, I traveled to D.C. along with Chenée Fournier, John Fortes, and Ed Herzog, who documented the weekend on film.

We held a candle-lit vigil organized by the Washington,

the gate of the White House. I looked up and spotted members of our Buddhist Peace Affinity group, so full of devotion, love, and support. I wept. As I sat, I held a place for each and every being that has suffered because of this war: George Bush; his administration; all in Congress who sit in silence as this atrocity continues; the soldiers; their loved ones; and the men, women, and children of Iraq. As I sat, I heard a woman named Annie strike the bell and repeat the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, and in my heart I knew I was home."

For most of us, the big question is "What now?" Our call to bring the troops home and end the war is not just about Iraq. It's about connecting the dots to speak truth to power, about how the U.S. military is being used to prop up an unjust system of global economic dominance, about how those with the least access to resources pay the highest price in such conflicts. As a dharma-based organization, we continue to explore how the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion manifest on a social and political level, and how to respond. ❖



D.C., BPF chapter on Friday night. We marched together on Saturday. And on Monday, after a day of training in nonviolent direct action, we formed a Buddhist Peace Affinity Group that took part in the largest display of civil disobedience held at the White House in more than 20 years. Three hundred and seventy people were arrested, including 12 from our affinity group, as they delivered letters calling for President Bush to end the war (see the BPF letter on the next page). These Direct Action Bodhisattvas, as we dubbed them, practiced mindfulness and compassion as they waited more than five hours to be arrested. Along the way, they were joined by Dr. Cornel West, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, and Cindy Sheehan.

For many, it was a transformative experience. Kadi Sprengle, of the Rochester BPF chapter, said, "This was my first arrest. It will not be my last. What a gift to be able to take action to support this beautiful movement for freedom and peace." Johnny Barber, of the Boca Raton BPF chapter, wrote, "I was honored to have carried the letter from BPF to

March on September 24, 2005 in Washington, D.C.  
photo by Charlie Jenks

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# Letter to President Bush

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The following letter, dated September 24, 2005, was written by Alan Senauke, signed by BPF members (whose names appear at the end) and sent to George W. Bush.

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW Washington, DC 20500  
president@whitehouse.gov

Dear President Bush,

As Buddhist practitioners and teachers, we write to you with deep concern for our suffering world. Our organization, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, represents nearly 5,000 people who believe that compassion and wisdom are essential ingredients of effective government. We respect the vast responsibility you have to lead the United States government and to try to help people within and beyond our borders toward lives that are free from repression and persecution. We understand that for you as a man of faith your heart goes out to people in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama who are so hard hit by Hurricane Katrina, and to military and civilians of many nations caught up in the wars and civil strife of Iraq and Afghanistan.

We are also people of faith. Though our religious scriptures and practices are different from your own, Buddhists share values of compassion, love, and generosity with Christians, Jews, Muslims, and all those who follow their true hearts. It is from these passionate and shared values that our serious concern arises about the role of our country in the world, and about what awaits us in the near and distant future.

As we and many other Americans viewed the images from Iraq and Louisiana these past weeks, we feel that our country's actions and priorities have gone terribly wrong. This is not a surprise. So many people—ordinary citizens, military leaders, and political analysts—warned that the Iraq war was built on false premises, and that it would serve to deepen resentment and violence both in Iraq and towards the United States. This has proven true, as nearly 2,000 U.S. military—our brothers, sisters, and children—have been killed there, along with untold numbers of Iraqi civilians whose numbers grow daily in what has become an ever more bitter civil war. The only benefit that we can see of this war has been to the profit line of U.S. corporations such as Halliburton and Bechtel, and arms manufacturers such as Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics.

Meanwhile, the tragedy along our own Gulf Coast continues to unfold. Here too, warnings of impending disaster could be heard loud and clear well before Katrina struck. Prominent journals like the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* and *National Geographic* spelled out the danger to the levee system in unequivocal terms. Along with neglectful maintenance and engineering, the government turned a blind eye to extreme poverty, violence, and racism in one of our most treasured cities. In the last few weeks, we have witnessed an

overwhelmingly African American population that is desperate and homeless. This has been a grim reminder of the resources that are lacking at home while hundreds of billions of dollars are spent overseas in adventures that win us not even the smallest bit of security. We grieve the fact that aside from direct U.S. military expenditures, international arms sales have reached a new peak (\$37 billion) and the U.S. continues to be the world's largest arms merchant.

In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha taught: "Hatred is never appeased through hatred. Only through love is hatred appeased. This is an eternal and unvarying law." In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Jesus said: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." As individuals and as a nation, these should be our watchwords. We believe we can create a world free from poverty, disease, and war. But not if we are driven by habits of self-centeredness, greed, national pride, and intolerance.

President Bush, we believe that true spiritual values take precedence over a culture of avid materialism. We feel that this belief is shared by much of the world, and is at the center of your own faith. As President you have an opportunity to lead America in a new direction, motivated by love and generosity. This will take strength and courage on your part. This is a kind of calling, and it brings to mind words that Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke in Birmingham nearly 50 years ago:

*If I hit you and you hit me and I hit you back and you hit me back and go on, you see, that goes on ad infinitum. It just never ends. Somewhere somebody must have a little sense, and that's the strong person. The strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate. Somebody must have religion enough and morality enough to cut it off and inject within the very structure of the universe that strong and powerful element of love.*

We urge you to be the kind of person described by Dr. King and taught by the Buddha and Jesus. The American people will back you all the way. In the wake of Katrina and last year's Asian tsunami, ordinary Americans have shown themselves to be among the most generous and compassionate of peoples. Let us all bring forth this compassion and turn away from heartless violence and neglect.

In light of the deep desire that all of us share for peace and for true security, we call on you to take the following steps:

- Withdraw our combat troops from Iraq, including the National Guard, and offer the Iraqi people the food, water, medicine, and education they need to rebuild Iraq according to their own autonomous wishes;
- Redirect a substantial portion of funds designated for the war on Iraq for the support and rebuilding of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region;

*continued on page 39*

# PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS BUILDING PEACE TOGETHER

## How to Get Involved

by Lyn Fine and Annette Herskovits

### Grassroots Disarmament

Speaking of disarmament in relation to Palestine/Israel seems almost incongruous. But if one looks at grassroots activities rather than what the Israeli government and Israeli and Palestinian extremists have done, one finds a multiplicity of projects in which Palestinians and Jews, in Palestine/Israel and the United States, cooperate peacefully. As Quakers have shown, nothing is more transforming than working toward a common purpose with “the enemy.”

“Separation” appears to be central to Ariel Sharon’s design for the region’s future. Israeli law forbids Palestinians from the Territories to enter Israel, although a few exemptions are granted, and the Israeli army generally stops Israelis from crossing into the West Bank. But contact and cooperation continue.

### List and Categories

Our initial plan was to list 108 organizations, a highly auspicious number in Buddhism—the world is said to have known 108 *boddhisatvas*. But as we worked, we were delighted to discover more groups than one issue of *Turning Wheel* could hold. So we decided to post a longer list on the BPF website ([www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)), where it will be updated regularly.

People cooperate in a multitude of ways, so we have grouped the organizations into categories to make the list more accessible. We selected organizations that bring Jews and Palestinians into direct contact. Thus the list does not include many important peacemaking efforts, such as:

**Government-level peace plans:** The 2001 Taba talks, Geneva accords, and Ayalon-Nusseibeh peace plan, developed with Palestinian and Israeli negotiators, show that some agreement is possible.

**Jewish peace organizations in the U.S. and Israel:** Tikkun Community, Brit Tzedek v’Shalom, and Gush Shalom, for starters. There are too many to list here.

**Palestinian nonviolent resistance:** Palestinian organizations (the Holy Land Trust, Panorama, Sabeel, etc.) are training Palestinians in nonviolent direct action and, increasingly, Palestinian villagers are resisting nonviolently the confiscation of their land and destruction of their homes.

**War resistance:** There are currently 1,662 Israeli “refuseniks”—reserve officers and soldiers, pilots, and draft-age students who will not serve in the Occupied Territories. And many resist quietly, finding ways to do their military service outside the Territories, or stay out of the country.

**Palestinian self-help efforts:** Poverty and unemployment are so widespread in Palestine that simply surviving is an act of peaceful resistance.

Our hope is that readers will inform others about this work—by writing editorials and letters to the editor, organizing events, communicating with elected officials—and, if possible, will contribute or raise money for a group, work directly with a group, or even be inspired to create a new group. Many active in this work say that peace will not come with signatures on a treaty; instead, people must open their hearts to the suffering of their adversaries and start planning to live together. We see this project as a small contribution toward this transformation.

### Notes on History and Terminology

The state of Israel was established in 1948 in the area called Palestine and immediately invaded by the neighboring Arab countries. Most Palestinian Arabs then fled their homes. Today, about 4.6 million still live in refugee camps in surrounding Arab countries and in territory occupied by Israel in 1967.

Arabs who remained in Israel and their descendants (Muslims, Christians, and Druze) now constitute about 20 percent of Israel’s population. They are Israeli citizens but suffer discrimination.

**Occupied Territories:** Land occupied by Israel in the 1967 war with Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Includes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights. Since 1967, Israel’s government has demolished about 12,000 Palestinian homes. And it has encouraged the building of Jewish settlements; about 400,000 Jewish settlers now live in the West Bank in violation of international law.

**The Green Line:** Border between Israel and the West Bank.

**Oslo Accords:** Signed in 1993 by Israel and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization), it called for Israeli forces to progressively withdraw from the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and for self-government within those areas to emerge through the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA never gained control of more than 18 percent of the West Bank’s territory.

**Intifada:** Palestinian uprising in the Territories against Israel’s occupation. The first started in 1987 and ended with the Oslo accords; the second started in 2000 after negotiations between Israel and the PA failed.

**The Wall/Barrier:** Built by Israel to separate it from the

West Bank, this structure runs beyond the Green Line to allow Israel to annex large settlements. The International Court of Justice declared it a breach of international law.

## Arab-Jewish Citizen Dialogue

### Bereaved Families Forum

(theparentscircle.com) 500 Israeli and Palestinian families who lost loved ones in the conflict. Has conducted over 1,000 programs in Israeli schools with a Palestinian and Israeli speaking of losing a loved one. Organizes public events, e.g., displayed 800 coffins draped with Palestinian and Israeli flags near New York's U.N. headquarters in 2002.

### Hello Peace!

(hellopeace.net) Provides free telephone service to anyone in Israel or the Territories wishing to talk with someone on the other side chosen from a pool of names.

### Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group

(traubman.igc.org) Brings together Palestinian and Jewish Americans. Started in the San Francisco Bay Area, it has now spread to many other U.S. cities.

## Arts and Culture

### Arab-Hebrew Theatre of Jaffa

(arab-hebrew-theatre.org.il) A troupe of Arabs (from Israel and West Bank) and Jews, who write and perform plays in Arabic and Hebrew about the conflict; seen by more than 15,000 students.

### Comedy for Peace

(comedy4peace.org) Palestinian American comedian Ray Hanania and Jewish American filmmaker David Lewis plan a comedy tour of the Middle East in early 2006 and a documentary, *Laughing Through the Tears*.

### Just Vision

(justvision.org) Compiles an online gallery of 180 "portraits" of Israelis and Palestinians working with people on both sides of the Green Line (including a former Israeli settler and a former Palestinian fighter). Plans curricula in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, and a documentary.

### West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

(danielbarenboim.com) Young Arab and Israeli musicians who rehearse every summer in various cities and perform around the world, and in the Palestinian Territories. Directed by Israeli Daniel Barenboim, cofounder with the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said of the Barenboim-Said Foundation, which also established the Palestine Youth Orchestra with conservatory students from Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem.

## Cooperative Living

### Neve Shalom/Wahat El Salaam

(Oasis of Peace in Hebrew and Arabic, nswas.com) A vil-

lage of Jews and Arabs within Israel established in 1970, owned and run by its members. The village's bilingual schools are also open to children from surrounding Arab and Jewish communities. The School for Peace trained 35,000 adolescent and adult Jews and Arabs in peacemaking skills, with special attention to national identity and power asymmetry. Humanitarian projects include medical assistance to West Bank and Gaza Palestinians.

## Direct Action and Solidarity Groups

### Anarchists Against the Wall

(af-north.org/wall.html) Israelis who join Palestinians in nonviolent actions against the Wall Barrier.

### Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

(icahd.org) Resists demolition of Palestinian homes with non-violent direct action and mobilizes Israelis and Palestinians to rebuild them. Also helps Palestinians deal with Israeli authorities.

### Ta'ayush

(taayush.org) Arabic for "life in common," Arab and Jewish Israelis who engage in concrete daily actions of solidarity with West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, e.g., organizing convoys to bring food and other necessities to Arab villages.

## Economy

### Center for Jewish Arab Economic Development

(cjaed.org.il) Aims to nurture economic cooperation between Jews and Arabs in Israel and close gaps between them.

### Sindyanna of Galilee

(sindyanna.com) Arab and Jewish Israeli women who distribute local Arab products—olive oil, soap, baskets, etc.—worldwide. Also works with West Bank farmers whose land has been confiscated or destroyed by Israeli forces.

## Education

### Hope Flowers School

(hope-flowers.org) A Palestinian school near Bethlehem, K-7, that adds peace and democracy to standard curriculum, e.g., creative solutions to confrontation, standing up for your rights nonviolently. Counsels children and families traumatized by the violence. Had exchanges with Israeli schools until second Intifada, when they were outlawed. Jewish volunteers teach children about Judaism.

### Jewish-Arab Center for Peace at Givat Haviva

(givataviva.org.il) In central Israel; Arab and Jewish staff offers broad range of educational programs for peace and coexistence to 15,000 students, teachers, and community professionals annually: Camp Coexistence (see "Sports"), Children Teaching Children (on issues of national and personal identities and joint citizenship); Children's March for Peace; courses on Arabic culture and language.

### Opening of the Heart

(openingoftheheart.org) U.S.-based educational program for teachers offers films, curricula, books, exhibits, and training based on compassionate dialogue and careful listening to people on the other side of the conflict.

### PRIME Curriculum Project

(vispo.com/PRIME) History teachers, people from the West Bank, Palestinians, and Israeli Jews develop texts for students ages 15-16 presenting the Palestinian and Israeli narratives, without attempting to build a “common narrative”—e.g., 1948 is described both as the Israelis’ year of “independence” and the Palestinians’ “catastrophe,” or *Naqba*.

### Environment

#### ARAVA Institute for Environmental Studies

(arava.org) Conducts research with Palestinians and Jordanians about air quality, biodiversity, and sustainable agriculture in the Middle East.

#### Friends of the Earth Middle East

(foeme.org) Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli environmentalists working on transborder issues, especially shared ecosystems, including the Jordan River Basin and Dead Sea (Palestine, Jordan, and Israel). Offices in Amman (Jordan), Bethlehem (Palestine), and Tel-Aviv (Israel).

#### Good Water Neighbors

(a project of Friends of the Earth Middle East) Uses interdependency of shared water resources as a basis for cooperation. In each of two communities on either side of a border, a staffer and young volunteers study its “water reality”: Where is water coming from? How is it allocated? What is its quality? How is it priced? What happens to sewage? Groups share results, then work to raise awareness at regional level.

### Health

#### Physicians for Human Rights—Israel

(phr.org.il) Defends right to health in Israel and Territories; runs mobile clinics in Territories and Tel-Aviv (for undocumented); also challenges doctors’ participation in torture; advocates for those in Gaza cut off from treatment because borders are now closed and for West Bank Palestinians impeded from access to health services.

#### Bridges

(bridgesmagazine.org) The first Palestinian-Israeli public health magazine, written and run by Palestinian and Israeli academics and health professionals. Covers the impact of the conflict on health in both societies, and other topics relevant to both populations.

#### Peace Through Health

Partnership in Emergency Medicine (no website; google for news articles) Three hospitals—one Israeli, one Palestinian,

one in Boston—cooperated in training 300 Palestinian, Israeli, and American nurses and doctors in emergency medicine. Plans a joint Israeli-Palestinian toxicology center.

### Human Rights

#### Hamoked

(hamoked.org.il) An Israeli organization that assists Palestinians in the Territories whose rights are violated by Israeli policies.

#### Rabbis for Human Rights

(rhr.org) Opposes restrictions on Palestinians’ freedom of movement and house demolitions through legal and direct action. Participates in the olive harvest in the West Bank and helps the farmers sell the oil.

#### B’Tselem

(btselem.org) The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories uses Palestinian and Israeli researchers to document human rights violations in the Territories; universally respected for its accuracy.

### Interfaith

#### House of Hope

(hohpeacecenter.org) In Galilee, founded by a Palestinian Christian, it brings Arabs and Jews together for dialogue, lectures, and conferences; runs a Peace Kindergarten and a summer peace camp for youth.

#### Interfaith Encounter Association

(interfaith-encounter.org) Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Baha’is in Holy Land and Middle East promote coexistence through cross-cultural and interfaith study and dialogue. Established the Women’s Interfaith Encounter (women meet monthly and share religious celebrations) and Youth Interfaith Encounter.

#### Sulha Peace Project

(sulha.com) *Sulha* (forgiveness) is a traditional Middle East reconciliation ceremony for feuding families involving sharing cups of coffee. Project organizes three-day festivals with shared prayer, religious study, music, stories, and ideas; drew several thousand Muslims, Christians, and Jews in 2005.

### Media

#### Alternative Information Center

(alternativenews.org) A Palestinian/Israeli think tank focusing on media activism, human rights research, and political analysis.

#### Crossing Borders

(crossingborders.org) Bimonthly magazine in English produced by Palestinian, Jordanian, and Israeli (Jewish and Arab) youth; used in schools in Palestine, Jordan, and Israel.

### **Palestine-Israel Journal**

([pij.org](http://pij.org)) Copublished and produced quarterly by Israeli and Palestinian journalists and academics. Aims to “analyze freely and critically the complex issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians, without prejudice and taboo.”

### **Radio All for Peace**

([allforpeace.org](http://allforpeace.org)) Broadcasts from East Jerusalem with half-Palestinian, half-Israeli staff; Arab and Israeli music, talk shows, and interviews of Palestinian and Israeli political figures; in Arabic and Hebrew.

### **Peace Walks**

#### **Middleway**

([middleway.org](http://middleway.org)) Applies dharma teachings to peacemaking; organizes peace walks lasting one or several days in Israel and Territories—sometimes going back and forth at West Bank checkpoints or walking along the Wall; led by Israelis, joined by many Arabs. (See article on page 27.)

### **Public Policy and Advocacy**

#### **Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information**

([ipcri.org](http://ipcri.org)) A think tank devoted to developing practical solutions to the conflict. Palestinian and Israeli experts produce detailed proposals about security, borders, Jerusalem, refugees, water, and peace education textbooks.

#### **Negev Coexistence Forum**

([dukium.org](http://dukium.org)) Joins Bedouin and Jewish communities in Israel's Negev Desert. Increasingly concerned with protecting Bedouins' rights.

### **Sports**

#### **Breaking the Ice, Antarctica Project**

([breaking-the-ice.de](http://breaking-the-ice.de)) Joint Israeli-Palestinian expedition reached the summit of a previously unclimbed Antarctica peak in January 2004 and unfurled the two national flags. Plans a trans-Sahara journey for 2006.

#### **Camp Coexistence**

([soccerforpeace.com](http://soccerforpeace.com), a Givat Haviva project; see “Education”) Arab- and Jewish-Israeli children, ages 10-12, meet for four days in summer to train with professional soccer players.

#### **Hapoel Jerusalem Youth Program**

([mpdn.org/hjyp.htm](http://mpdn.org/hjyp.htm)) Gives 4,000 Jerusalem youth a chance to play sports, primarily basketball (the most popular); trains Arab coaches and players from Jerusalem area; works with parents and teachers to strengthen players' academic skills; and integrates players in informal classes and training with teams from Jewish public schools.

### **Truth and Reconciliation**

#### **PRIME**

([vispo.com/PRIME](http://vispo.com/PRIME)) Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, founded by two professors, one Palestinian, one Israeli. Explores establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Palestine/Israel, and argues that redressing the continued injustice inflicted on Palestinian refugees is essential to peace and the spiritual healing of Israeli Jews.

### **Women**

#### **Bat Shalom**

([batshalom.org](http://batshalom.org)) Jewish and Palestinian Israeli women working together for a just resolution of the conflict and an equal voice for Jewish and Arab women within Israel; resistance and educational activities, including days of solidarity with Arabs in villages slated for demolition.

#### **Jerusalem Center for Women**

([j-c-w.org](http://j-c-w.org)) Palestinian group works to empower Territories' Palestinian women. Cooperates with Israeli Bat Shalom through the Jerusalem link, which helped establish the U.N.-based International Women's Commission to ensure women's full participation in all peace negotiations.

#### **Women's Partnership for Peace in the Middle East**

([gwip.org/programs](http://gwip.org/programs)) Formed in Oslo in 2003 by Israeli and Palestinian women to strengthen women's role in fostering reconciliation. Projects include: a gathering of Israeli and Palestinian businesswomen to explore joint business ventures; a journalists' forum to promote coverage of peace building initiatives and publication of Palestinian journalists in Israeli press and of Israeli journalists in Palestinian press.

### **Youth**

#### **Summer Camps for Jews and Arabs**

([traubman.igc.org/camps.htm](http://traubman.igc.org/camps.htm)) At least 14 such camps in North America, including: Building Bridges for Peace ([s-c-g.org](http://s-c-g.org)), which brings teenage girls from Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza to Colorado's high country; Seeds of Peace ([seed-sofpeace.org](http://seed-sofpeace.org)), which brings 300 Arab and Israeli teens to Maine for training in leadership and communication skills.

#### **Peace Child Israel**

([peacechild.net](http://peacechild.net)) Uses theater to foster dialogue between Jewish and Palestinian teens throughout Israel and East Jerusalem. Teenagers tell about their lives and the conflict, create dramatic pieces based on their stories, and perform them in Arabic and Hebrew. ❖

See [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org) for the complete list of organizations.

*Lyn Fine lives in the Bay Area, where she offers mindfulness practice retreats and sangha support in the U.S. and in Israel. Annette Herskovits writes on politics and human rights, and writes the Indra's Net column (replaced by this guide) for Turning Wheel.*

# Whose Side Are You On?

## A Jewish Woman's Thoughts on Israel/Palestine

by Sandy Butler

In all my years of political activism, I never broke the taboo against criticizing my own people, my Jewish family. Yet my studies and the daily headlines left me feeling tentative and uncertain. I have been armed to the teeth most of my political life. *Which side are you on?* the song asks. I always thought I knew what side I was on and who was on it with me. I thought those on the other side were misguided or ignorant. So how do I condemn my own Jewish family?

My assessment of the imposed suffering of the Palestinian people, inevitably leading to the moral atrophy of the Jewish state, leaves me feeling alienated from those I love, casting me out onto the margins of the Jewish world. My grandmother said that just because I am becoming increasingly knowledgeable about ancient Jewish texts does not mean that I have the right to speak out against my own people. My mother echoes her, accusing me of betraying Jews who have been oppressed, she sighs, since forever. Sticking my nose where it doesn't belong, my father adds. Yet perhaps my grandfather will understand. He is the one who taught me about injustice, educated me about poor and oppressed people, about the dignity of every person, and always, he added sternly, *no matter who*. I want to believe he would understand that most of the poor and oppressed people in Israel and Palestine are Palestinians living in refugee camps, and that I am acting in the name of his teachings.

Many American Jews condemn me as a self-hating Jew, and secular left-wing activists, with whom I often find common cause, incorporate anti-Semitic language and interpretations into their rhetoric against me, blurring the Israeli army and government with the Israeli people, and even more virulently, with Jews around the world.

Now I am 67 years old, all my ancestors are dead, and I am left to listen to my own voice, to make my way through the underbrush of contradictions and feelings of disloyalty, with an urgency to face squarely and unapologetically the Israeli re-enactment of our own oppressive history, now directed against the Palestinian people.

All my life, I created stories to help me make sense of the world. I created the stories, then I believed in them. Inevitably, as life intervened, the stories dissolved, leaving me with more complex and often painful realities. My central story about Israel was based on the belief that there were parallel narratives,

an equivalently urgent Israeli and Palestinian history, that there were real dangers Israel had to protect against. I was carefully taught that the state of Israel was a refuge for the persecuted, the remnants of a vibrant and rich world of European Jews after World War II. I saw that singular truth, and no other.

In these past years, I have immersed myself in this region of the world, its convoluted history and geography, and struggled over pages in hundreds of books, each of which defined what it meant to be a good Jew, to create *tikkun olam*—mending, repairing, and restoring our broken world. As I studied, I deepened my prayer practice, reciting the central daily prayer of the Jewish faith tradition.

*Sh'ma Israel. Adonai Eloheinu. Adonai Echod.*

*Hear O Israel. The Lord Our God the Lord is One.*

Judaism affirms, through the repetition of the *Sh'ma*, the oneness of all life, all beings, and the earth itself. There is no duality between mind and body, between earth and person. Feminist scholar Judith Plaskow urges us to glimpse the *One* in and through the changing forms of the many, to see the whole through its infinite images. Despite the fractured, scattered, and conflicted nature of our experience, there is a unity that embraces and contains our diversity and that connects all things to each other.

Now, as I listen and struggle to remember my dedication to the oneness of all things, I push against criticism, shame, as well as the sense of moral disappointment and personal outrage at the draconian oppression Israelis are carrying out against Palestinian people. How do I keep from arming myself with anger and judgment, separating myself from the Israeli government's actions and all its supporters? How do I ask my broken heart to stay open? How do I express my oppositional truth with fierce love like my grandfather taught me—no matter who or what?

I just returned from several weeks in Israel/Palestine, where I attended the 13th International Women in Black Conference on Resisting War and Occupation. We gathered, more than 700 strong, to vigil, to teach and study together, to extract from our many struggles in countries around the world, the lessons of peacemaking and nonviolent struggle against all forms of militarism and nationalism. While my trip provided only a snapshot of the constantly changing

**My grandmother said that just because I am becoming increasingly knowledgeable about ancient Jewish texts does not mean that I have the right to speak out against my own people.**

realities that both Israelis and Palestinians face, my eyes and my heart fill with an altered reality, requiring me to dismantle my remaining protective stories and see clearly what is.

What I saw was a series of concrete barriers separating people from land, past from future, a blank impassive wall straddling two worlds, the wounds of people echoing and magnifying one another. I saw violence done to the soil and to the people, as the knife-point edge of the ubiquitous bulldozer slices through land that has been at rest for centuries, carving up the ancestors and their memories. I saw Israeli soldiers guarding a small Israeli house on a hillside surrounded by Palestinian villages, in preparation for the expansion of Israeli settlements. I saw a concrete wall that divided a main street in a Palestinian village in half so that Israeli traffic could run more smoothly. I heard an Israeli, when asked to move his car from the center of a narrow street in a Palestinian neighborhood in the Old City, reply contemptuously, "Why should I move my car? It's my street."

I saw Palestinian men and women walking along a dirt path to a checkpoint, vulnerable to the whims of the young Israeli soldiers on duty. I smelled the tear gas thrown at Palestinian villagers. I watched the smiling face of the young Palestinian woman, whose house was to be demolished that week, offer us pita bread to thank us for caring about her life and the future of her neighbors. I saw the fury on the face of an Israeli settler as Israeli, Palestinian, and international demonstrators vigiled at the entrance to the settlement of Ariel. His face clenched, he snatched the Palestinian flag from the hands of a local Palestinian activist proudly holding it. I watched as several police officers tried to subdue him.

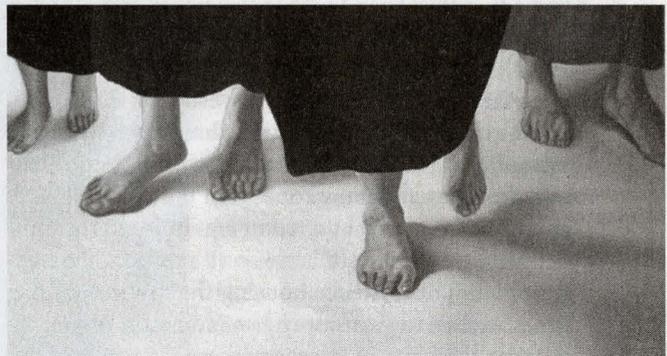
And repeatedly, I saw the steady determined faces of villagers and activists, many of whom have lived through two periods of *intifada*, the Palestinian protests against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. These are the women and men who are living their politics day after day, with heartbreaking losses and occasional small successes.

At the conference, there were visible and invisible walls with the potential to divide women from one another. There were women whose focus was on issues relevant to the Israel/Palestine struggle, and women from all over the world with wide-ranging concerns. There were secular and religious Jews, conservative and radical Palestinians. Women who insisted upon lesbian visibility and those who wanted to honor and respect the slowly changing conservative Palestinian cultural norms. Yet in Jerusalem, a city of so many overlapping loyalties and priorities, the walls dividing us fell as we sat in overcrowded small rooms and began to speak. Everyone was heard; each woman's perspec-

tive was respected and given space. There was no cross talk, arguments, interruptions, or criticism. Each conversation was intricate, touching deep chords in women's histories and lives. There was great freedom in the way we listened, in the respect for multiple locations and ideas; there was patience with inexperience and delight in welcoming newcomers to international concerns. I stretched for the best in myself as I sat in circle after circle of women—from the former Yugoslavia, from Italy, Britain, Palestine, Israel, Colombia, Guatemala, and the U.S.—and together we found our way through the thickets of identity, solidarity, nationalism, and feminist theory. We felt our way forward into the future of justice and of peace. As I listened, my breathing grew deeper, slower, more spacious.

Challenged by members of his

*I saw violence done to  
the soil and to the  
people, as the bulldozer  
slices through land that  
has been at rest  
for centuries,  
carving up the ancestors  
and their memories.*



conservative congregation about why he chose to march with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel responded, "My feet were praying." For me, standing in the street with the Women in Black was my public expression of the *Amidah*, our daily prayer.

And, as women joined Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists to sing songs of liberation in Bi'l'in, a besieged Palestinian village whose land is being remorselessly confiscated for the expansion of the adjoining settlement, my feet were praying. We stood in silence before the concrete wall that bisects history and geography, facing the armed and jittery Israeli soldiers, our voices rising into the air over the rooftops of homes about to be demolished.

My feet were praying when we stood, hundreds strong, lining both sides of the Kalandia checkpoint as thousands of Palestinians moved between us, necessary papers in hand. Some met our eyes and nodded, others simply moved through the dusty corridor of the fenced-in passage.

"Peace Walk" by  
Michele Benzamin-Miki

*continued on page 20*

# Breaking the Chain

## Getting Guns Out of My Life

by Gary Lark

Seven years after my final Army National Guard meeting, four years after the fall of Saigon, I am standing in my driveway surrounded by firearms. It is a fine spring morning in 1979, white puffs of cloud drifting in from the Pacific before an indifferent azure sky. The guns are within reach: a 12-gauge double barrel, a sweet little Remington .22 semiautomatic, a Stevens .410 shotgun, a lever-action .308 Savage, a European Mauser, and a 12-gauge pump.

I'm taking them apart one by one, then backing over the barrels with my pickup to bend them useless. Pieces of each go into the regular trash bin, some are dropped in the bay, others are thrown into the dump, stocks splintered. The pieces will not be reassembled. I haven't talked about this to anyone except my wife and a Buddhist friend who is staying with us for a few days, on his way back from two years in a monastery. He is like a stunned animal, assaulted by the perversity of the human culture that now surrounds him.

The idea of reincarnation has always been a metaphorical one to me. But it isn't to him. We talk into the night about my concept of the living fabric of atoms and energy and compare it to his infinite karmic web. We talk of action and reaction, the multiple planes of existence housing the millions of lifetimes we live to wear away our mountain of sin, the chances we have in every moment. We talk of the struggle to pull free from the morass of conditioning and the uselessness of struggle.

His literal beliefs reinforce my abstractions. I've been thinking about what to do with my small arsenal, as my personal connection with the military recedes and the war in Vietnam wheels through our past like a diseased planet. I don't plan on hunting again. Although I have wondered about keeping a survival gun, perhaps the .22. What if there's an intruder? What if I need to hunt small game? What if...? There are fears everywhere. On the other hand, there are already enough guns in the world. If I destroy these they will not kill anything again. I can break this chain. But will I break the chain inside me?

Memories zigzag through time with each gun I pick up. I feel the tiger pacing inside me. My hand slides under the belly of the .308, and I remember hunting deer in the wild beauty of Steens Mountain when I was 14. I remember the aspen-lined creek bottom where my friend and I caught high-desert rainbow trout with our hands. The next day I waited by a ravine that cut through the rimrock. Fully alive in that

light air, watching a yearling buck slip away from the hunters in the canyon below, not raising my gun, I walked into manly power. The day after that I fired at a trotting deer, watched it crumble, watched it die, its spine broken. We cut it into quarters and carried it two miles back to camp.

I put the .308 down for now and pick up the 12-gauge pump. It was my father-in-law's. Is it the one he put to his chest in the alley behind his apartment? I don't know for sure. I don't think I want to know.

That shot in an alley in Boise will echo in my wife's ears as she walks out the door, out of our marriage, a year after the guns are destroyed. She will say something had changed inside her. For the better? For the worse? Were my changes threatening to her? You'd think that after ten years together, we would have found a way to speak our darkness, but we hadn't. I hadn't learned to speak mine. I will always carry with me the fear of being in large groups, the need to sit on the edge in theaters, the need to always have an escape route.

The Mauser, also her father's, is the next to go. Then the .410. A Stevens single shot, often a boy's first gun, that I acquired by trade while I was still in high school. A boy who lived on a ranch down the road from our river-bluff house admired my crossbow and one day offered to trade it for his .410. When I hesitated he added \$20. For a moment I thought he was asking me for the twenty, but then I realized it was coming my way. I was still a little amazed when he handed me the shotgun and a \$20 bill. The crossbow, while it worked well, didn't have the power of this little gun. Why did I own a crossbow? That's not a question I ever asked.

I remember killing a pheasant with the .410, carrying it loaded with slugs during deer season, and carrying it broken down in my car. Thirteen years ago, two weeks after my 21st birthday, an older friend, Don, and I were making the rounds of the five bars in town. We came out of one, got in Don's Volkswagen bug and were starting the engine when a '58 Chevy with Texas plates came around the corner and bumped us from behind. We got out to assess the damage and were immediately surrounded by five guys. Naive and drunk, I didn't perceive the threat until two of them started pounding on me. I warded off blows as best as I could, but eventually found myself on the pavement curled against their kicks. The blows stopped. I sat up, vomited.

Unbeknownst to me, Don, while under attack, had

**I told myself  
that during  
wartime, maggots  
are sometimes  
used to clean  
wounds.  
Could they reach  
the wound  
I had?**

dashed around the corner of the next block and yelled into the police station for help. When they saw where he was headed, our assailants decided to split. Somewhere past midnight we tried to identify them at an all-night diner. Were the guys in the booth, eating ham and eggs, the same ones? Probably. Could I swear to it in court? I hadn't had time to memorize their faces. We left.

At home I could see my swelling, distorted face. On the phone the sleepy doctor said it could wait until morning. In the cold light of day he leaned over me with a stainless steel probe, looked into my eyes and said, "Now this is going to hurt." He stuck the probe up each nostril and tried to straighten the deviations, but my nose was swollen so he couldn't tell what progress he'd made. I assured him that it was as straight as it needed to be.

For the next three months I carried the .410 in back of the passenger's seat.

I cruised the area and spotted the Chevy in a neighboring town. I pulled into a driveway, put the gun together, and waited. Nobody came out. I decided to try another time. And I did with the same results. Eventually my life went back to normal, I gave up the watch. Would I have shot somebody? I don't know. Probably not. Without imminent threat, my calm everyday life resumed. I worked swing shift at the VA Hospital, fishing and hunting on my days off.

My first National Guard meeting was one week after the beating. The swelling was going down, but tape still crisscrossed my nose. We went to the rifle range to test our accuracy. It was very mundane, firing at human silhouettes, standing around for hours.

When we finished at the rifle range we crawled into the two-and-a-half-ton troop truck for the hourlong ride back to the armory. A man sat next to me. It was also his first day. We talked about books and ideas, and began to trust each other, which was good because we spent the next six years together—from 1966 to 1972—becoming lifelong friends.

Next, the 12-gauge double barrel. I had picked it up in a secondhand store. It was cheap, short barreled, and carried no guarantees. Even though it fit tightly together, the first time I shot it I wondered if I would blow my head off. But it worked fine. I spent many pleasurable hours hunting quail in the river margins, jump-shooting ducks on feeder creeks, spending time with my friend and his springer spaniel as the morning mist

clung to blackberry thickets, the outside world distant.

The first rifle I ever fired was my father's .22 with a bolt action and a peep sight. This one had a flat sight and would fire every time I squeezed the trigger. The tubular feed held well over a dozen rounds. I bought it with my own money in the last year of high school. I was well past the age of killing songbirds, and I wasn't sure what to shoot with it. But it worked so well. I saw it as a survival gun. It fulfilled a basic need like a car or a pair of boots.

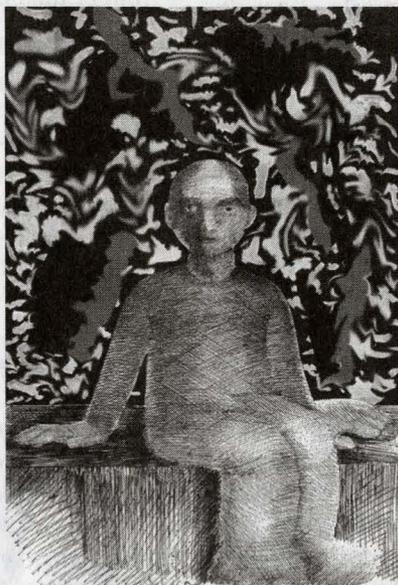
A few years later I was on the .50 caliber machine-gun range. The weapon would fire as long as you held your finger on the trigger. My friend and I were in advanced infantry training. Unlike basic training we could now go to the enlisted men's club, where we'd eat fried oysters. It was our first time there. We felt civilized having fried oysters and beer in civilian clothes. There was a meningitis scare on several military bases and we hadn't been off the base in nine weeks.

We arrived at the range the next day, set up the guns, and started firing. Then it hit us. Our stomachs churned. Between firing bursts of .50 caliber ammo that rose across silhouette targets, we took turns running to the latrine. It was a long day. The image of heavy machine-gun fire cutting through the target bodies stayed with me.

Was there some mention that using .50 caliber machine guns on humans was against the Geneva Convention? Was it a joke? Another thing I remember was the bored captain who was in charge of the range, sitting on the top bleacher reading a book. He, too, was waiting for his release. It was the only book I saw in four and a half months.

On an earlier day, on the M60 (7.62 mm) machine gun range, we had fired all day, cleaning weapons well into the night. We learned the weapons well, as well as you can, preparing for the time when you'd be dodging bullets and running through muck. We had only a taste of that, crawling across a field with simulated artillery shaking the ground, with live M60 fire three to four feet above our heads. It was night and we could see the tracer rounds streaking across the blackness. No one stood up during our exercise.

When I first returned from training I would be driving down the road and suddenly a billboard would be cut in half by machine-gun fire. In the classroom it was the professors who would be ripped to pieces. It seemed to be the random synaptic firing in



drawing by  
Hamlet Mateo

a little corner of my brain.

One morning as I was driving to the monthly Guard meeting, I felt an itch on my nose, scratched it, looked into the mirror and hallucinated that my nose had come off. The hole was seething with maggots. I told myself that during wartime, maggots are sometimes used to clean wounds. Could they reach the wound I had?

That night, after the meeting, I put on the Rolling Stones, smoked half a joint, poured a glass full of wine, and sank into a hot bath. But that still wasn't enough. Later that night I went to a bar, danced in front of the loudest speakers in town, hoping the music would blast something away. I didn't even know what it was I was trying to get rid of. I wondered why no one talked about what really goes on in military training.

I returned to college, taking several years to learn how to concentrate again. The ROTC people were mixed among the student population, officers-to-be, seduced by becoming the upper class. No one talked about how soldiers are made, or who we become.

That day in 1979, in the process of finding myself, I destroyed all my guns. I quit alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and caffeine. I walked the beach every day, listening to the drum of the waves and my feet, opening a door to a new, unknown life. The years that followed brought a divorce and another relationship or three. It also brought new adventures: I learned to contra dance. Slowly, as I move to the daring music of a jig or reel in a swirling roomful of people, all of them wounded in some way, I glimpse the open door of compassion. Walking up the sloping, milelong bridge, the wind whispering around me, the seasons cycling toward summer, I drop the trigger housing from the .308 and watch it fall down, as if through a thousand lifetimes, into the brine. ❖

*Gary Lark is a retired librarian who has also worked as a carpenter, janitor, and hospital aide. He lives on the Oregon coast with his wife, Dorothy. His poetry chapbook, Tasting the River in the Salmon's Flesh, was recently published by Traprock Press. His play And One Flew South won first place in the Pacific Northwest Writers Association literary contest and will be produced next summer in Winsted, Connecticut.*



## Reincarnation

One story is that we are reluctant to return. We can be anything—a shadow in a corner, deeply at ease.

We do not want to take the proffered drink.

We do not want to lose control. But we fly up out of the black pool, like someone in a home movie, flat feet backwards on the glued grit of the diving board, still twanging in the tangy air.

They say we begin again, ready to not know anything.

*Gail Hanlon is a writer and editor who lives in the greater Boston area.*

*Butler continued from page 17*

My feet were praying when I joined international activists at the entrance to an Israeli settlement, along with a local Palestinian woman proudly holding her national flag, all of us enveloped by Israeli soldiers and a cluster of armored vehicles there to protect us from the settlers. We stood in the fierce noontime sun, eyes straight ahead, as the cars streamed past us, drivers and passengers cursing, waving their fists, children peering out through the back window, looking bewildered.

In Palestine, standing before a demolished house, a carcass of concrete and rubble, I recited the *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer for the dead. I am growing lighter. As I approach the end of my sixties, I am finding the courage to release the heavy wrappings of my defenses. I feel the winds of possibility on my skin now, as unprotected as my heart. It's taken my whole life to reach this place. ❖

*Sandra Butler is an American Ashkenazi Jew who supports the Palestinian liberation movement while honoring her religious tradition, spiritual practice, radical lesbian-feminist politics, and responsibility to her history.*

# Unarmed in Prison

by Billy Tyler

Prison is a difficult place to disarm yourself. Prisoners tuck their knives in boots, mattresses, or boxer shorts. Everyone knows we're armed. When the time comes to release cell blocks into the exercise yard, correctional officers pat-search each one of us, looking for our hidden weapons.

I stopped keeping knives five years ago, and I miss the feeling of security they provided. Without weapons in a potentially violent situation I feel anxious. But I have found other ways to remain safe. I rely on my physical strength first. I train my body with a vigorous daily workout. I run. I know that I am less likely to be attacked by anyone if my body is strong.

I also train diligently in martial arts and boxing. There was a heavy bag on the exercise yard of the last prison I was in, and for five years I soaked up every boxing lesson available. Jabs, hooks, crosses, upper-cuts, and over-hands are all second nature to me now. I learned some basic kicks as well: front kicks, side kicks, and snap kicks. Although I have ceased to carry knives, I am ready to defend myself and others by less violent means.

But disarmament may have more to do with mindfulness than with physical weapons. In an environment like prison, it is natural to exist in a constant state of fight-or-flight anxiety. Correctional staff have guns, mace, and clubs at the ready all the time. They expect spontaneous, daily violence because most prisoners are gang members, drug dealers, and otherwise antisocial creatures. We fight when angry, scared, or slighted. We fight over words, debts, territories, and vendettas. We fight because talking out problems usually requires compromise, and compromise seems too much like weakness and fear in an environment filled with predators.

I don't expect my fellow prisoners to disarm. Nor do I expect the correctional staff to disarm. My practice of personal disarmament consists of being as peaceful and unarmed as practical in their presence. I've seen prison riots, and I know that, should one arise, I will fight to defend myself, my friends, and anyone in great need. I can do that without using any knives, but I will likely have to defend against them. I don't have a gun either, and the correctional staff shoot at prisoners who participate in riots. I believe I can dodge both knives and bullets long enough to survive any riot. We'll see.

I try not to think about it. That's the most important disarming I can do—freeing my mind of the fear and

worry that comes with living unarmed in a potentially violent prison. But recently, a peculiar social scenario called for me to practice disarmament in a way I hadn't seen coming: I had to use a diluted form of violence to save a friend from being stabbed.

The drama started when some prisoners asked me if I knew that Goldie, a friend of mine, was a child molester. I had had no idea. I'd become friends with Goldie during the previous three months that we'd been neighbors. Child molesters are instant victims in prison; they are beaten or stabbed as soon as possible. But I didn't want Goldie to be stabbed or beaten even if he was a child molester. After all, he was still my friend.

Goldie has a light-brown complexion, like me, and a contagious smile. We call him Goldie because of his gold-faced front teeth. He came to prison at 19, as I did, and I think of him as my little brother because he's only 25 (and I am 30). Before the news came out about his history, we had traded life stories, looked at each other's photo albums, and even exchanged home addresses so we could keep in touch if we ever separated.

So when people told me that they'd read Goldie's court paperwork and that he needed to be stabbed, I knew I had to do something. First, I found out what the court transcripts said: When Goldie was 19, he had raped a 14-year-old girl at a park. I don't know if I would have become his friend if I had known that before, but he had already stolen my heart. I couldn't pretend that I did not care about him.

I knew that Goldie was in trouble because three separate people had approached me to whisper about him. Nobody was talking to Goldie about it, as they didn't want him to flee to protective custody before he received the punishment deemed necessary by prison politics. I didn't have to think about the dilemma long at all. I vowed to attack him myself the next time I saw him. I knew that I could fight him without hurting him seriously and that others would not grant him that compassion.

When I saw Goldie next, he was walking back from dinner, completely unaware of the trouble he was in. I approached him and greeted him with the usual handshake and hug. I then asked him about the molestation case as we walked. He tried to explain it away, saying the

*I had to use a diluted form of violence to save a friend from being stabbed.*



*Tyler, continued from 21*

"om" by Jan Eldridge

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

girl made it up and that it wasn't as bad as it looked on paper. I asked him why he hadn't told me about it himself, sooner, and why I had to learn about it through the rumor mill. As he paused to think of his response, I struck him in the face with an open palm. He seemed shocked for a second, or hurt, as though slapped by a parent. Then he threw his coffee cup at me, and I chased him toward the group of correctional officers who were standing in front of the dining hall. They sprayed us both with pepper spray, and we submitted to handcuffs. It was over that fast—one hard slap took the place of the puncture wounds, or worse, that he may have suffered otherwise.

That happened five days ago at this writing. I returned to my cell after being interrogated, and Goldie was relocated to another yard, possibly even another prison. The guys who wanted to stab him are still here with me, and they know that I saved him. I'm planning to write to Goldie to explain exactly why I felt I had to attack him. I want to tell him that our friendship is still intact. I hope he can understand what I did. Not only did I disarm those who would have stabbed him, but I also refrained from using any punches or kicks that would have hurt him more than I had to. ❖

*Billy Tyler lives in High Desert State Prison in Calipatria, California.*

## **DEPLETED URANIUM**

### **Radioactive Weapons Threaten Everyone**

As we deal with the reality of the continued war in Iraq, depleted uranium (DU) is becoming a greater concern for many people, especially those with friends and family serving in Iraq.

The US government doesn't often discuss DU, but when it does, it describes it as an "efficient" part of military arsenal and tries to reassure the public that DU poses little danger.

#### **What Are the Facts?**

DU is a by-product of the processes used to convert natural uranium for use as nuclear fuel or weapons. DU has 60% of the radioactivity level of ordinary uranium and a half life of 4.5 billion years.

The U.S. military (and other armed forces, including the U.N.) has relied on DU as a means of penetrating the armor of enemy tanks. With the density 1.7 times that of lead, DU is used to coat the shell of bombs and bullets.

Upon impact with a hard target, DU contaminates the local area with radioactive dust, which may be inhaled or ingested during and after the battle.

DU has been used by the U.S. military in Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Serbia, Kuwait, and Montenegro, and on target ranges in Vieques, Puerto Rico. During the first Gulf War, the military released over 300 tons of DU into the environment.

Scientific research on exposure to DU largely has not explored its longterm consequences and is often distorted by the government. However, doctors report a large amount of anecdotal evidence that DU is associated with Gulf War Syndrome, kidney problems, childhood and adult cancers, neurological disorders, birth defects, and other health problems. Certainly it is worth noting that nearly half of the first Gulf War veterans have reported illnesses related to DU exposure and over 8,000 have died since their return.

What is certain is that U.S. soldiers as well as Iraqi citizens are currently being exposed to DU. The true health and environmental costs will only become clear in the months and years ahead.

*—compiled by Chenée Fournier*

# From Death Row

## Tookie Williams and the Peace Protocol

by Melody Ermachild Chavis

*"Buddhist practice can be stated very simply. It is moving from a life of hurting myself and others to a life of not hurting myself and others." —Charlotte Joko Beck*

Stanley Tookie Williams is probably one of the most well known of the nearly 700 men and 12 women living on death row in California. His remarkable transformation in prison has won him thousands of supporters. He has written nine widely read books, all of them warning young people not to join gangs, and appealing for peaceful solutions to conflict. His book for middle school students, *Life in Prison* was honored by the American Library Association. Tookie has been nominated for a Noble Peace Prize, and a television film of his life titled *Redemption* is now available on DVD.

Tookie was one of the first condemned to die after the California death penalty was reinstated by a ballot initiative in 1978. Tookie grew up in South Central Los Angeles. In 1971, at the age of 17, he and a close friend formed the Crips, which began as a small neighborhood youth gang. In 1979, Tookie's friend was murdered, and Tookie, 25, was arrested for killing four people during two armed robberies, convicted, and sentenced to die. He came to death row in 1981 at the age of 27.

During a six-and-a-half-year period in solitary confinement, Tookie Williams began his journey from gang violence to self-awareness. During the cocaine epidemic which began in the mid-1980s, Tookie watched in horror as the Crips spread across America, and even to South Africa, where in poor areas like Soweto, youth have formed violent Crips copycat gangs. In 1997, he published an apology to the children of America and South Africa and vowed to spend the rest of his life working towards solutions. On his website ([www.tookie.com](http://www.tookie.com)) there is a Peace Protocol outlining ways for gang members to establish truces and peace pacts to save lives and end "child-on-child and black-on-black brutality." Thousands of young people have read his popular books, among them *Wanting To Belong* and *Drugs*, each subtitled, *Tookie Speaks Out Against Gangs*.

In February, 2005, Tookie Williams's Federal appeal was rejected by the Ninth Circuit Court. Nine of the twenty-four Justices wrote a passionate dissent, citing the elimination of African American jurors from Tookie's trial jury, by a prosecutor whose exclusion of black jurors had resulted in the overturning of two other death sentences in prior cases. Civil rights groups, in a statement supporting Williams, accused

the same prosecutor of racist tactics.

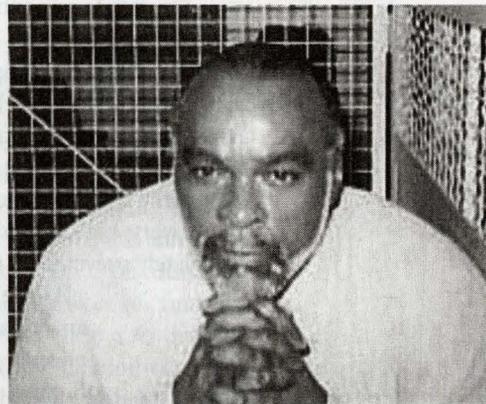
Tookie has maintained his innocence, and his supporters say that he deserves a new trial. Tookie Williams's appeal is now in the last phase before the United States Supreme Court. He could be executed within a year.

What would it mean for Tookie Williams, now a gray-haired 51-year-old, to be given a lethal injection by the state of California? Is it meaningful or just to try to kill the violent teenager who founded the Crips by killing the wise older man who now teaches kids to resist gang violence?

To study the self is to forget the self—Tookie Williams's life is an example of this Buddhist idea. As others on death row have done, including Buddhist writer Jarvis Masters, Tookie looked at himself, saw the harm he had inflicted, and vowed to do good for others.

In an unusual postscript, the nine justices who dissented from the denial of his appeal have now suggested that Tookie's "good works" might be grounds for clemency from the governor. California has had no real clemency process for years. Not one of the condemned has been granted life in prison by the past several governors. There used to be three main criteria for clemency: lingering doubt about guilt, good behavior in prison, and expression of remorse. These reflected important values many in our society still hold: that people can always change for the better and that we wish to avoid, at all costs, executing the innocent. The old clemency process resulted in about one-third of all death sentences being commuted to life in prison in the 1950s and 1960s. These values seem to have been abandoned by the last several governors in favor of execution for all.

Tookie's execution date has been set for December 13, 2005. Before he is executed, Tookie Williams will be given a clemency hearing. At that time, we can write letters to support him to the governor at the State Capitol Building, Sacramento, CA 95814, or visit [www.govmail.ca.gov](http://www.govmail.ca.gov). If anyone deserves clemency, Tookie Williams does. ❖



*Melody Ermachild Chavis is private investigator and a peace and social justice activist who lives in the Bay Area.*

# No Nukes!

## Peace, Justice, and Nuclear Disarmament

by Jacqueline Cabasso

After touring the destruction left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour said, "I can only imagine that this is what Hiroshima looked like 60 years ago." I too can't help comparing the devastation caused by recent natural disasters with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But in this comparison there is one very big difference—nuclear weapon use is a completely preventable man-made event.

As the disaster of Hurricane Katrina continues to unfold, it is clear that our national priorities have run drastically off course. Katrina has exposed massive government ineptitude, neglect, and racism. It is unconscionable that the U.S. government is spending hundreds of billions of dollars on nuclear weapons and war, while failing to meet our human security needs at home. As horrific as the hurricane and flooding were, the damage and suffering they caused pale in comparison to the effects a nuclear blast would produce.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the illegal and barbaric United States atomic attacks on innocent civilians. Read that again. How different it sounds from the earnest, passive voice we've come to expect—even to utter ourselves—when we gather each year to "commemorate the bombings of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki." Whenever I hear that phrase, I am struck by the utter lack of accountability attributed to the source of those weapons of mass destruction. Even today, the U.S. atomic bombings of Japan are not widely taught in our public schools.

As the mayor of Hiroshima told the International Court of Justice in 1995: "History is written by the victors. Thus, the heinous massacre that was Hiroshima has been handed down to us as a perfectly justified act of war. As a result, for 50 years we have never directly confronted the full implications of this horrifying act for the future of the human race. We are still forced to live under the enormous threat of nuclear weapons."

This anniversary year presents us with an important opportunity to review, and perhaps reframe, the current status of nuclear weapons and the movements that have sought to control or eliminate them.

### **There Was More Than One Holocaust in WWII**

In two blinks of an eye, over 200,000 human beings were sentenced to death by nuclear weapons dropped by U.S. bombers on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the end of 1945, approximately 210,000 men, women, and children had perished—incinerated in an instant, or incomprehensively, slowly and painfully dying from radiation sickness, unable to eat or drink, their hair falling out in clumps, their skin hanging from their bones like shreds of fabric. Delayed effects, which continue to this day, include cancer, birth defects, and immune-system disorders. Harder to quantify are the destruction of traditional society, devastation of community life and social systems, and the psychological trauma imposed on survivors.

### **Nuclear Weapons Are the Real "Weapons of Mass Destruction"**

U.S. doctrine lumps nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons together, labeling them all as "weapons of mass destruction." But chemical and biological weapons are subject to the whims of weather and terrain, and difficult to deliver in sufficient quantities to kill many thousands of people. Nuclear weapons, in contrast, are orders of magnitude more destructive. Today, there are nearly 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world, enough to destroy human civilization in a day.

### **Plans to Use Nuclear Weapons Are Well Under Way**

The United States is the only country that has used nuclear weapons in war. Fifteen years after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. maintains a nuclear arsenal of some 10,350 weapons, 480 of them deployed at eight bases in six NATO countries. More than 2,000 U.S. strategic nuclear warheads remain on hair-trigger alert. Land-based nuclear missiles are ready to launch their deadly payloads within two minutes. U.S. Trident submarines continue to patrol the seas, ready to fire on 15 minutes' notice.

The U.S. is modernizing every weapon type in its still vast nuclear arsenal, in some cases giving weapons new or enhanced military capabilities. "Life Extension Programs" to render the U.S. nuclear arsenal reliable for decades to come are ongoing. The Pentagon is poised to begin development of a new generation of long-range delivery systems capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are gaining legitimacy as the world's only remaining superpower blurs the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons and expands the role of nuclear

*With the risk of use of nuclear weapons climbing towards levels not reached since the Cold War, where is the public outcry? What happened to the massive anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s?*

weapons in its national security policy.

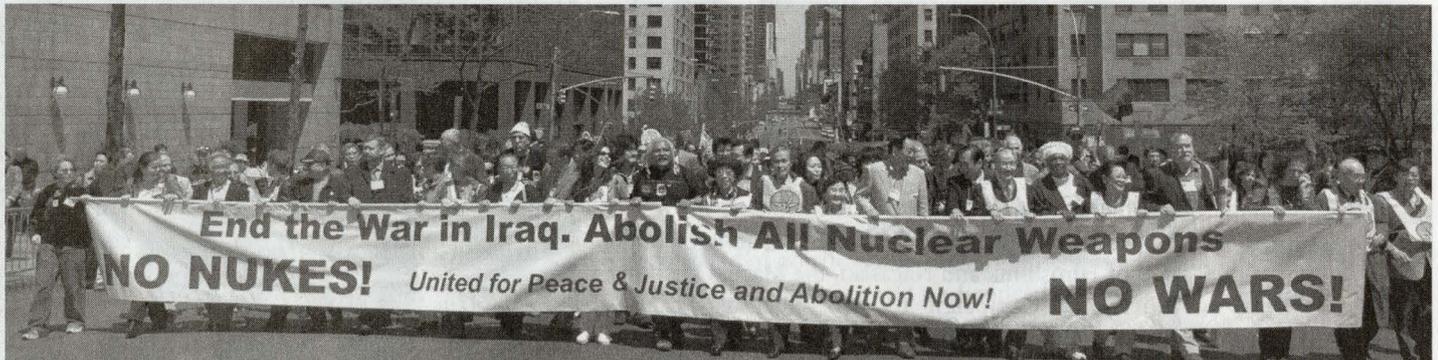
This year the U.S. will spend nearly \$7 billion to maintain and modernize its nuclear warheads, significantly more than its annual spending during the Cold War years. If you add the money going to upgrade the weapons' means of delivery—missiles, submarines, and bombers—the U.S. is spending about \$40 billion a year on its nuclear forces.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration openly declared the potential first use of nuclear weapons, even against those countries that don't have them. The 2001 Nuclear Posture review revealed U.S. plans for first use of nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear attacks or threats involving biological or chemical weapons, targeting Iraq, Iran, North Korea, China, Russia, Syria, and Libya. The "National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction" states that the U.S. "reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force to the use of WMD against the United States, our forces abroad, and friends and allies."

In the run-up to the U.S. attack on Iraq, President George W. Bush warned, "America must not ignore the threats gathering against us. We cannot wait for the final proof that could come in the form of a

Meanwhile, deeply embedded in the military-industrial-academic complex, the nuclear juggernaut rolled on, as militarists in the Pentagon and scientists at the nuclear weapons labs conjured up new justifications to project nuclear weapons far into the future.

During the 1990s, nuclear weapons—especially U.S. nuclear weapons—fell off the public's radar screen. Questions of nuclear arms control and disarmament were increasingly relegated to elite policy circles, becoming less of a concern to most ordinary people. Post-Cold War strategies focused on keeping them out of the hands of "rogue" states and terrorists. Grassroots groups worked to put the brakes on U.S. plans for new weapons production. For the most part, this information was kept out of Washington, D.C., discourse by arms control lobbyists. As the decade wore on, funding for arms control and disarmament began to dry up. Ignoring calls for disarmament, the Clinton administration squandered the historically unprecedented period of opportunity that appeared with the end of the Cold War. This administration's military programs and policies laid the groundwork for the Bush administration's aggressive foreign policy, in which the potential use of nuclear weapons has been openly stated.



mushroom cloud." But President Bush didn't tell us that the U.S. had drawn up contingency plans for the potential use of nuclear weapons against Iraq! As the war rages on, with mounting casualties and a country in ruins, Washington has turned its sights on North Korea and Iran, seeking again to inflame public fears of a new nuclear threat.

### Where Is the Public Outcry?

With the risk of use of nuclear weapons climbing towards levels not reached since the Cold War, where is the public outcry? What happened to the massive antinuclear movement of the 1980s?

When the Cold War abruptly ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, people around the world breathed a huge sigh of relief, believing that they had walked away from the potential of a nuclear holocaust, and putting nuclear weapons out of their minds. Many activists went on to other issues.

Eventually U.S. disarmament groups and international nongovernmental organizations, frustrated by the lack of progress towards disarmament, broke away from the limited arms control agenda. By 1995, nearly every country in the world had joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) with Abolition 2000, in a statement calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Only the U.S., Britain, Russia, France, and China had nuclear weapons (nuclear-armed India, Pakistan, and Israel remain outside the treaty).

In the run-up to the U.S. attack on Iraq, premised in part on the false allegation that Iraq had an active nuclear weapons program, a new antiwar movement began to coalesce, with a heightened sensitivity to the domestic impacts of the "war on terror." The first National Assembly of United for Peace and Justice, held in Chicago in June 2003, seemed like a good opportunity to reclaim nuclear disarmament as a

peace and justice issue, and to reintegrate it into the broader antiwar agenda. A proposal from U.S. Abolition 2000 groups to make nuclear disarmament a United for Peace and Justice priority was adopted.

In August 2004, on the anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings, the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, urged on by the aging *hibakusha* (survivors) in their cities, launched the Mayors for Peace Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons, vowing to bring their demand for the time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons to the 2005 NPT Review Conference. By the time they got to New York, more than 500 mayors from 32 countries—65 from the U.S.—had signed onto the mayors' campaign. On May 1, 2005, Abolition 2000 and United for Peace and Justice joined forces to demand "No Nukes! No Wars!" Nearly 40,000 people marched past United Nations headquarters in New York City and rallied in Central Park. The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and dozens of *hibakusha* carried the lead banner, flanked by city officials and non-governmental organization leaders from around the world. Behind them, spirited antinuclear and antiwar activists filled more than 13 city blocks.

This September, I was arrested, along with 370 others, in front of the White House for nonviolently "demonstrating without a permit" against the war in Iraq. As I languished in a holding cell with several Gold Star mothers who had lost sons and daughters in Iraq, I was again reminded of the *hibakusha* and their haunting message: "What happened to us is so terrible, it must never happen to anyone again."

On the 60th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Mayors for Peace Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons declared August 6, 2005, through August 9, 2006, to be a Year of Inheritance, Awakening, and Commitment. My question to all of us is, *Are we up to the challenge?* ♦

*Jacqueline Cabasso is Executive Director of the Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF) in Oakland, California. She is the coauthor, with Susan Moon, of Risking Peace: Why We Sat in the Road (Open Books, 1985). She serves on the International Coordinating Committee of the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons and the National Coordinating Committee of United for Peace and Justice. For more information, visit [www.wslfweb.org](http://www.wslfweb.org)*

Senryu

kept from playing with toy guns  
boys use their fingers instead

—Gary Gach

The atomic bomb is the real Buddha of the West—a perfect, detached, sovereign apparatus. Unmoving, it rests in its silo, purest actuality and purest potentiality. It is the embodiment of cosmic energies and the human share in these, the highest accomplishment of the human race and its destroyer, the triumph of technical rationality and its dissolution into paranoia. Its repose and its irony are endless. It is the same to the bomb—how it fulfills its mission, whether in silent waiting or as a cloud of fire. For it the change of conditioned states does not count.

As with a Buddha, all there is to say is said by its mere existence. It is not a bit more evil than reality and not a hair more destructive than we are. It is not only our unfolding; it is a material expression of our ways. It is already completely incarnate, while we in comparison are still divided. In the face of such an instrument, great listening is called for, rather than strategic considerations. The bomb requires from us neither struggle nor resignation, but experience of ourselves. We are it.

—Peter Sloterdijk, from the *Critique of Cynical Reason*

# The Middle Way to Peace

by Stephen Fulder

*A Palestinian woman on her way to Jaffa Gate bursts onto the scene. She is shouting out her sorrow about what is going on in the territories, about the military incursions into Palestinian towns. She says that our [Israeli] soldiers are war criminals. She tells me about the refugees and their constant suffering.... I feel a huge sense of compassion and an intense need to listen to her. I notice the "the walk" approaching us slowly, at the top of the street. A hundred people are in a line, one after the other walking in silence, slowly, quietly, aware of each step, creating an atmosphere of peace and safety around them. They radiate calm and warmth. I point them out to her and explain that this is the reason I came here, to join a walk of peace in which Palestinians and Israelis are together. I tell her about the walk, its message of coexistence and peace. I notice that she is very moved by the walk and the atmosphere it radiates. She seems to me calmer—nothing like the furious woman I met only several minutes before. She walks alongside the line for a while. She tells me that she likes this walk, that it makes her feel good, it gives her relief. I am moved. —Marion Pergamin*

It is quite an unusual sight: through the frenzy of downtown Tel Aviv traffic or the anxious quiet of Jerusalem streets, a long line of people appears. They walk slowly in single file and in complete silence. An atmosphere of calm and peacefulness surrounds them. But what is more unusual, taking most bystanders by surprise, is that they are both Jew and Arab.

Three years have passed since the founding of Middleway, a group dedicated to applying dharma teachings to the task of peacemaking in a land steeped in conflict and bloodshed for more than 50 years. Middleway was born out of a sense of urgency and compassion felt by participants at silent retreats in Israel, and was especially inspired by Christopher Titmuss during his frequent visits to Israel and Palestine. Many in the sangha sensed that the extent of suffering in the region called for engagement beyond sitting on the meditation cushion. At the same time, most felt a resistance to conventional forms of political action. The question then became, What kind of action is appropriate both to make a clear statement and to remain within the ethical, non-violent principles of the dharma?

We concluded that our actions should speak louder than words and created a form that is inclusive, non-harming and yet expresses in a clear way the need for peace and reconciliation. Our form—an adaptation of the traditional *dharmayatra* peace walks—embodies dharma in action. We walk slowly in silence, wear a white sash as a sign of simplicity. Some walkers hand out leaflets to passers-by, shopkeepers, and drivers. The walks are led by senior Israeli dharma practitioners, but there are many participants with no dharma back-

ground. During the walks there are instructions on maintaining a quiet confidence, presence, friendliness, and nonreactivity in the face of provocation.

We invite local people to join us at the end of the walks in dialogue and sharing circles. These circles, led by experienced facilitators, encourage heartfelt sharing, the release of pain, personal contact across cultural boundaries, and the building of trust between people from separate communities.

Sometimes the local mayor or representatives of community groups address the walkers. During an eight-day walk from the new town of Modi'in up through the wadis and villages to Jerusalem, we heard from a representative of an Israeli charity attempting to restore the memory of the 500 or so Arab villages destroyed since 1948, a representative of the right-wing nationalistic settlers, and a representative of a group of lawyers trying to get the Separation Wall rerouted.

The "silent walkers," as we are generally described, are becoming relatively well known in the country. Over the past two years, there were walks nearly every month in all areas of Israel, and lately beginning in the occupied territories. The walks pass through towns, cities, Arab villages, religious settlements, kibbutzim, and the countryside. There are never fewer than 50 walkers and sometimes more than 100.

We were invited to two meetings with the now deceased Yasser Arafat to share our experience of the effectiveness of nonviolence. All this was achieved with relatively few volunteers and no financial resources or support apart from what has been dropped in the hat during each walk. And while our limited resources have made it difficult to reach out and broaden the participation, Middleway has energized our sangha.

The walks are not explicitly Buddhist and are open to anyone who wishes to join. However, the dharma is embodied in everything that happens: in the mindfulness and peacefulness we bring to the walking, in the intention to reduce suffering and bring healing, in the practice of trust and equanimity when risks must be taken, and in the inclusiveness through which anyone can participate equally. The practice of absorbing verbal abuse from people in the street, without reaction, and returning metta, is readily understood. When the Bedouin *mukhtar* Abu Amin was asked why he joined, he replied without hesitation: "When we are shouted at, I absorb it like a sponge, and in this way I am making peace for my people." This is walking the Eightfold Path in daily life. ❖

*For more information, visit [www.middleway.org](http://www.middleway.org). A longer version of this essay appeared in Inquiring Mind.*

**The practice of absorbing verbal abuse from people in the street, without reaction, and returning metta, is readily understood.**

# Martial Arts

## The Sword That Cuts a Path to Freedom

by Michele Benzamin-Miki

**D***on't be an easy target*, were the words going through my head as four older boys surrounded and threatened me on the way to elementary school. I was only nine. After I landed four well-placed kicks, the boys left me alone.

My parents taught me to use self-defense in tandem with compassion against what they called “the wrong-headed actions of people who don't know any better.” Consequently, I felt no fear or animosity towards these boys. My parents had studied martial arts in Japan, and my father taught me some basic self-defense moves. Without a car, we walked everywhere or took the bus, so my father was concerned for my safety—he'd been attacked several times in the various neighborhoods we'd lived in.

But fighting my way out of situations became unnecessary as I acquired more nonviolent skills. My parents taught me to use everything in my power to avoid a physical confrontation. I also became streetwise.

Later in college I received formal training in the martial arts, which connected me to my Japanese ancestry. Through karate-do, I found a connection to my mother's Japanese ancestry, which included farmers and samurai. Being biracial made me adaptable to the various high-risk communities of color that I struggled with growing up. This was important when I felt different from others. Martial arts also helped me see my anger with focus and clarity, and it gave me the confidence to explore my biracial history and accept that I was also white.

My first *sensei* (teacher) was a Japanese American man who was passionate about women's self-defense, and he emphasized the formal training of *kata* and sparring. *Katas* are martial arts movements that represent a mock-battle sequence. One can practice individually, or with a partner, in a controlled sparring or fight. Sparring is free-form, and a test of what one has learned in the context of *katas* or drills. A drill is just a repetition of punches, kicks, and other martial arts movements. Sparring has a set of rules of conduct according to each school or system. For example, contact in the head and groin area is off-limits. Self-defense has only defense and safety in its purpose, therefore there are no limits.

Two years after starting karate, I began studying Buddhism and practicing meditation. After observing an aikido class taught by a graceful and strong woman, Megan Riesel Sensei, I immediately joined. I knew I would have to start fresh and completely for-

get my past training in order to embrace this new art. It was completely different, emphasizing principles of nonviolence, with forgiveness and compassion at the core of the teaching. Aikido's founder, O'sensei Ueshiba, taught the art of peace in these movements, which made me feel at home finally.

Four years into my training I met Shoji Nishio Sensei, an amazing Japanese man who continues to be my role model and my inspiration. After I received my first-degree black belt in aikido, I began as an assistant teacher. Soon I was on my way to starting my own school.

Nishio Sensei was an aikido and laido master who showed me how to use the *katana*—the Japanese sword—to cut a path to reconciliation and freedom in my life. He taught me the truth of disarmament through the use of a weapon. Aikido is based on this view of disarmament. To me it clearly expresses a path of *budo*, which means to “stop the clashing of weapons.” It is also known as “the way of the martial arts.”

Aikido techniques initially teach us how to harmonize with the energy of an attack. This is difficult if we are only focused on defense. It is therefore essential that we become effective at offense first. Effective offense is called *ukemi*, and the position we take in this training is called *uke*, the sole purpose of which is to strengthen the person we are attacking by revealing the weak places in their defense. This plays an essential part in building the defensive position, called *nage*. It is then possible to develop compassion and understanding of the attacker by taking on the role of *uke*. When taking on the position of the *nage*, we are in a better position to harmonize with the energy of an attack. *Nage* is, more simply, understanding the attack, and responding with compassion and benevolence by not harming. In *nage* we are also directing the attacker by being one step ahead of them, and releasing them when they are empty of “attack energy.” The true moment of aikido is when the *nage* and *uke* become one in their movement, not separate from one another. This is harmonizing.

Nishio Sensei referred to aikido technique as the practice of forgiveness. He would show several techniques, and locate the places where we have opportunities to forgive our attacker. He would often say, “It is easy to forgive once, and twice is also possible, but three or four or five times is difficult. Aikido gives us the opportunity in our training to see that it is possible to keep forgiving—and this is our practice.” I often

tell my students that forgiveness is not optional. It is essential for us to heal. Forgiveness is necessary for disarmament and for solving conflict.

The “empty hand techniques,” which involve punching and kicking as forms of conflict resolution, come from understanding the history and path of the Japanese sword. In aikido the study of kata comes from working with weapons. This study allows us to understand how to disarm. We first learn to use the weapon effectively and then train to disarm one another with the use of the weapon. Eventually we can disarm the opponent’s weapon empty-handed. The ultimate technique is the sword of no-sword. To understand the sword is to be able to disarm someone without using one. This is nonviolence at its core.

The sword has an interesting history in Japan. This advanced country voluntarily chose to give up more high-tech military weapons to return to a more primitive ones. Guns arrived in 1543, brought by the Europeans. They were adopted at once, and were used widely for the next hundred years. Then they were gradually abandoned.

When I train with my sword it allows me to see into my deepest fears. I am able to experience my aggression and use skillful means to transform and heal my fears. By simply realizing that there is no separation between my attacker and I, and letting go of my fear and replacing it with feelings of kindness and love towards my attacker, I am able to disarm the sword against me. Gandhi said, “The sword of nonviolence is love, and the unshakable firmness that comes with it.”

There are many references in Buddhism teachings to the use of weapons as tools for transformation and healing. The sword of the bodhisattva Manjusri cuts through the notions that we are separate from one another. It cuts through delusion, greed, and hatred—the poisons that are the core of violence. Wisdom is the sword of Manjusri, and Compassion is the skillful means that guides its use. In the teachings there is no separation between victim and oppressor. Understanding this allows disarmament to happen.

One night I was coming home late from a seminar with my Japanese teacher. Around the corner from my house I saw a young man in the street whipping a tree violently with a chain. He looked angry and a bit crazed. The thought crossed my mind that I may have to deal with him to get to my house. Suddenly the man was inches from my face. I did not move. I looked him in the eyes. I knew that I was ready for anything. I saw him checking every inch of me. I was loaded down with stuff and I also had my sword case on my shoulder. I also happened to be revved from six hours of aikido training. It seemed like a long time, but I did

not move, and there was no fear in me, only readiness. Then, he started to back away slowly. He kept his eyes fixed on me and started zigzagging as he went down the block. When he got to the end of the street he turned his back and ran quickly into the darkness.

In the ‘90s, I taught meditation and aikido at juvenile justice camps and prisons, where I talked about the principles of compassion and nonviolence to boys. At a probation football camp in Malibu, California, I brought a male student with me to help with my demonstration of aikido. We were led to a large room filled with 100 boys. The guard showed me a button to push in case of an emergency and then left.

Being in this room made me feel tense, so without much explanation I broke the tension by talking about the misperceptions of strength. I demonstrated my point by picking up my student and carrying him across my back while I continued to lecture! (I am 5’3” and about 120 pounds. He was 6’ 2” and about 220 pounds.) I carried him for about five minutes, until I knew I had won their devoted attention. They were then quiet and respectful, and asked many questions. I finished the session with a meditation on lovingkindness.



“Watashi No Inouchi” by Michele Benzamin-Miki

Another story that I like to tell is that of a dear friend of mine who works in the field of Nonviolent Communication. My friend was at the federal building at a death penalty protest march. An angry person approached, shouting, “What if it was your wife or children that were killed, what would you do then?” My friend answered, “Then I would need and ask of you, my friend, to restrain me.”

Gandhi also said, “Nonviolence is the greatest and most active force in the world. One cannot be passively nonviolent.” I have come to realize that by disarming my fear, hatred, and negativity in the moment it arises, I am then free to act from a place of love. ❖

*Michele Benzamin-Miki teaches aikido and aiki toho laido sword in Santa Monica, California, and martial arts and meditation at Manzanita Village, which she cofounded with her partner, Cairtriona Reed. Visit the website at [www.manzanitavillage.org](http://www.manzanitavillage.org).*

# Peace on the Pavement

## My One-Man Vigil

by Lin Jensen

Someone has to do it. And if it's at all do-able, someone will. I just happened to be the one. Saturday, October 16, 2004, I initiated a one-man peace vigil on the corner of Third and Main streets in the northern Sacramento Valley town of Chico, California. And on that day I entered into a tradition that traces its roots back to the early 1960s, when the U.S. military built Titan missiles with nuclear warheads to be stored in underground bunkers at a base northeast of town. In solitary protest, Chico resident Wilhelmina Taggart began weekly visits to the base to pray. Eventually the missiles were removed, but by then Wilhelmina was joined by Florence McLane and Helen Kinnee and the three of them began holding a weekly peace vigil in downtown Chico. Forty-four years later, the vigil Wilhelmina began still takes place, every Saturday afternoon, 12:30 to 1:30, winter or summer, wet or dry.

As a Zen Buddhist, I'm accustomed to viewing the world from ground level. So I had a sign made that could be propped up on the ground rather than held. It features a peace symbol incorporating the words "Peace Vigil," "Nonviolence," "Justice," and "Mercy,"

and identifying me as a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. The following Saturday, I went down to Third and Main, where a couple dozen others stood on the four corners of the intersection, waving banners and holding messages of protest on squares of poster board. I picked a spot on the sidewalk near the curb where I could prop my new sign

against a bike rack with the message facing the oncoming traffic. Then I sat down on a meditation cushion, crossed my legs, formed the Zen mudra with my hands, and began my first formal hour of sidewalk sitting.

The next day was Sunday, and there was no scheduled peace vigil in the town of Chico. But when I looked at my peace sign resting against the closet wall with my cushion and mat stored on the shelf above, I thought, "Why not?" After all, there is no shortage of downtown street corners to sit on—the post office entrance, the courtyard in front of the Chico State University Student Union, and, of course, the military

recruiters' offices on Mangrove Street. And so my Saturday peace vigil expanded to a daily affair. If I bicycled to S & S Produce for a head of lettuce or to the Chico Natural Food Co-op for fair-trade coffee or to the bank to make a deposit, I'd take my peace gear along and sit for an hour's vigil.

When strangers encounter me sitting cross-legged on the sidewalk they can simply pass me off as another town eccentric, especially when I sit outside the Fifth Street Post Office facing the city plaza whose weekday population is frequently characterized by personal oddity. But when someone with whom I've shared opinions on the city's Tree Ordinance Committee finds me there, a certain awkward adjustment in perception is required. For one thing, people are not accustomed to relating to me from such an uncommon differential in height—everyone towers over me when I'm settled down on the concrete. People who have previously known me as a neighbor on East Sacramento Avenue or as the guest lecturer in their university ethics class or the author they met at the Barnes and Noble book signing or the Buddhist who gave a Zen convocation at the city council chambers don't expect to find me that close to the ground in such an exposed and public place. My being there must seem like some sort of mistake, perhaps an accident that has just occurred. One perplexed and apparently embarrassed prior acquaintance of mine stood over me looking directly at my sign that clearly indicates that I'm conducting a peace vigil, and asked me, "What are you doing here?"

Like other peace activists, I protest the violence of war in any way I can. I give talks on the ethics of peace and nonviolence, and I serve on panels, and have recently published a book I hope will encourage some kindness and compassion toward others. I've also written every "Letter to the Editor" protesting this tragic war that I could get the conservative *Chico Enterprise-Record* to print, feeding them a letter a month until the paper's editor began imposing censorship, claiming that my viewpoint on peace was repetitious and no longer timely. The editor was certainly wrong about the timeliness of the letters, but probably right about the repetition. I don't know what else I should be writing about in this nation whose ambitions are so characterized by the flagrant abuse of lethal force. Does anyone besides me suffer the same shame and disbelief over the televised display of "shock and awe" that the United States Air Force treated us to in the initial bombings of Baghdad?

*He looked at my peace sign declaring that I was conducting a peace vigil, and he said in the most matter-of-fact way, as an indisputable article of truth, "We need war."*

### "We Need War"

It was the way he said it that struck me. I've heard others make the same assertion in a manner that communicated their preparedness to argue the necessity of war as a position backed by reasoning of some sort. But this one spoke from simple belief. He looked at my peace sign declaring that I was conducting a peace vigil, and he said in the most matter-of-fact way, as an indisputable article of truth, "We need war." It was therefore uncontestable and not subject to reasonable inquiry. He didn't wait for any response from me because he probably understood my peace sign with its call for nonviolence, justice, and mercy to be an equally simple expression of faith. For him, it was just a matter of what you choose to believe.

But that won't work because we can choose to believe in almost anything, including a logical absurdity like "We need war." And that's what we have come to believe. "We need war" is the gospel of military fundamentalism, and it has been repeated, chapter and verse, so often and in so many versions, that it feeds back on us like an echo reverberating off canyon walls.

We adopt an aphorism of this sort because we don't trust ourselves. We think that if we don't come armed with certainty, we won't know what to do. We feel shored up by sharing a common idea or belief with others and don't trust our capacity to observe and understand on our own. But ironically, it's the arbitrary viewpoint required of our belief that can obstruct our capacity to understand. A belief, however wise it might be, is a static thing quickly outmoded by life's caprice and swiftness. A tremendous capacity for harm lies in trying to force discrete events into conformity with one's faith.

In the absence of faith, we must rely on trust. And what we trust is not so much any particular innate talent or wisdom of ours but rather the living moment itself. We trust circumstances to show us what's required. And while this may seem a lot less certain than we'd like it to be, it's the only way to engage something other than our own ideas. If I don't know ahead of time what to do or what I intend to do, if I don't have any prepared formula, then I'll be left to see for myself what's happening. And what's happen-

ing will be my guide for what to do. This naked exposure to the world is what I mean by *trust*.

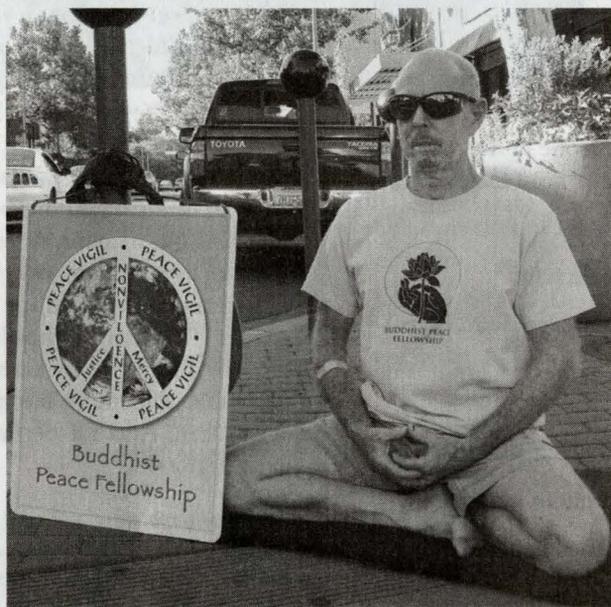
Zen literature abounds with examples of students asking for something fixed and definite to believe in, only to be turned away by their teachers. For example, it's a universal tenet of Indian Buddhism that Buddhature pervades the whole universe, that everything is Buddhature. When a monk asked Chinese Zen Master Chao Chou, "Has a dog Buddhature or not?" Chao Chou said, "No." I have great sympathy for this monk, who was only asking for confirmation of the most obvious truth, the one thing he could afford to believe in. But Chao Chou denied him. Truth, however alive, is a dead thing when adopted as a belief. Later, another monk tested Chao Chou with the identical question, "Has a dog Buddhature or not?" And

this time Chao Chou said, "Yes," shifting his response so that the student couldn't settle on either "Yes" or "No."

Anything you believe in without question is capable of becoming a dead and wooden thing, lacking the resiliency to assume a living shape. And for me that's exactly the harm that lies in believing we need war, a belief that never requires of its adherents to recognize the living face of the enemy. The gospel of war is an unforgiving faith that renders its

adherents increasingly dead to natural human sympathies. Its primary consequence is its indifference to the humanity of its victims, and thus its forfeiture of its own inherent humanity. Chao Chou taught that "The Buddha made of wood won't pass through fire. If it does it will surely burn." The sooner the Buddha of war burns the better. Let us commit all such withered beliefs to ashes, that the living flame of our humanity might be restored.

The man who told me "We need war" might very well assume that my position on peace is an article of faith no less arbitrary than his own. But I don't experience peace as a matter of belief. The peace I do experience is compassion—something I trust rather than something I adopt as an article of faith. War, on the other hand, is a failure of compassion, a failure to realize one's inherent sympathies. Violence, too, may be inherent in humans, but war institutionalizes violence in such a way that it comes to be regarded as



The author sitting on a corner in downtown Chicago

normal. We cultivate indifference to others' pain and suffering. And this suppression allows us to celebrate the defeat of our enemies as an achievement deserving of the highest praise.

It's been my experience that kindness toward others has been given to me by nature. In order to be cruel or inconsiderate, I must override the compassion that is inherent in me. The mythological embodiment of compassion in the Buddhist tradition is the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who is said to possess a thousand eyes to see suffering wherever it exists and a thousand hands to reach out and give aid to those who suffer (the palm of each hand containing an eye so that the organ of perception and action are one and the same). An ancient dialogue between two Chinese Zen masters about the bodhisattva touches further on the spontaneity of compassion:

Yun Yen asked Tao Wu, "How does the Bodhisattva use all those hands and eyes?"

Wu answered, "It is like someone in the middle of the night reaching behind her head for the pillow."

Yen said, "I understand."

Wu asked, "How do you understand it?"

Yen said, "All over the body are hands and eyes."

Wu said, "That is very well expressed, but it is only eight-tenths of the answer."

Yen said, "How would you say it, Elder Brother?"

Wu said, "The body itself is hands and eyes."

Compassion is a spontaneous act done virtually without notice. You don't adjust a pillow as a matter of principle or because you have a faith in pillow adjustment. You just do it because it needs doing. And in a similar manner, kindness and mercy don't require the support of an ideology or belief, because our very bodies are naturally the hands and eyes of compassion. In his book *Love and Will*, Rollo May pointed out that you can't really generate love on purpose. Still, he said, you can intend love. May coined the noun "intentionality" to refer to a state of mind in which you prepare a place in your heart for love to enter. This invitation is a living act, quite unlike the rigidity of even the most praiseworthy article of faith or belief one might adopt. You can file a belief and keep it on hand for future reference. But Rollo May's intentionality requires that you throw open the door and listen for the footsteps that signal the arrival of your guest. Love isn't something I believe in. It's something I ask for. And then I await its visit.

When Zen Master Ikkyu was asked, "What is Zen?" He responded, "Attention. Attention. Attention." War,

it seems to me, is a practice of failing in attention. If we really paid attention to the *reality* of war rather than being guided by an abstract and idealized *faith* in war, we might reject war outright. The alternative to the Gospel of War is not to be found in an opposing Gospel of Peace. It is rather to be found in the still heart of one who watches undetermined and waits to be called.

## Peace on the Pavement

The advent of my sidewalk sitting was, like Wilhelmina Taggart's solitary prayers at the missile bunkers years before me, a response born of an urgency to protest in the most concrete and direct way the violence of our nation and of the world. Putting my entire body to the task of public witness touched a need not met for me in other ways.

I am saying to my fellow townspeople that I will continue to sit here on the pavement, virtually under their feet as they pass by, as I offer the visible presence of grief over the brutality our nation resorts to in order to get what it wants, and my rejection of its claim to be acting on our behalf—yours and mine—assuming our inaction to be tacit approval of its aims. And so I've brought my protest to the very place where they come to shop or get a cup of coffee or mail a letter. They may acknowledge me or ignore me as they see fit, but I am here, nevertheless, to remind them that something has gone drastically wrong in our nation. And I'll be back tomorrow to remind them again. ❖

*Lin Jensen is founder and teacher emeritus of the Chico Zen Sangha in Chico, California, where he writes and works in defense of the Earth. He is the author of Uncovering the Wisdom of the Heartmind (Quest Books, 1999) and a frequent contributor to Turning Wheel. His forthcoming book, Bad Dog! A Memoir of Love, Beauty, and Redemption in Dark Places (reviewed on page 36), is available from Wisdom Publications.*

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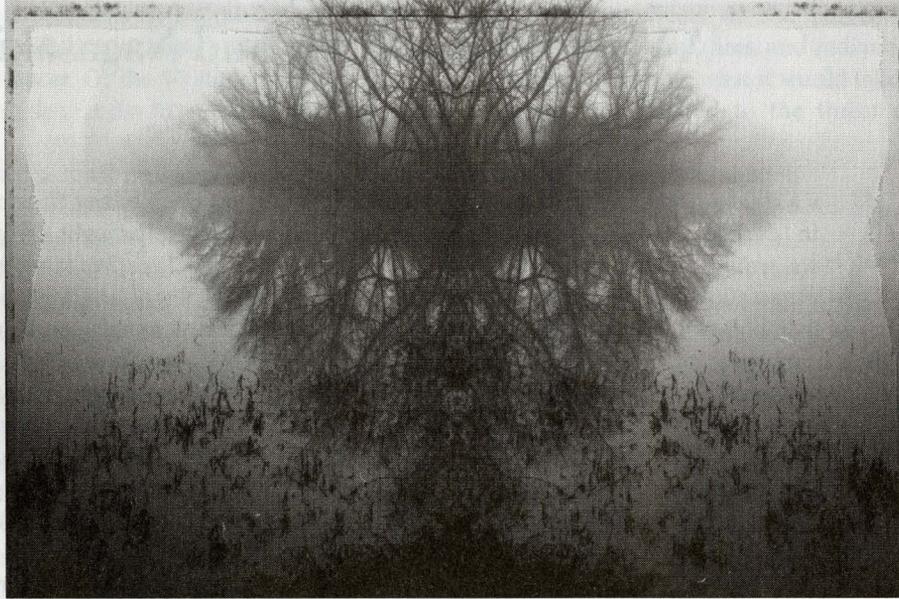
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IN THE  
FOOTSTEPS  
OF THE  
BUDDHA





### A Few Reasons to Oppose the War

because wind soughs in the branches of trees  
like blood sighing through veins

because in each country there are songs  
huddled like wet-feathered birds

because our bodies are soft and easily harmed  
and destruction is a way of dying, not living

because we are so utterly human  
and so prone to grief

because even though the news has nothing new to say  
and keeps on saying it  
NO still fights its way into the world

because for every bomb that is readied  
a baby nestles into her mother,  
latches onto a nipple beaded with milk

because the tulips have waited all winter  
in the cold dark earth

because each morning the wildflowers outside my window  
raise their yellow faces to the sun

because we are all, each one of us,  
in love with the light

by Lisa Suhair Majaj

See page 47 for poet's bio

Photo by Lawrence Watson

# Becoming Jizo

## A Visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki

by Tova Green

**A**s a child in elementary school I took part in “duck and cover” air raid drills in which we would all duck under our desks in preparation for nuclear war. I had little awareness then of how futile such efforts would be if a nuclear bomb were dropped on my city, New York. I had no idea then that there were people who were actively opposing such weapons.

I first learned of the antinuclear weapons movement in 1957 during my freshman year at Antioch College in Ohio. After my first semester, I took a Greyhound bus back to New York City, where my father met me at the bus terminal. As we walked across 42nd Street to the subway, we passed the office of SANE (Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy). I’d heard of SANE’s antinuclear philosophy at Antioch and I wanted to go in and learn more. My father’s body stiffened and he refused to let me enter. “What difference can one person make anyway?” he asked. That question has stayed with me ever since.

In August 2005, 48 years after my father’s question, I was one of 35 “ambassadors of peace” who joined Zen teachers Chozen and Hogen Bays in a pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of those cities. We brought with us more than 270,000 images of Jizo Bodhisattva, one for each person who had died in the first year after the bombings.

Jizo is a bodhisattva, an archetypal “awakened being,” beloved to people throughout Japan. Statues of Jizo appear on street corners, in neighbor-

hood shrines, and at the entrances to cemeteries. Jizo looks like a simple monk in robes. He usually carries a staff with six rings in one hand a “wish-fulfilling jewel” in the other. The jewel is symbolic of finding one’s own inner riches. Sometimes statues of Jizo are clothed in red hats or bibs as expressions of tenderness for them. In Japanese folklore Jizo has many important roles. He is a guide for travelers and a protector of mothers and children. He also helps those in physical or psychological pain and relieves the suffering of the spirits of those who have died.

The Jizo images we brought with us were drawn or

stamped on cloth prayer flags or sewn into quilts or banners. We also brought origami Jizos, and carved wood and clay Jizos. We traveled by plane, train, bus, tram, ferry, subway, and foot to deliver these Jizos to peace museums, temples, and nursing homes in Japan.

Our leader, Jan Chozen Bays, is a pediatrician and a Zen teacher who has a special fondness for Jizo. Residents make and sell clay images of Jizo at her temple, Great Vow Monastery in Oregon. Jizo’s name means “earth store bodhisattva” (*ji* means earth and *zo* means storehouse). He has an amazing capacity to divide into thousands of millions of bodies in order to teach and assist all living beings. This story appears in an early Buddhist text, the *Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra*:

Just before the Buddha’s death, hundreds of thousands of division bodies (manifestations) of Earth Store Bodhisattva arrived from worlds wherever suffering existed. Suddenly the multitude of bodies assembled into a single body to listen to the Buddha teach.

Jizo appears in many different forms. It is said that the “division bodies” of Jizo arise in response to those who ask for help. Chozen Bays says “we are all division bodies born in response to the urgent need to heal the human world.” On the pilgrimage to Hiroshima and Nagasaki I met and heard about many people who embody the qualities of Jizo Bodhisattva. They have unquenchable optimism, take full responsibility for beings who suffer, and share in manifesting benevolence and engagement in life.

Chozen and Hogen Bays and the young monks from Great Vow Monastery envisioned bringing 270,000 Jizos to Japan and then worked tirelessly for two years to bring the project to fruition. The project spread throughout the United States and to countries around the world. By summer, before the pilgrimage left for Japan, nearly 400,000 Jizos had been created.

When we arrived in Hiroshima, three generations of the Yokoyama family welcomed us to their temple, Zenshoji, in the hills outside the city. Seventy-year-old priest Rev. Shoken Yokoyama lives there with his wife, Hitoko, and their son Taiken.

Zenshoji was originally built in 1615 in downtown Hiroshima, in what was once the entertainment district. On the morning of the bombing in 1945, elementary school students were having their classes in the temple hall. Hitoko, who was five at the time, was the daughter of the head priest of the temple. She and her parents managed to escape with little injury as the

*The question that has pulled at me throughout my life, what difference can one person make?, was answered by my encounters with the living Jizos I met in Japan.*

family quarters of the temple collapsed. A month later her mother died from radiation sickness and in 1954 her father died from cancer. Of the 30 students who had gathered at the temple that day to study, only one young girl survived.

In Nagasaki, I visited a small museum devoted to the life of Dr. Nagai Takashi, a radiologist who was working in a hospital near the epicenter when the bomb was dropped. The hospital was destroyed, instantly killing many patients, doctors, and nurses. Dr. Nagai was wounded but survived, and found the other surviving hospital staff in the wreckage. Together they began treating those who were wounded and worked tirelessly until each of them succumbed to radiation sickness or exhaustion.

Dr. Nagai's first book, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, tells of his experiences during the first year after the bomb was dropped. American occupation forces did what they could to suppress the writing and photos of the effects of the atomic bombs. Nevertheless, Dr. Nagai's books were successful. With the royalties he bought 1,000 cherry trees for the parks and schools of the city he loved, rebuilt schools, and created a small library for children who had lost all their books. That building today houses the museum that tells of his life and his work for peace. Dr. Nagai died at age 46 of leukemia.

We met another living embodiment of Jizo when we arrived at the train station in Nagasaki—a small, energetic man named Masahito Hirose. Now 82, Mr. Hirose was a 15-year-old high school student who was working in the Mitsubishi shipyard with his classmates at the time of the bombing of Nagasaki. He survived the bombing, went on to university, and worked as a teacher for 46 years. Since retiring in 1998, Mr. Hirose has devoted his life to peace education and is now the head of the Nagasaki group of *hibakusha* (atom bomb survivors).

Despite learning about the ongoing work of people like Mr. Hirose, there were a number of times during the pilgrimage when I felt despair about all the nuclear weapons that have been developed, tested, and stockpiled since 1945. On the afternoon of August 6, I wandered in the Peace Park in Hiroshima. Our group had visited the Peace Museum and learned

about the devastating effects of the bomb—the tremendous heat, wind storms, fires, and radiation it produced. It made me wonder what it would take for the heads of states to respond to the threat that nuclear weapons pose today.

I walked to the Children's Monument, a tall graceful metal sculpture of a schoolgirl topped by an origami crane.

Near the monument two girls in plaid school uniforms stopped me and asked me if I spoke English. One of them asked if I knew the story of Sadako and the Thousand Cranes. It seemed as if she wanted to tell me the story, so I said I didn't know it.

Sadako was two years old when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. It seemed that Sadako and her family were spared. She grew strong and healthy, and was loved by her family and friends. She was a good student and an athlete. When she was 12 years old she developed leukemia, otherwise known as "the atom bomb disease."

While Sadako was in the hospital, her best friend told her of the Japanese tradition: if she folded 1,000 paper cranes, survivors would be healed. She had folded 644 cranes before she died. Her friends and classmates folded 356 more after her death. Sadako's life has had a profound impact on children throughout Japan. The children raised money to build the statue that honors Sadako and all the children who died from the effects of the atom bomb. At the base of the statue are these words: "This is our cry, this is our prayer: Peace in the world." Hearing the story of Sadako in their voices dispelled my feeling of despair and filled me with

hope for the future.

The question that has pulled at me throughout my life, *What difference can one person make?*, was answered by my encounters with the living Jizos I met in Japan. I learned how to ask for Jizo's help, and my hope is that I will respond as Jizo does when I hear the cries of those in pain. ❖

*Tova Green is a member of BPF's international advisory board. She is a Zen priest living at Green Gulch Farm.*

*When she was 12 years old Sadako developed leukemia, otherwise known as "the atom bomb disease."*



Katrina Van Male is a sculptor who lives in Benicia, California

## Book Reviews

### **Bad Dog! A Memoir of Love, Beauty, and Redemption in Dark Places**

by Lin Jensen

(Wisdom Publications, 2005)

#### **Reviewed by Patrick McMahon**

In the opening line of his introduction to *Bad Dog! A Memoir of Love, Beauty, and Redemption in Dark Places*, Lin Jensen asks himself why he's writing a memoir at all. He quotes the classic memoirist Thoreau, who set the standard for self-disclosure with *Walden*: "I should not talk about myself so much if there were anyone else I knew so well." It's a forthright enough declaration and, because it is so up front and engaging, I trust that this is a writer who isn't just going to monologue me to death.

Thoreau lays out what he expects from other memoir writers: "a sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives." Jensen delivers an equally sincere account of his life, and I feel held to that standard as I find myself questioning his claim that this memoir is "a true story as faithful to fact as memory will allow." It's true, I'll grant: true as the records of the old Zen masters and students are true; true as a poem is true; true as a story is true. For Jensen is a storyteller and a poet, and truest when he is closest to telling details, which I prefer to facts.

As an imaginative writer, Jensen selects from the welter of memory that which serves his story: the boy's hands gripping the mane of the runaway horse; his mother sitting down on a patch of earth, her legs stuck out under her skirt, toppled from her roller skates; bed-wet sheets on a cold morning; his father's tailored suits bought with hard-earned cash; the dust of a turkey farm coating the slats of new Venetian blinds. Each carefully selected detail is more a symbol than a fact, offering the reader a wide window into the world Jensen knows so well, that in some ways we all know so well.

As a teller of the tale of a particular place and a particular time—which is what the memoirist is—Jensen is in the best of company: Thoreau, Garrison Keillor with his tales of Lake Wobegon, and my own grandfather, leaning on a barbed wire fence on his farm in Galena, Illinois, rolling another messy cigarette while he crafts yet another version of a story I've heard many times before. These artists hold us with the vivid detail, selecting what most needs remembering.

When Jensen tells the story of the farm dog—the eponymous bad dog—whose spirit is broken while the young boy stands by helplessly, I am back to age four, watching helplessly as my father whips the family dog. As sweet as it is to share the experience of ducklings and chicks, it's also sweet, and even more inspiring, to share the more terrible experiences. I'm heartened at the prospect of redeeming, as Jensen does in his memoir, the dark places. Where once we were helpless, perhaps now we can help. And when he tells of sending the family karma in a different direction by

cleaning, in the dark of early morning, his bed-wetting brother's sheets, rather than insisting that he clean up his own mess, I think of the simple selfless acts, sometimes going against the grain of custom, each of us engages in to cover for one another.

Redemption comes with realizing that what was so shaming holds the very thing we most need to regain—self-love. That's the love of the subtitle, called forth by dwelling in, writing from, and reading about the dark places: of washing one's elderly and incontinent father (the very father who had beaten him, and who had broken the dog), of memory's refuse pit filled with dead turkeys.

*Bad Dog!* is amazing, a sincere account that might also remind us of our own lives.

### **Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate**

by George Lakoff

(Chelsea Green Publishing, 2005)

#### **Reviewed by Laila Al-Marayati**

In light of the federal government's mismanaged hurricane recovery efforts in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, George Lakoff's book, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, has special value for those who want to restore the United States to its original ideals and values. Lakoff, a U.C. Berkeley linguist and progressive political theorist, helps us see how the political right was voted into office by masterfully using language to frame a conservative ideology designed to reduce the role of government in every arena (such as strengthening levees in New Orleans) except defense.

How did this happen and can it be reversed? Lakoff's book is an enlightening exposé on the decades-long efforts by the right to reframe political debates and seize control of the major media outlets that influence public opinion. He discusses the failure of the progressive movement to recognize the strategy of the right and take substantive steps to correct the imbalance.

Lakoff begins by explaining "framing"—"getting language that fits your worldview"—which is the book's central concept. For example, conservatives use terms like "tax relief" to describe cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans and "partial-birth abortion," a ghastly term not recognized or used by the medical or scientific communities. According to Lakoff, the frame within which people function is so important that, faced with facts that challenge the frame, they will reject the facts before changing their frame. The frame then becomes one's identity.

When it comes to elections, Lakoff writes, the "most powerful form of identification are with values and corresponding cultural stereotypes." To Lakoff, "models of idealized

family structure lie at the heart of our politics." To this end, conservatives identify with a strict-father model and progressives with a nurturing parent model.

In the strict father model, morality is linked to prosperity. Those who are not prosperous lack discipline and are disobedient; the poor are not entitled to benefits from the rest of us who have worked hard to care for ourselves. Within this worldview, capitalism benefits everyone so long as everyone actively pursues his/her own self-interest. The Bush administration's response to the natural disaster visited upon New Orleans reflects this thinking: the mostly poor, African American residents of New Orleans should have heeded warnings to evacuate the city before Hurricane Katrina struck. Thus, they must take the blame for their own suffering.

Conversely, the gender-neutral nurturing parent model emphasizes responsibility and empathy. In this worldview, other values that follow are those of freedom, opportunity, communication, trust, and community.

Lakoff examines the ways contemporary conservative politics turn family values into political values. Thus, the debate about gay marriage is framed as a challenge to the father-dominated heterosexual family model. Similarly, the Bush administration's "war on terror" exemplifies the value placed on strength, power, and military might as the solution. An alternative, progressive approach would emphasize understanding root causes and addressing social and political conditions that lead to terrorism.

So far, Lakoff explains, the progressive response to the right-wing domination of political discourse is characterized by defensiveness and getting sucked into the opposition's terms rather than articulating its own terms. What is at stake, Lakoff argues, is more than the choice of words: progressives need ideas that are strategically oriented and have long-term, wide-ranging effects.

In his chapter "What Unites Progressives," Lakoff offers a vision of unifying progressive values and ideas that can be adopted, expanded, and translated into effective domestic and foreign policy. Once the ideas are there, the language can be found to create the proper frame that speaks mainly to those Americans caught between the two family models discussed above.

The book's final chapters offer useful tips to help activists, politicians, and others maximize opportunities to reframe issues on their terms and respond in ways that communicate their messages without succumbing to traps set by political opponents.

*Don't Think of an Elephant!* is a short, easy read. The path to implementing the ideas Lakoff puts forth will be considerably more difficult. A far-from-adequate federal response to Hurricane Katrina, the worst humanitarian disaster in American history, and rising gasoline prices that will largely affect the poor and the middle class (who now have fewer opportunities for bankruptcy relief) are several manifestations of the conservative agenda. Lakoff reminds

us throughout his book that awareness of facts is not enough to persuade voters to vote against their identity and their identification with a cultural stereotype like the strict-father family model.

Perhaps this seemingly steady stream of grim news, especially if the media continues to provide the unspun "facts," will encourage Americans to consider the truth of the Bush administration before the next election. In the meantime, progressives should start by reading Lakoff's primer as they generate an alternative for a brighter future.

## **Taking a Stand: A Guide to Peace Teams and Accompaniment Projects**

by Elizabeth Boardman

(New Society Publishers, 2005)

## **Stop the Next War Now: Effective Responses to Violence and Terrorism**

Edited by Medea Benjamin and Jodie Evans

(Inner Ocean Publishing, 2005)

### **Reviewed by Jim Brown**

For those who have ever wondered what it takes to venture into a war zone with the goal of waging peace, two new books offer logistical specifics and inspiration.

*Taking a Stand: A Guide to Peace Teams and Accompaniment Projects*, by Elizabeth Boardman, lays out the steps for participating in grassroots peacemaking outside the United States. Boardman, a longtime San Francisco peace activist, spent three weeks in Baghdad in 2002 as part of the Iraq Peace Team during the run-up to the American invasion. Her book was born from speaking engagements after her return home, where she found herself answering logistical questions from audiences eager to consider making a similar trip.

Boardman uses those questions as chapter openers—Why go? Go where and do what? What will people say? Isn't it dangerous?—in which she tells of her own experience and quotes extensively from other activists who have taken part in peace and accompaniment teams. (Peace teams physically intervene in hostile circumstances, bear witness and gather information; accompaniment teams escort and protect local activists in conflict situations.)

Boardman presents the choice to take part in such activism not as personal heroism but as an expression of community. The process of "outing" oneself as a peace activist, Boardman writes, "may in fact be scarier than actually getting on the plane or going into the jungle village. This is the moment...[when you are]taking a visible public position and making your colleagues stop to think.... This is the stage at which you can be most effective in promoting

peace and justice in the world.”

She quantifies the effect by describing jobs for as many as 52 people at home—handling everything from publicity to moral and logistical support—to make the most of an activist’s foreign peacemaking efforts. This it-takes-a-village view is inspiring, yet Boardman doesn’t consider the questions it invites about privilege and resource consumption. Who but a fortunate few can afford to make such sacrifices? How might the world be transformed if Americans used those resources to make their own communities more peaceful and just? Boardman says nothing at all about the example—and worldwide impact—of the American civil rights movement or its Everywoman icon, the late Rosa Parks.

Boardman writes, “People participate in peace teams and accompaniment projects because they come to a point where they feel like they must take a more dramatic stand against the greed, destruction, and injustice in the world.” For some Buddhist readers, this may signal a missed opportunity to explore the rich and difficult realms of judgment and ego that so often shape such choices.

Those readers might consider *Stop the Next War Now: Effective Responses to Violence and Terrorism*, edited by Medea Benjamin and Jodie Evans, cofounders of CODEPINK, a peace organization whose name is a feminist play on the federal government’s rainbow of coded terrorist threat warnings. If Elizabeth Boardman’s book is the organizational mind of peace activism, this collection of writings by 70 prominent progressive authors, artists, activists, scholars, and leaders, most of them women, is its wise, expansive heart.

The book’s collected writings—contributors range from playwright Eve Ensler, peace mom Cindy Sheehan, and environmental activist Julia Butterfly Hill to congresswoman Barbara Lee, disarmament advocate Helen Caldicott, and former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto—are organized into chapters that make up a recipe for peace. Educator Joan Almon offers an eight-point guide to help schools and parents teach children about peace, with specific resources for encouraging creative play, helping schools develop curriculum, and supporting budding peace activists. Andrea Buffa, peace campaign coordinator at Global Exchange, prescribes six steps by which broadcast news outlets could be encouraged to depict the reality of war.

Buddhist thought is represented as well: Benjamin and Evans give dharma teacher Sharon Salzberg the last word. In an essay adapted from her book *A Heart as Wide as the World*, Salzberg describes the inspiration she finds in Burmese peace activist Aung San Suu Kyi and Suu Kyi’s ongoing practice of metta or lovingkindness. Salzberg writes, “Qualities like metta allow us to remember what our efforts for freedom are fundamentally about: to remember the light in this life and in this world.”

This book presents the rest of us with an ideal place for doing the same.

## **Rooms and Fields: Dramatic Monologues From the War in Bosnia**

Poems by Lee Peterson

(Kent State University Press, 2004)

### **Reviewed by Colette DeDonato**

It has been ten years since the war in Bosnia ended. From 1992 to 1995, towns were “cleansed” of their Muslim population. Men, women, and children were forced out of their homes and were taken to concentration camps or to open spaces far from their hometowns, where they were brutally massacred. Women were raped repeatedly. Homes were destroyed and mosques were demolished. In Srebrenica, an area that was ostensibly protected by the UN, the massacre that occurred was the “largest single incident of mass murder on European soil since the Holocaust.”

In these poems, Lee Peterson channels the voices of the dead and the wounded, telling their stories and humanizing their losses—because all of us need, I think, to be reminded of the realities of war. We hear, for example, from a man named Atif: “I’ve been through other wars, / but now my wife is gone. / I lost her along the Roman road / they marched us out of town on.” Animals and dead writers are brought to life too, making this a collection of compassion in action: no voice is too insignificant to be heard.

The poems in this collection are not reenactments of war crimes, though Peterson has done her research and the book is filled with notes of the true accounts of those on whom she based her poems. Poetry, as we know, does not need to be a search for “facts,” yet the truth of these poems, so near and so palpable, helps to bring them more resonance. This is truly poetry of necessity. When we talk about victims of war (or worse, of “casualties”), we do not always imagine their unique thoughts and voices, but Peterson gives us access to them, in which there is nothing casual: “When we sleep / in cots / in camps / our names / fall away / like dreams. / Our names / dissolve / into...mattresses / sweet / with filth /...We lose / Our names / Our houses.”

*Rooms and Fields* is divided into three parts. And so the poems and the people that begin in “rooms” are then forced into “fields.” And in a stroke of genius, the voices of the “rooms” and the “fields” are separated by a bridge—literally words on a page that resemble a bridge, so that we, as readers, are allowed to cross over. The bridge the poem refers to, the Drina, located between Bosnia and Serbia, was considered a passage between East and West upon which many atrocities were committed.

I was equally mesmerized by the formal qualities of these poems as I was by their haunting content. Amid all of the horror in this subject, Peterson created a work of devastating beauty, which parallels Thich Nhat Hanh’s plea for us to look more closely at the “lotus in the mud.” ❖

## letter to Bush, continued from page 11

- Create a real partnership between state, local, and federal resources that heeds the voices of the displaced. This partnership should: 1) place local residents and community organizations in decision-making roles in the rebuilding of their cities and towns, 2) provide living-wage jobs by restoring the Davis-Bacon Act, and 3) guarantee the right of return for all evacuees;
- Turn away from preemptive military solutions to all perceived and prospective conflicts involving the United States and other nations, and adopt a foreign policy of kindness. Just to start down the road outlined here will get the world's attention and respect. More importantly, it will sow seeds of peace in a time when war endangers us all. Please lead us in this direction, and we will continue to share the truth with you as we see it.

Sincerely, in peace,

Alan Senauke and Maia Duerr, on behalf of BPF

Joined by:

Rev. Robert Joshin Althouse—Zen Community of Oak Park, IL  
Rev. Joshin Carolyn Atkinson—Everyday Dharma Zen Center  
James Baraz—Spirit Rock Meditation Center, CA  
Sensei Margaret Ne-Eka Barragato-Treetop Zen Ctr, Orono, ME  
Sensei Stefano Mui Barragato—Treetop Zen Center, Orono, ME  
Jan Chozen Bays & Hogen Bays—Great Vow Zen Monastery, OR  
Dai-En Bennage—Mt. Equity Zendo, Jihoji, Pennsdale, PA  
Sensei Michele Benzamin-Miki—Ordinary Dharma, Los Angeles, CA  
& Manzanita Village, Warner Springs, CA  
Rev. Layla Smith Bockhorst—San Francisco Zen Center  
Martha Boesing—Faithful Fools Street Ministry, CA  
Angie Boissevain—Floating Zendo, CA  
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Portland, OR  
Rev. Eido Frances Carney—Olympia Zen Center, Olympia, WA  
Rev. Catherine Cascade—Arcata Zen Group, CA  
Melody Ermachild Chavis—Berkeley Zen Center, CA  
Roko Sherry Chayat—Zen Center of Syracuse, NY  
Rev. Nonin Chowaney—Nebraska Zen Center  
Virginia D. Clarkson—Cholula, Mexico  
Rev. Darlene Cohen—Russian River Zendo, CA  
Jundo James Cohen—Treeleaf Zen Center, Coconut Creek, FL  
Sharon & Michael Doucet—Acadiana Shambhala Group,  
Lafayette, LA  
Zoketsu Norman Fischer—Everyday Zen Foundation  
Bernie Glassman—Zen Peacemakers Circle International  
Gaelyn Godwin, Sensei—Houston Zen Center, Houston, TX  
Tova Green—Green Gulch Zen Center, Sausalito, CA  
Roshi Joan Halifax—Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, NM  
Elizabeth Hamilton—Zen Center San Diego, CA  
Rev. Wakoh Shannon Hickey—Buddhist Community,  
Duke University, NC  
Rev. Joan Hogetsu Hoerberichts—Heart Circle Sangha,  
Ridgewood, NJ  
Mushim Ikeda-Nash—Buddhist Peace Fellowship  
Stephanie Kaza—Dept. of Environmental Studies,  
University of Vermont  
Les Kaye—Zen Center of Mountain View, CA

Michael J. Kieran—Palolo Zen Center, Honolulu Diamond  
Sangha, HI  
Rev. Barbara Seirin Kohn—Austin Zen Center, TX  
Kenneth Kraft—Lehigh University  
Rev. Taigen Dan Leighton—Mountain Source Sangha, S.F.  
& Ancient Dragon Zen Gate, Chicago  
David Loy—Think Sangha, Japan  
Joanna Macy—Buddhist Peace Fellowship  
Rev. Genjo Marinello—Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji, Seattle  
Zen Temple, WA  
Rev. Fleet Shinryu Maull—Prison Dharma Network,  
Colorado Peacemaker Institute  
Mary Mocine—Vallejo Zen Center, CA  
Rev. Teijo Munnich—Great Tree Zen Women's Temple, NC  
Rev. Haju Murray—Zen Buddhist Temple, Ann Arbor, MI  
Rev. Wendy Egyoku Nakao—Zen Center of Los Angeles, CA  
Ginger Norwood—International Women's Partnership  
for Peace & Justice, Chiang Mai, Thailand  
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& Manzanita Village, Warner Springs, CA  
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Buddhists, Siam  
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Ocean Dharma Center, Minneapolis, MN  
Daniel Terragno—Rocks & Clouds Zendo, CA  
Katherine Thanas—Santa Cruz Zen Center, CA  
Robert A. F. Thurman—Department of Religion,  
Columbia University, NY  
Diana Winston—Spirit Rock Meditation Center, CA  
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# Prison Program

## Coming Home

by Michael Callahan and Hong Chingkuang

There is a basic human need to feel safe. But safety is a tricky thing in a capitalist society that is based on profit and scarcity. The problem is that the safety and comfort that some people feel entitled to undermines what others get. Consequently, the globalization of capital heightens the disparities between the rich and the poor, increases the policing of this divide, and privatizes safety. (One upshot of this trend is the gated community.)

Former prisoners face rampant discrimination in housing, healthcare, educational opportunities, and employment. They are condemned to live under the label of “ex-con” or “ex-felon” and not as a member of the larger community. In California, more than 70 percent of former prisoners with felony convictions are unemployed, which fuels cycles of disenfranchisement and incarceration.

BPF has a different way of thinking about former prisoners and safety. We believe people coming home have a right to a full life and should not bear the burden of a double sentence. As a Buddhist organization, we wish to cultivate understanding that is beyond false concepts and appearances. We believe that no person should be condemned to live without opportunities for growth and transformation.

The Coming Home Project we are currently developing here at BPF has three fundamental goals: 1) to create a space where people coming home from prison can deepen their practice and apply it through mindful living, 2) to build participants’ leadership skills and economic self-sufficiency, and 3) to create safe and just communities. More simply, we are practicing the Noble EightFold path.

Our Coming Home Project is a means to disarm the “prison mentality” that keeps former prisoners and community members imprisoned in distorted views that disable our basic human potential to transform thoughts, speech, and actions.

The prison industrial complex (PIC) seems a symptom of a very sick society. Its direct legacy to slavery highlights the enduring contradictions of democracy in this country. Today, a quarter of those imprisoned globally are caged in the U.S.—more than 2 million. This heavy reliance on the captor/keeper relationship deflects attention away from power imbalances in our economic, political, and social institutions and how these perpetuate inequality and violence. The public is rarely critical of the PIC because the “criminal” predominates the social imagination. Tough-on-crime politicians, the mass media, and the entertainment industry feed into this.

BPF recognizes the fact that the personal cannot be separated from the political and that systems of oppression such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalist exploitation create the material conditions for widespread violence in our society.

What constitutes the prison mentality that pervades our society? Who benefits from the fear it generates? How do we internalize this culture of punishment in our everyday lives? How does this address Buddha’s teaching of liberation and community? How do we collectively examine fears and assess risks in a way that ensures true safety, equality, and health for all people? These are the vital questions for BPF.

The image on the front cover characterizes the issues we are working on. Rather than addressing the root causes of problems in our society, resources are put into arming people, erecting walls, and encouraging greed, hate, and delusion.

Recently we’ve been involved in discussions about how Buddhist communities should engage prisoners who want to practice in their sanghas upon release. These prisoners have frequently developed relationships with sangha members through Buddhist ministry programs. We often hear how sangha members feel enriched by their experiences with prisoners. Yet tension arises and fear takes over when these very same prisoners come to sanghas to practice. This uneasiness provides a teachable moment.

We all have histories of violence. Some people have gone to prison for their violence. Others buy their way out. Some people understand their mistakes and change their behavior. Others get stuck in destructive patterns. The point is that it’s not very helpful to discriminate on the basis of our assumptions. To actually prevent violence we have to figure out ways to be mutually accountable to one another moment by moment and actively create the conditions of peace.

In order to make our communities safe for everyone we have to examine and challenge the ideologies that influence the way we think about safety, crime, and violence. We are calling on Buddhist communities to ensure that our sanghas don’t become another gated community! We encourage sanghas to create meaningful spaces to discuss these very important issues and to continue building the capacity of our communities to transform both personal and institutional forms of violence.

To this end, Buddhist ethics and precepts are a means to help us generate the wisdom and compassion that are necessary for our communities to flourish. In practice, they develop right view, which should never include discrimination against former prisoners. For discrimination of this kind immediately replaces the Buddha’s clear wisdom eye with the distorted lens of the prison mentality.

We leave you with the courageous vow of Earth Store Bodhisattva, which continuously inspires our work at the prison program:

“Until the hells are empty, I vow not to become a Buddha; Only after all living beings are saved will I myself attain Bodhi.”

*Namo amitabha.* ❖

*Please contact Michael or Hong at 510/655-6169 ext. 306 or 307 to learn more about our new program and how you can support its success.*

## BPF Chapters and Members Mark Hiroshima/Nagasaki Days

In August, 11 BPF chapters marked the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima/Nagasaki in 14 locations in the U.S. and Australia.

In New Mexico, BPF board member Joshin Althouse and director Maia Duerr joined *hibakusha* (survivors of the bombing), Roshi Joan Halifax, and others for a bell-ringing ceremony at the same time that the bomb was dropped in Hiroshima. On Saturday, August 6, the group held a daylong Bearing Witness meditation vigil near the Los Alamos Nuclear Lab, where the atomic bomb was created. Near Las Vegas, BPF staff member Alan Senauke was present at a retreat and teach-in at the Nevada Desert Test Site, location of over 900 nuclear weapons tests since the Cold War. And in California, the San Francisco BPF chapter offered a silent candlelight vigil and meditation witness at the gates of Livermore Nuclear Weapons Lab.

Some other events that BPF members helped to plan included a meditative peace walk in Montpelier, Vermont; a candlelight vigil and interfaith ceremony in Ann Arbor, Michigan; a contemplative commemoration in St. Petersburg, Florida, which included launching peace lanterns; and, in Sydney, Australia, the "Shadow Project"—an act of political art that represented the thousands of people in Japan who were literally burned into the ground when the bombs were dropped.



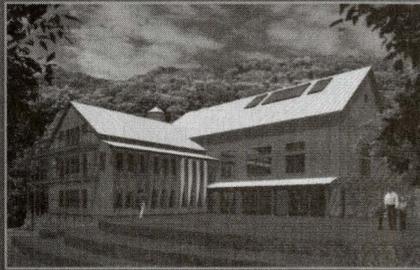
(above) August 6, 2005, Bearing witness vigil at Ashley Pond, Los Alamos, New Mexico (below) Sackcloth and ashes walk organized by Pax Christi.

*Turning Wheel* editor Susan Moon explained why BPF is involved: "Even though the horrific destruction of these two cities happened 60 years ago, the same kind of violence has the potential to happen today. Our government is still testing and manufacturing these bombs. As Buddhists, we need to speak out and help people remember that we're all connected to each other." ❖





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Led by Lisa Prajna Hallstrom, Ph.D. and Judith Ansara Gass, MSW  
3 Days: March 31 through April 2

**Exploring Precepts I: Zen Ethical Codes**

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**Exploring Precepts II: Zen Ethical Codes Follow-Up Investigation**

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For more information contact Erin Hill  
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Three BASE programs are starting (January-July, 2006), including a **Communication** BASE group for people using spoken or written communication in their service. This group will be led by *Turning Wheel* editor Susan Moon.

Costs are sliding scale (\$70-\$95 per month) for any program. Scholarships available for low-income participants. Applications available now:

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# BPF Chapters, Contacts, and Affiliates

**REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE:**  
Mike Fallarino (Albany, NY)  
herbalist@berk.com

**CONNECTICUT CHAPTER**  
Seth Segall  
(203) 758-2867  
seth.segall@yale.edu  
www.bpfct.org

**BOSTON AREA, MA**  
Joan Schwartz  
info@bpfboston.org  
or joan@bpfboston.org  
www.bpfboston.org

**CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS**  
Worcester, MA  
Clifford Reiss  
(508) 856-0970  
clifford.reiss@highstream.net

**PIONEER VALLEY**  
Western Massachusetts  
Emilie Woodward  
(413) 586-0474  
emiliewoodward@hotmail.com

**CENTRAL & JERSEY SHORE**  
Long Branch / Elberon, NJ  
Alan Drake  
(732) 241-3682  
cloudmountain@yahoo.com

**NEW YORK CITY**  
Judy Seicho Fleischman  
(212) 696-7238  
judyseicho@yahoo.com  
www.topica.com/lists/Buddhist\_Peace\_Fellowship\_NY  
http://bpfny.org/index.html

**ROCHESTER, NY**  
Jay F. Thompson  
(585) 576-6073  
info@rochesterbpf.org  
www.rochesterbpf.org

**VERMONT**  
Richard Dunworth  
(802) 228-2476  
ryoha@adelphia.net  
www.vtsangha.org/bpf/about.asp

**SOUTHERN U.S.**  
**Regional Representative:**  
Rick Ferriss (Tampa Bay, FL)  
rickfrss@earthlink.net

**WASHINGTON, DC**  
Rebecca Hines  
(301) 529-6158  
info@wbpf.org  
www.wbpf.org/index.asp

**BOCA RATON, FL**  
John Barber  
(561) 445-1548  
dodger8mo@hotmail.com

**TAMPA BAY, FL**  
Rick Ferriss  
(813) 238-9713  
rickfrss@earthlink.net  
www.bpf-tampabay.org

**TALLAHASSEE, FL**  
John Wark  
(850) 342-3370  
jtwork@hotmail.com  
http://webdharma.com/tbpf

**ATLANTA, GA**  
Denise Curcio  
(404) 934-4445  
or (770) 435-2911  
dbethsc@aol.com  
or teachese@hotmail.com

**TEXAS HILL COUNTRY (AUSTIN)**  
John Dinsmore  
(512) 452-5777  
jdinsmore@austin.rr.com  
www.austinbuddhist.org/bpf/index.html

**CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA**  
Marian Morgan  
(434) 295-9662  
mdm5f@yahoo.com

**RICHMOND, VA**  
Kevin Heffernan  
(804) 355-7524

**MW Regional Representative:**  
Cleveland, OH  
Lynne Brakeman

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER**  
Denver, CO  
Nancy Peters  
(720) 855-7544  
bpfdenver@yahoo.com

**CHICAGO BPF**  
Joshin Althouse  
(708) 445-1651  
bpf@zencommunity.org  
www.bpf.org/chicago

**SANTIKARO**  
(708) 848-4816  
skb@liberationpark.org

**BLOOMINGTON, IN**  
Jon Peters  
upaya108@yahoo.com

**SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN BPF**  
Jackie Kurtz  
734-255-2711  
jacqueline.kurtz@att.net

**TWIN CITIES, MN**  
Greta Gaard  
(612) 822-9875  
gaar0010@umn.edu

**CLEVELAND, OH**  
Mark McDermott  
(216) 651-5904  
mcdwizard@yahoo.com  
www.members.cox.net/bpfcleveland

**MADISON, WI**  
Kathy Derene  
608/233-4118  
kathy@derene.com

**MILWAUKEE, WI**  
Paul Norton  
(414) 961-9281  
pnorton42@hotmail.com

**WESTERN U.S. (other than CA)**  
**Regional Representative:**  
Heidi Enji Hoogstra  
(Portland, OR) enji@comcast.net

**TUCSON, AZ**  
Anina Lavee  
anninal@earthlink.net

**HONOLULU, HI**  
Gloria Staackman  
(808) 946-0550  
gloriant@hawaii.rr.com

**EAST HAWAI'I ISLAND**  
Unzan Pfennig  
(808).895.1533  
unzan@hotmail.com

**PORTLAND, OR**  
Heidi Hoogstra (Enji)  
(503) 236-5741  
bpfportland@yahoo.com  
www.bpfportland.com

**SEATTLE, WA**  
Elaine Waller-Rose  
(206) 725-7074  
elainewr@speakeasy.org  
www.bpf-seattle.org

**OLYMPIA, WA**  
South Sound BPF  
Robert Lovitt  
(360) 357-5409  
lovitthere@scattercreek.com

**CA Regional Representatives:**  
Margie and Charlie Calvert (Santa Cruz, CA), margie@elvenware.com and charlie@elvenware.com

**EAST BAY, CA**  
Faith Fuller/Bob Lyons  
(510) 655-6555  
dharmawork@yahoo.com  
www.bpf.org/eastbay

**SAN DIEGO, CA**  
Ava Torre-Bueno  
(619) 266-2442  
avatb@cox.net

**GREEN GULCH ZEN CENTER**  
Muir Beach, CA  
Tova Green  
(415) 384-0383  
tovagreen\_zen@yahoo.com

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
Lee Lipp  
(415) 864-4828  
sfzcllee@yahoo.com  
www.sfzc.org

**LOS ANGELES, CA**  
Penelope Thompson  
(213) 389-6991  
pbt9@aol.com

**CARMEL VALLEY, CA**  
Tassajara Mountain Monastery  
Judith Randall  
39171 Tassajara Rd.  
Carmel Valley, CA 93924

**NEVADA CITY, CA**  
Perissa Busick  
(530) 265-4274  
bpfnevadacity@yahoo.com

**SACRAMENTO, CA**  
Beverly Taylor  
(916) 442-4994  
BTaylor99@sbcglobal.net

**WEST BAY (PENINSULA), CA**  
Catherine Byers  
(650) 306-9264.  
cbyers47@yahoo.com  
www.groups.yahoo.com/group/WestBayBPFChapter

**SANTA CRUZ**  
Charlie and Margie Calvert  
(831) 425-7321  
charlie@elvenware.com  
www.bpfsc.org

**HUMBOLDT**  
Mitch Trachtenberg  
(707) 677-0762  
mjtrac@gmail.com

**LONG BEACH, CA**  
Dale Lanz  
(562) 425-0094  
dmlanz@gte.net

## CONTACTS

**COOPER LANDING, AK**  
David Rhode  
907/595-1314  
hylocichla@aol.com

# BPF Chapters, Contacts, and Affiliates

---

**VALDEZ, AK**  
Nancy Lethcoe  
907/835-5175  
nlethcoe@yahoo.com

**AVONDALE, AZ**  
Randy Nowell  
azbs@azbs.org

**RIVERSIDE, CA**  
Susan Nash  
951/928-3698  
snash22@earthlink.net

**NORTH IDAHO**  
Gretchen Albrecht-Hellar  
208/263-6893  
hellar@televar.com

**MARYLAND**  
Will Boggs  
410/252-9324  
info@bpfbaltimore.org

**SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN**  
Matthew Morris McCormick  
269/692-3692  
mattmcco@mac.com

**NEW JERSEY**  
Victor Forte  
forte@eticomm.net

**CAPITAL AREA, NY**  
Michael Fallarino  
518/828-8757  
herbalist@berk.com

**DURHAM/CHAPEL HILL, NC**  
Richard Wark  
919/451-8931  
rwark@nc.rr.com

**BOISE, ID**  
Michele Tae  
208/863-2562  
mtae@cmnthrd.com

**SANTA FE, NM**  
Stefan Laeng  
steflaeng@comcast.net

**GREENSBORO, NC**  
Daniel Rhodes  
336/274-1007  
thuonx@yaho.com

**COLUMBUS, OH**  
Sue Roy  
614/891-0886  
roy-43081@msn.com

**MANSFIELD, OH**  
Michael Minick  
Mansfield Zen Sangha  
419/774-8957  
zeninmansfield@earthlink.net

**ASHLAND, OR**  
Robert Carroll  
541/840-7532  
robtcarroll@yahoo.com

**RHODE ISLAND**  
Thomas Marino  
401/615-0243  
tmarino11@yahoo.com

**DENTON, TX**  
Mike Murdock  
940/591-0454  
mike.murdock@verizon.net

**SPOKANE, WA**  
Mary Webster  
509/535-1458  
maryw@icehouse.net

**YAKIMA, WA**  
Douglas C. Ray  
509/865-6045  
bodhimind@hotmail.com

**SPENCER, WV**  
Bob Wilson  
304/927-5833  
singingplow@igc.org

---

## INTERNATIONAL CHAPTERS & CONTACTS

**AUSTRALIA: MELBOURNE**  
Jill Jameson  
Ph: 61-3-9844-2289  
jamesonjg@bigpond.com

**AUSTRALIA: SYDNEY**  
Gillian Coote  
gillianc@acay.com.au

**BANGLADESH**  
BPF Bangladesh  
Brother Jarlath D'Souza  
St. Joseph's School  
Hsad Gate, Mohammedpur  
Dhaka, 1207 Bangladesh  
[www.suanmokkh.org/ds/bpfb1.htm](http://www.suanmokkh.org/ds/bpfb1.htm)

**CANADA: CALGARY**  
Jess Huffman  
403/282-7866  
403/852-0930  
jess@bpfcalgary.org  
[www.bpfcalgary.org](http://www.bpfcalgary.org)

**CANADA: VANCOUVER**  
Andrew Larcombe  
604/879-3650  
larcombe@telus.net

**CANADA: MANITOBA**  
Mark Courtney  
Winnipeg  
mbpw@shaw.com

**CANADA: ONTARIO**  
Karen Harrison  
Toronto  
416/604-5785  
torbpf@hotmail.com  
[www.geocities.com/torbpf](http://www.geocities.com/torbpf)

**SASKATOON, SASKATCHEWAN**  
Martin Kratcky  
306/384-5968  
brownrice@fastmail.us

**GERMANY**  
Arnt Büssing  
ArBuess@t-online.de

**INDIA**  
BPF Bangalore  
Siddhartha  
Ph: 91-80-5564436  
sidd@vsnl.com

**LADAKH**  
Ven. Bhikkhu Sanghasena  
c/o Mahabodhi Centre  
gyamsa\_retreat@yahoo.com  
POB 22, Leh, Ladakh  
194101 Himalaya, India

**ITALY: MILANO**  
Stefano Bettera  
39-02-36529056  
or 39-338-6888228  
stefanobettera@tin.it

**KOREA**  
Ven. Pomnyun Sunim  
pomnyun@jungto.org  
011-822-587-8990

**MEXICO**  
Ginger Clarkson  
011-52-222-229-2862  
mbr-vdc@yahoo.com

**NEW ZEALAND**  
Jarrod Clyne  
Dunedin, Otago  
021-256-3164 (mobile)  
03-466-7772  
jarrodclyne@hotmail.com

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

## AFFILIATES

**AMIDA TRUST**  
**THE BUDDHIST HOUSE**  
12 Coventry Road  
Narborough, Leicestershire  
U.K. LE19 2GR  
01162-867-476  
[www.amidatrust.com](http://www.amidatrust.com)

**U.K. NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS**  
Maitrisara/Pippa Bobbett  
Oxford, U.K.  
secretary@engagedbuddhists.co.uk  
018 577 7297

**FOUNDATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF BURMA**  
909 Montgomery St.  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
415/486-6527  
[www.foundationburma.org](http://www.foundationburma.org)

**GAY BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP**  
2215-R Market St.  
PMB #456  
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[www.gaybuddhist.org](http://www.gaybuddhist.org)

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"Masakazu" by Marc Lancet (See bio on page 3)

### Arguments Against the Bombing

consider the infinite fragility of an infant's skull,  
how the bones lie soft and open  
only time knitting them shut

consider a delicate porcelain bowl  
how it crushes under a single blow—  
in one moment whole years disappear

consider that beneath the din of explosions  
no song can be heard  
no cry

consider your own sky on fire  
your name erased  
your children's lives "a price worth paying"

consider the faces you do not see  
the eyes you refuse to meet  
"collateral damage"  
how in these words  
the world cracks open

*Lisa Suhair Majaj is a Palestinian American writer living in Cyprus. She has published poetry and prose in many journals and anthologies. Her books include three coedited collections of critical essays on Arab and "third world" women writers, and a poetry chapbook, These Words.*

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