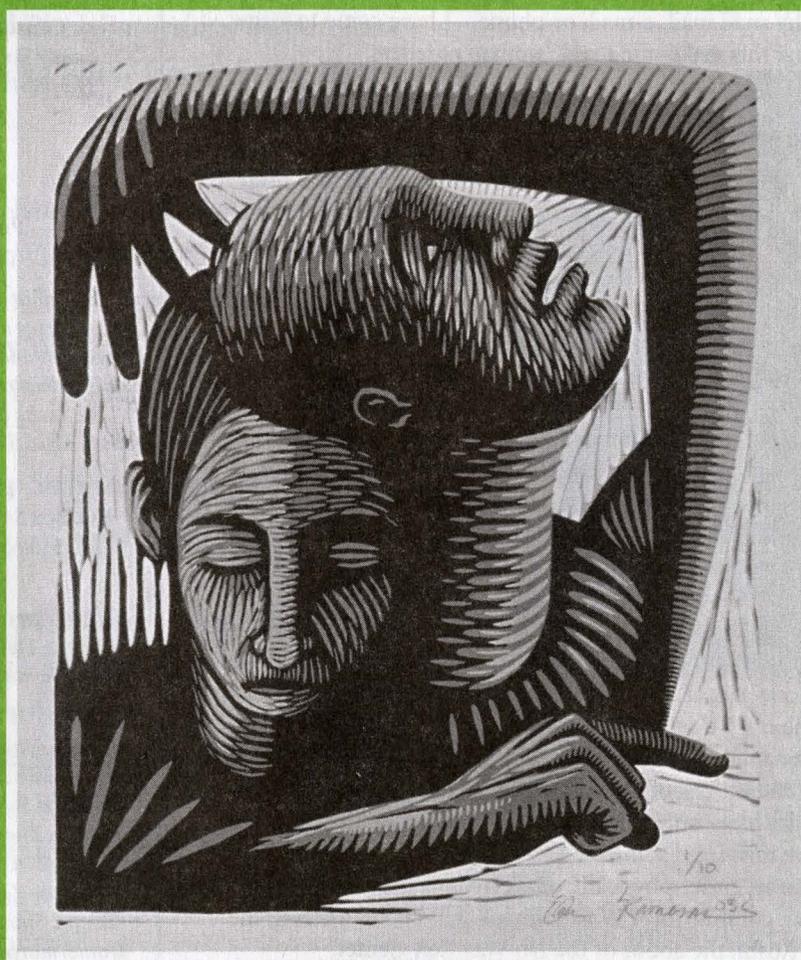


# TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



## Exchanging Self and Other

**Robert Aitken • Victoria Austin • Norman Fischer •  
Joseph Goldstein • Jack Kornfield • Earthlyn Manuel *and more...***



## Farewell from the Editor

When I applied for the job of editing the *Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter* (later renamed *Turning Wheel*), I told the two board members who interviewed me that I would commit to the job for at least a year. That was 17 years ago.

The main interests of my life at that time, besides my children, were my Buddhist practice, my writing, and peace work. Here was a job that miraculously combined all three. In the years that followed, I have continued to marvel at my good fortune—to have work doing all of the things I care about most, wrapped up together in one package. And being part of BPF has brought gifts, too: new learnings about *Buddhism*, collective reaching for *peace*, and lots and lots of *fellowship*.

When I was considering whether or not to take the job, I asked David Schneider, the outgoing editor, what he had liked most about this work, and he said “making connections with amazing people all over the world.” I’ve often thought of his words. Some of the most meaningful connections I’ve made are with people I’ve never met in the flesh, and yet, through our correspondence—by snail mail, e-mail, or phone—I have come to know them. (I like to think this makes me a real “woman of letters.”)

As a project-oriented person, I have enjoyed the tangibility of *Turning Wheel*. I can run my fingers over the many issues on BPF’s shelves and say, “Look what we’ve made together.” And it was definitely “together.” I wish we could all gather in a huge zendo and sit in a circle: BPF staff, board, volunteers, interns, columnists, contributing writers, the editorial committee, the various assistant editors, all the people whose names you see on the masthead and the contents page and the gratitude page at the end of the issue, as well as BPF members and *Turning Wheel* readers. Plus all the people who have ever been on the masthead and the contents page for the last 17 years. At the end of our silence, I would make nine deep bows to everyone, and most of all to the writers and artists who have trusted us with their work, often speaking up bravely on scary subjects. It’s been a privilege to be their midwife.

As I finish my bows, Maia Duerr steps up to take *Turning Wheel* into her capable hands. In 1999 I hired her, out of a large applicant pool, as *TW*’s assistant editor. We worked happily together for three years, until she decided to expand her horizons by taking a job in Massachusetts. As you can read on page 52, she came back to BPF as our executive director in 2004, and now, like a chicken coming home to roost, she is taking my place as *TW* editor (just one part of her new job description as communications director). There’s no one I’d rather see at the helm of this particular chicken coop, to mix metaphors. Maia will be working with managing editor Colette DeDonato and the rest of the *TW* family. I’ll miss being part of this family on an everyday basis, but I won’t miss the deadlines or the panic that comes up when I’ve misplaced someone’s manuscript.

I won’t be far away, either physically or electronically, and I’ve committed to a regular column for *TW* in which I will be channeling the teachings of Tofu Roshi, the abbot of the No Way Zen Center.

I admit to a certain proprietary feeling for *Turning Wheel*. Passing it on to Maia is a little like sending a child off to college. I’ve put my whole heart into *Turning Wheel*, without holding back, and now it needs to grow and change. Maia will impart new strengths to our journal. It’s time for me to let go and move on to other adventures. Nothing remains the same, but the wheel keeps turning. ❖ —Susan Moon

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### Next deadline for *Turning Wheel*—

Fall/Winter ’07: **Nourishment**. Deadline for submissions: **July 9, 2007**  
Send submissions of essays, poetry, drawings, or photographs to *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703, with SASE; or to <turningwheel@bpf.org>. We also welcome letters. Send to “Editor” at address above or via e-mail.

# TURNING WHEEL

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*Elan Kamesar is a San Francisco-based artist who grew up in and around Zen communities. He works mainly in linoleum cut and lithography.*

## Art

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**Are You Ready for Death?** In the Summer issue of *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly*, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche tells us how to prepare for death now, in order to take advantage of this greatest of all gaps. ♦ ALSO IN THE ISSUE: Jack Kornfield talks about the challenges and tensions that have accompanied Buddhism's spread to the West and the creative solutions that have emerged to meet them. Chan master Sheng Yen on the four steps to 'magical powers' and their importance on the path to buddhahood. A panel of teachers tackles the question of whether Western Buddhists are focusing too much on meditation and ignoring other important practices.

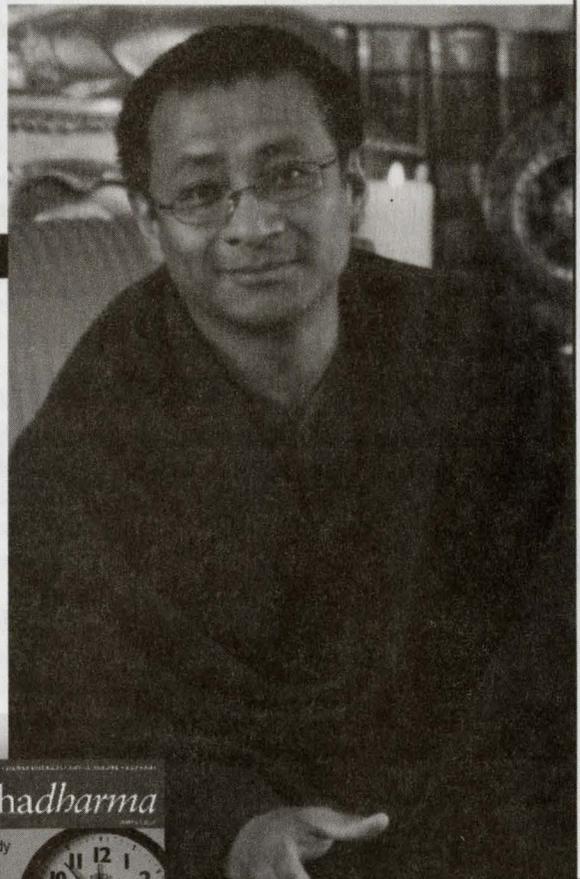
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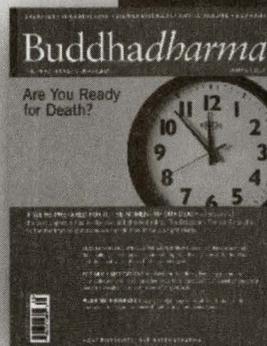
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## Letters

We welcome your responses to what we print. Write to *Turning Wheel*, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703-9906 or send us e-mail at <turningwheel@bpf.org>. Letters may be edited.

### Building Alliances to Address Racism (Spring '07)

Your racism issue was a great gift—and thanks for addressing the “elephant in the sangha room” so well. We “whites” have much to learn and unlearn.

—Grant Couch, West Lake Village, California

The first two lines of a poem I read years ago always stick with me as a guideline for antiracist work. Pat Parker, an African American woman who died of breast cancer in 1989, entitled her poem, “For a White Person Who Wants to Be My Friend.” It begins: “The first thing you do is to forget that I’m black. / Second, you must never forget that I’m black.” Accepting the paradoxical nature of these words can guide us in skillful work as allies.

—Sheila Martel, Leonardtown, Maryland

The article “Where the Rubber Meets the Road” left me with a deep appreciation for the work BPF does on both global and personal levels. This type of self-reflection and action-taking can be truly difficult and disheartening at times. But you have shown that no matter how hard the path is, it is truly fruitful. Whether or not a completely happy ending is possible, the trek is still the right thing to do.

—Jill Boone, San Jose, California

Mushim Ikeda-Nash’s openness in “Reaching Back in the Dark” let me in on an intimate piece of her family life. I feel a door to the very inner life of a family has been opened for me. It is a big help to me in my own life.

—Nyla Blair, Santa Rosa, California

Racism is a subject that needs to be considered by all human beings. As I read your issue, I felt that something important was left out of the discussion. Here are several assumptions that your writers made in their essays about racism:

- Racism is about white attitudes vs. attitudes of people of color.
- Racism is entirely a product of social conditioning.
- Racism as expressed in the United States is best dealt with through sensitizing whites to the evils of racist behavior.

I question these assumptions. I have seen racist attitudes among all the races. I question a polarized approach to confronting racist attitudes that does not recognize racism as a tendency of all of us. I hope future discussions of this topic will not be as bipolar as this one was.

—Richard Fidler, Traverse City, Michigan

I’ve been involved in antiracist work for about 10 years, working with the UNtraining (Untraining White Liberal Racism), and other organizations, as well as on my dissertation.

I particularly enjoyed the very personal, nondefensive stories of people grappling with their own racism or being the target of racism or white unconscious privilege, rather

than the abstract lecturing common to much antiracist literature. It is courageous to be frank about our own culpability or pain, and to read about it in the Buddhist framework of acceptance and forgiveness, rather than shame, guilt, or spiritual bypass, was wonderfully refreshing modeling.

I hope your publication leads many people to fearlessly look deeply into this area for themselves, without saying, “Oh, that doesn’t apply to me, I’m not a racist.”

—Nancy Arvold, Redwood City, California

I appreciated your glowing tribute to Diana Lion in the Spring '07 issue of *TW*. Having worked closely with Diana since 1998, I want to offer an additional piece that adds to the glow. In East Asian Buddhism, the ideogram for “heart” actually means “heart/mind.” Diana’s heart and mind of practice are inseparable, and her keen intelligence gives depth to all the work she did at BPF. As much as anyone I know, Diana has an unmatched grasp of systems of structural violence. BPF’s Prison Program, as developed and led by Diana, has all along been based on her analysis that the so-called criminal justice system is at the base of structural violence. So the work is not simply ministering to those behind bars but steadily advocating the deconstruction and transformation of prisons. Diana has consistently brought forth this keen understanding. We need her heart, mind, and body healed and back on the front lines. Meanwhile, her deep vision continues to inform our work.

—Alan Senauke, BPF, Senior Advisor

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# Farewell, but not Good-bye, to Susan Moon

by Melody Ermachild Chavis

In the summer of 1990, Susan Moon reached a fork in the road of her work life. She had been a Zen student since 1976, and in 1988 she had published *The Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi*, the hilarious wisdom of Sue's imaginary alter ego. Now, two opportunities were before her: either go to the Soviet Union for a year to research a book, or take on the editorship of the *BPF Newsletter*. Luckily for BPF, Sue stayed in Berkeley, and turned a simple little newsletter into what is today an internationally respected and award-winning journal of engaged Buddhism.

She went to work in the cramped little office overlooking a vacant lot of dirt and weeds on the grounds of Berkeley's Martin Luther King Middle School, space that BPF shared back then with the Gray Panthers. In 1992, the BPF newsletter became *Turning Wheel*, and Sue committed to a dependable quarterly schedule, building on the excellent work of her predecessor David Schneider, and his predecessor Arnie Kotler.

From the beginning, Sue's vision was to foster the voices of grassroots activists—"the stories of people who might not otherwise be heard or published," she said. If an activist had something to say, Sue would help the person get it down on paper to benefit others.

Sue began to feature a theme for each issue in 1994. The first theme was Practicing Buddhism in Prison. Among the many writers Sue nurtured was death-row inmate Jarvis Masters, whose work first appeared in *TW*.

No theme has been too complex or fraught for *TW* and its editor. Gay and Lesbian Buddhists (1994), Sexual Misconduct in Buddhist Sanghas (1996), Class (2000), and many, many other topics bravely took readers into difficult territory. *TW* pioneered discussions of race in the U.S. Buddhist community with entire issues—not just single articles—on Race and Racism, Buddhists of Asian Descent, Buddhism in Las Américas, and Black Dharma. Sue also added regular columnists on environment, family practice, and dharma history.

For each issue, Sue wrote an editorial, a gemlike window into the theme. Zen Master Tofu Roshi also contributed his wisdom, notably on Slow Fasting for the Food issue and Technodharmacology for the Technology issue. Some of the best writing in *Turning Wheel* has been by Sue herself, something her readers hope will continue. She has written numer-

ous pieces that model the deep personal narratives she favors as an editor. Home, wrongful convictions, aging, karma, and loneliness are just a few of her topics. Her interests are broad, yet she drills deeply into the telling details.

Sue interviewed Buddhist leaders such as Joanna Macy and Robert Aitken Roshi, resulting in pieces that illuminate their spirits and their lives of practice.

Honoring many forms, Sue always welcomed poetry, photography, cartoons, and drawings. At BPF board meetings, she would proudly fan out the growing pile of beautiful magazines to be admired. In 2001, this literary-style quarterly received the Utne Reader Alternative Press Award for Best Spiritual Coverage.

In 2002, with a grant from Judith Stronach, Sue founded the Young Writers Award to give a series of \$500 prizes to writers under 30. And in 2004, *Not Turning Away*, an anthology of 25 years of *Turning Wheel*, edited by Sue, was released by Shambhala Publications.

Sue accomplished all of this not secluded in a literary tower but as an active member of BPF's staff, working closely with colleagues to shape the organization's purpose and strategy.

Her steady guidance will be missed as much as her editorial panache. A busy activist, she has received "lay entrustment," a lay version of dharma transmission, from Norman Fischer.

That barren field of weeds at M.L.K. School that used to be the view from BPF's old office window has become a perfect analogy for Sue's accomplishments. Today, that field has been transformed into a fertile vegetable garden, and our old office is a beautiful kitchen where students prepare meals from produce they've grown. Similarly, *Turning Wheel* has blossomed under Sue's determination to nourish thousands of Buddhists living in many nations and practicing in every tradition, inside and outside of prisons. What a lot one person can do in 17 years if she puts her mind and heart and soul into it! More than 65 times, Sue made an issue of *Turning Wheel* happen, with faithful constancy and reliable creativity. We give thanks to her. ❖

*Melody Ermachild Chavis is a writer, a private investigator, and a Zen practitioner living in Berkeley, California. A former board member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, she contributes frequently to Turning Wheel.*



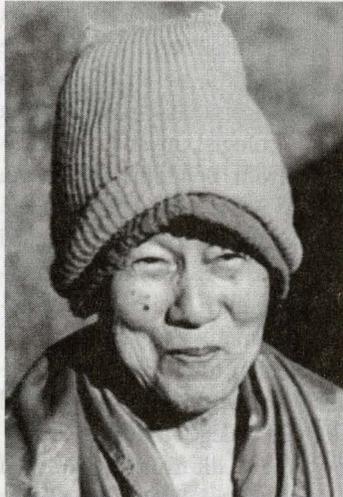
Sue and Paloma (see page 21). Photo by Arcelia Hernandez

# Indra's Net

*In the image of the "jeweled net of Indra," found in the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels, each of which reflects all the others. All our lives touch each other, as symbolized by Indra's net.*

With sadness, we devote this Indra's Net column to honoring three wonderful people who have recently passed away, all of them important to BPF. And we remember that we are still connected to them in the network of jewels.

photo by Alan Senauke



## **In Memoriam Samdech Preah Ghosananda 1929–2007 Supreme Cambodian Buddhist Patriarch**

Samdech Preah Ghosananda, one of the few senior monks to survive the Cambodian Killing Fields, died on March 12, 2007, in Northampton, Massachusetts. Regarded

as the "Gandhi of Cambodia," Maha Ghosananda was a well-respected peace activist, scholar, and teacher. Fellow Buddhists elected him as a Supreme Patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism in 1988. For his contributions to world peace and reconciliation, he was nominated six times for the Nobel Peace Prize, and was the recipient of many other world peace awards. Maha Ghosananda was also a member of BPF's International Advisory Council. Maha Ghosananda was born in Takeo, Cambodia, in 1929. He was initiated into the Cambodian Buddhist Order in 1943. In 1969, he received a doctorate from Nalanda University in Bihar State, India. He was living in a monastery in southern Thailand when a five-year civil war ended in Cambodia in 1976, with Pol Pot establishing what he called Democratic Kampuchea. Within days, almost the entire population of Phnom Penh, the capital, had been marched into the countryside to do forced labor. Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge closed about 3,600 Buddhist temples throughout the country. By the time Vietnamese forces overthrew the regime 44 months later, only about 3,000 of Cambodia's 60,000 Buddhist priests were still alive.

During the Pol Pot regime, when more than 1.5 million people lost their lives, Maha Ghosananda traveled from one refugee camp to another along the Thai border, creating Buddhist temples and training new monks. He helped survivors recover by teaching meditation and advocating the need for restoring peace. In 1992, Maha-Ghosananda led a 16-day pilgrimage across the country, gathering followers from village after village, in the first of what became known as the Dhammayietra Walks for Peace and Reconciliation—

45-day treks of some 650 kilometers. He continued to lead these annual nonviolent peace walks for many years, through areas strewn with land mines, as well as through the strongholds of warring factions. The Dhammayietra still continues every spring. (For more information, e-mail <012924248@mobitel.com.kh.>)

Over the years, Maha Ghosananda also met with world religious and political leaders, emphasizing the need for global support for the Cambodian humanitarian crisis. His strong presence at U.N.-brokered peace talks reminded participants of the Buddhist teaching "Hatred can never be appeased by hatred...it can only be appeased by love."

Maha Ghosananda said that "loving one's oppressors—Cambodians loving the Khmer Rouge—may be the most difficult attitude to achieve. But it is the law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the cycle. Reconciliation means that we see ourselves in the opponent; for what is the opponent but a being in ignorance, and we ourselves are also ignorant of many things."

In 1998, the Niwano Peace Foundation of Japan awarded Maha Ghosananda its peace prize, saying in its citation that "through these walks, Maha Ghosananda became a bridge of peace—bringing together people who had been separated by war—and wiped away their fears with his call for peace."

Pointing out that Maha Ghosananda had promoted non-violence as a remedy for other ills, including deforestation and the use of land mines, the foundation also said, "In both spirit and deed, he has shown the way to a fundamental resolution of regional and ethnic strife around the world."

We at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship mourn the loss of Samdech Preah Ghosanda and we celebrate his quiet, smiling compassion and courage. We can hear his contagious laugh. We remember him as a teacher who was light as a cloud and strong as steel. BPF was fortunate to have had his support. Peace is every step. —Gail Bailey and Alan Senauke

### **Two Points of Clarification**

In the tribute to Diana Lion (Spring '07), it wasn't made clear that

1) her diagnosis is chronic Lyme disease and CFIDS (chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome).

2) the work she has been doing on the Internet is facilitating groups for people with chronic illness.

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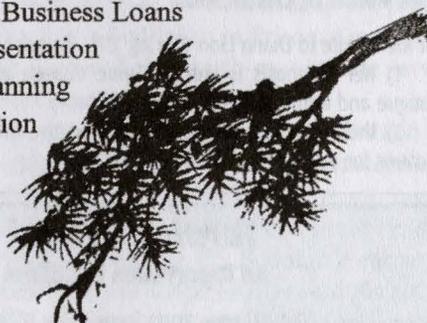
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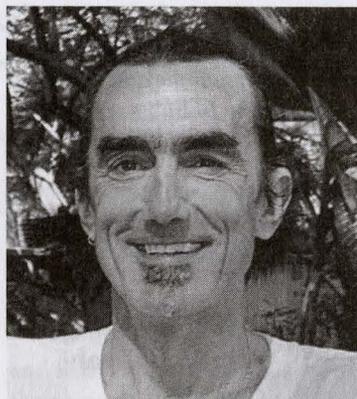


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## In Memoriam Wim Aspeslagh 1956–2006

Wim Aspeslagh passed away on December 30, 2006, at the age of 50 from complications surrounding advanced leukemia. The illness took him by surprise and he continued to

live only a few weeks after his diagnosis. He was a long-term Buddhist practitioner, activist, ecologist, mystic, and consciousness pioneer. Originally from Belgium, he was an early member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and an attendee and presenter at International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) conferences in Asia. He worked on international development, urban planning, sustainability, global unity, education reform. Eight times a lead faculty member at Living Routes, a program that took students to sustainable communities around the world, he transformed the hearts and minds of countless college students.

He was an instructor at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), an NGO consultant, and a lecturer in human rights environment and sustainability issues. He worked closely with Joanna Macy, helping to teach Despair and Empowerment work internationally. He was a dzogchen practitioner and an avid student of music, dance, celebration, and culture. In 2001, Wim moved to Auroville, India, where he truly found his home in a sustainable spiritual and political community. In Auroville, he helped to found the Cosmos Café, to which he brought an international and environmentalist perspective in the spirit of what he called "global unity."

I met Wim at an INEB conference in 1998 and we immediately became friends. I was drawn to his deeply integrated sense of environmental justice and dharma. He was a peer and a colleague: I remember discussing engaged Buddhism, teaching and meditating together, and having a lot of fun in the process! He taught me a huge amount. He had mastered the art of balancing life and work. He followed his heart to do work he was passionate about, and he relaxed through dance, music, and art wherever he went.

I learned from a mutual friend that at Wim's Auroville memorial, strewn flowers lined a path two kilometers long that led to his home, where the memorial took place. A parallel memorial was held in Belgium at the same time as the one in India and was attended by his family and friends. He is survived by a large extended family of dear ones. Many of those who attended the memorials traveled from afar—from Brazil, Nigeria, Germany, France, and the Netherlands—to say good-bye. He will be deeply missed.

—Diana Winston



**In Memoriam**  
**Barbara Hirshkowitz**  
1949–2007

Barbara Hirshkowitz, 57, longtime member of the BPF extended family, died of pancreatic cancer March 2, 2007, at her home in west Philadelphia.

Barbara was on the BPF board during the 1990s and served for several years as *TW*'s first

book review editor, sharing her love of books with us. As a matter of fact, her passion for reading informed her whole life: she was publications director for the Friends General Conference and cofounder of Books Through Bars, a program that provides books to prisoners. In 2002, to raise funds for Books Through Bars, she had the creative idea of starting an annual read-a-thon in which she and others devoted a weekend to reading, for per-page pledges of money from sponsors. Each year, I looked forward to the reading list Barbara sent out ahead of time, and to the book report that followed the event. This year, asking her sponsors to be generous, she commented, "This may not be the last read-a-thon for Books Through Bars, but it will certainly be the last one for me." The event took place over Presidents' Day weekend, less than two weeks before she died, and she raised \$15,000 by reading 1,200 pages.

All her adult life, Barbara was a committed and generous peace activist. She practiced with the Buddhist order Nipponzan Myohoji, and joined pilgrimages and peace walks with them in both Japan and the United States.

When she was diagnosed with cancer, she began sending out an e-mail newsletter through a website called CarePages, about her life, her treatment, and her state of mind and body. I found her appreciation of life remarkable and inspiring. In spite of her difficulties with pain management, and the discouraging downward course of her illness, she continued to find joy in her life and to dedicate herself to giving to others. A month before she died she wrote to me, "It is amazing to ponder how many books I won't read and movies I won't see. Yet somehow it doesn't matter. I don't feel regrets. Sometimes I think, 'Well I'm ready,' and then realize that secretly I'm hoping to grow and taste a garden tomato...so I laugh. It's only thinking of the kids and all the moments of their lives that I will miss that makes me sad deep down."

Barbara is survived by her mother, brother, several cousins, and her companion Steve Beuret, as well as many friends. We'll miss her at BPF, and we're grateful for everything she gave us. ❖

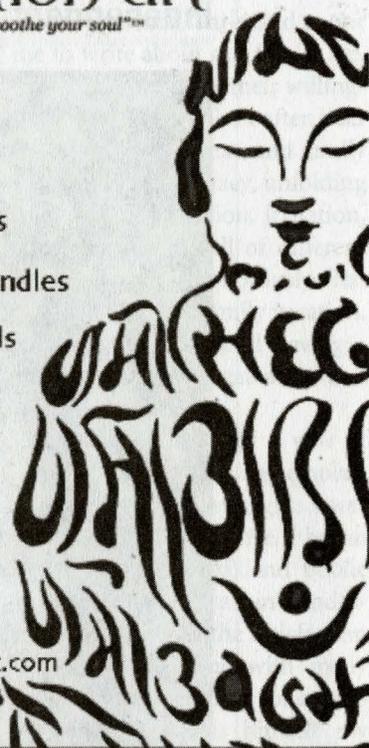
—Susan Moon

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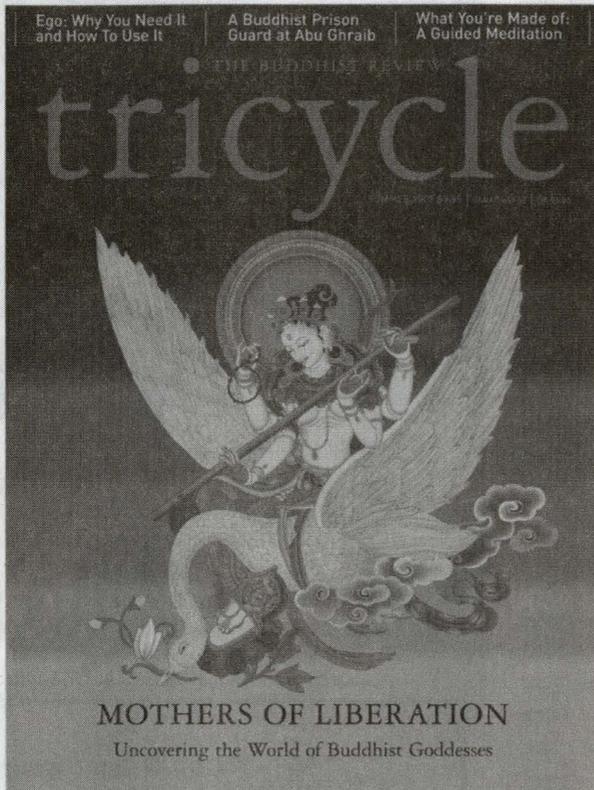
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## Family Practice

### Letting Go, Moving On

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

So live in love.  
Do your work.  
Make an end of your sorrows.

—*The Dhammapada*, trans. Thomas Byrom

My mother and father gave their fourth and last baby to my mother's older sister and her husband, who had no children. Mary was raised as a beloved only child, as my cousin, in Hawaii, far from my family in Ohio. It was a totally open adoption, probably somewhat unusual for its time (the early sixties), and I've always treasured my relationship with my sister-cousin and marveled that my mom and dad were able to give so selflessly. Due to complications, Mary was born prematurely and was placed in an incubator for the first part of her life, and my dad would go and visit her in the hospital. In the latter part of his life he said that although he'd visit the baby, amazed at how tiny she was, he never touched her, because "If I did, I would have wanted to keep her." My parents knew how to love and let go, and they passed that lesson on to me.

I published my first Family Practice column in the Summer 1997 issue of *Turning Wheel*. It's now a time of growth and transition in my family, as Chris and I enter a new period in our lives as parents and marriage partners, heading toward "senior" discounts at the movies, while our son Joshua prepares to leave for college. Writing this quarterly column has given me joy, helped me to see my family's story through fresh eyes, and connected me to readers through our common experiences of life passages such as a grandparent's death and a child's growing up. At the time I began writing this column, my son was 8; now he's 18. Today, when I took Josh to the pediatrician for his well exam, the nurse asked him, not me, to initial the consent form for his TB test and meningococcal shot. So it feels like a good time to pass this column on to another writer with different experiences and perspectives.

My gratitudes are many. This column has been totally supported by skilled editor, mother, and grandmother Susan Moon; by my aforementioned cousin, Rev. Mary Jiko Nakade, who is a mother; by many kind readers and Buddhist teachers including Bhante Suhita Dharma, Norman Fischer, Wendy Johnson, Nelson Foster, Kyozan Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Kenneth Tanaka, Jack Kornfield, Victoria Shosan Austin, Mayumi Oda, Larry Yang, and Haju Sunim; and by Robert Aitken Roshi, who suggested long ago that "you should write

about your experience as a mother, submit it to local parenting newsletters, and work your way up as a writer from there." Although originally trained as a poet, since becoming a mother I've followed his advice in my writing.

I am immensely grateful to my partner, Chris, and to our son, Joshua, for allowing me to write about our family life. My family's extraordinary generosity has been their willingness to let go of privacy. In American Zen circles I often hear the word "intimacy" used in a spiritual context, and family life revolves around the exploration of intimacy, unfolding over time with all of its many faces—affection, irritation, joy, anger, grief, boredom, and the push-pull of different needs. Years ago I pointed out, only half-humorously, that the problem with the family vacation is the family vacation. Everyone wants to do something different, and having a fight while spending money on a trip "to get away and relax" feels deeply stupid. That's the way it is.

My early Buddhist training, which included a vow of

poverty and simple living, emphasized passing on whatever gifts I was fortunate enough to receive. I began volunteering in the Oakland public schools when Josh was in kindergarten, and have had the satisfaction of teaching and being with many young people, including one who now humorously calls himself my "Guatemalan son." I couldn't be happier that the love and caring I've felt for my family can be extended to my community, and this has been the natural direction of my Buddhist practice for the past 18 years.

The great work of wisely manifesting love begins before we are born and continues long after we have passed away. That is not only my most fervent

belief, it has been my spiritual experience. We work at it, even in our sleep. We make scary mistakes, including big ones that hurt others deeply. And still the alarm goes off in the morning, and it's time for work and school and washing dishes until it's time to do other things together, including sickness, old age, and death. I can't conceive of anything more profound and ordinary, more terrifying and more fun.

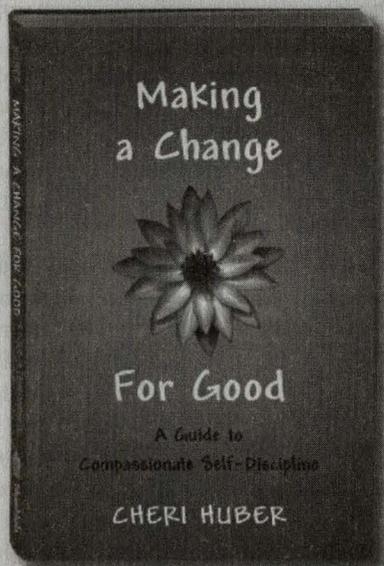
People in Hawaii say "Aloha," which means both hello and good-bye, or "until we meet again." Being Buddhist, I actually don't believe we can ever get away from one another, so saying good-bye is only for politeness. Better to say "Aloha," with palms together, and to thank you for reading and thus participating in this column over the past 10 years. Until we meet again. ❖

*Mushim Ikeda-Nash has taught meditation retreats for people of color at Manzanita Village, Vallecitos Mountain Refuge, and Spirit Rock Meditation Center. She is a board member of the new East Bay Meditation Center and publishes poetry under her secular name, Patricia Y. Ikeda.*



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—Cheri Huber



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## History

### Geshe Chekawa Ministers to Lepers

by Diane Ames

A crowd of monks did prostrations as the great lama strode into the hall, followed by his retinue of senior disciples. He mounted his throne of brocade cushions to give teachings. A hush fell. Not an unusual scene in 12th-century Tibet.

Then again, maybe it was. A couple of those most senior disciples, the ones granted the privilege of sitting behind the master, had the horrific disfigured features, the caved-in noses and clawlike hands, of leprosy. One of them, a woman paralyzed by the disease, had been carried to her seat by the lama's own brother. There could be only one explanation: the lama was Geshe Chekawa.

Geshe Chekawa (1101–1175) probably started his spiritual career as a Nyingma monk. He soon began searching for someone to teach him about Mahayana mind training, the collection of practices that cultivate the selfless awakened mind of the bodhisattva. When he chanced to encounter a short text called *Eight Verses of Training the Mind*, he decided that its author, Geshe Langri Tangpa of the Kadampa (later called Gelugpa) School, must be the teacher he was looking for. However, the great lama had recently died. Only after a nine-year search did Chekawa find an equally qualified guru, Geshe Sharawa, also of the Kadampa School. After studying with Sharawa for some years, he eventually became a recognized geshe in his own right, still remembered for writing the spiritual classic *Seven-Point Mind Training*.

He is also remembered because of his ministry to lepers. Not content to merely lecture about compassion, he began to distribute food to local lepers who had been driven out of their communities because of the fear and revulsion their disease inspired. He thought it natural to give them teachings and meditation instruction—and was amazed at the progress some of them made. Soon lepers were flocking to Geshe Chekawa from all over Tibet. His house was transformed into a veritable leprosarium where these unfortunate victims of the disease received physical and spiritual sustenance. At least two lepers were apparently numbered among his closest disciples.

We now know that the devotion of Geshe Chekawa's leper students may have been inspired in part by the medical benefits of the meditation practice he taught. Leprosy attacks the nervous system, among other things. Thus sufferers often lose all sensation in the parts of their skin covered by the hallmark lesions. Many also suffer serious chronic pain, sometimes in the form of a constant sensation of burning. And the mental stress that their condition causes is unimaginable. Twentieth-century research has documented the value of meditation in the management of chronic pain and stress. When they began to feel better, they must have thought their compassionate lama had worked a miracle. One could make a case that he had. ❖

# Ecology

## Following in Their Footsteps

by Stephanie Kaza

Always there are those who have gone before. Taking one step after another, they make a path visible to others. Teachers, writers, parents, leaders—we follow in their footsteps hoping for guidance along the way. A few useful words, a hand outstretched, a glance of kindness—these say, “keep going—the way is calling you.”

In the arena of Buddhism and the environment, Gary Snyder is one such hiker. His latest collection of essays, *Back on the Fire*, carries the feeling of one who has seen many things and is enjoying the full sweetness of life. For more than 50 years he has been climbing mountains, making community, and being a modern Zen bard of all things wild. His path is built of big-heart energy; anyone is welcome to join him in the grand celebration. For Snyder, that call means a good spirited fight on behalf of life, challenging the forces of destruction with fierce intention.

How do writers and artists join in defending the earth against wanton wastefulness? Snyder suggests their path is to “bear witness,” using the two magic gifts they have been given. The first is the *mirror of truth*; the second is the *heart of compassion*, which Snyder says is “the ability to feel and know the pains and delights of other people, and to weave that feeling into their art.” It is the calling of writers and artists to explore the territory of wild mind—that which reflects “the larger truth of our ancient selves, of our ancient animal and spiritual selves.”

The artist guide makes art that points to this wildness, this Big Mind, this world in all its grand fullness and mystery. Finding that wild mind in the works of a fellow being, we are called to follow, to come explore too. The adventure is alluring, the possibilities rich and rugged. For Snyder the poet and storyteller, it is wildness that gives “heart, courage, love, spirit, danger, compassion, skill, fierceness, and sweetness—all at once—to language.” The language illuminates the path, adds radiance to our seeing, suddenly makes clear what had been obscured by distraction.

One of Snyder’s essays takes up the “New World Disorder,” our modern destruction saga across eons of civilizations, searingly poignant for those of us worrying about the fate of humanity—and, for that matter, the fate of all the rest of the natural world that we impact with such a heavy footprint. As Snyder says, it is becoming more and more obvious that “nature and human ethics are not unconnected.” We might ask, what’s a bodhisattva to do about all this? Snyder invites us to “find the trick of weaving civilized culture and wild nature into the fabric of the future”—a rather daunting challenge. With species going extinct, oil running out, and glaciers melting rapidly, we wonder if we can find the path to a sustainable future. And yet, as a fellow traveler, he offers a hand: “Stay the course, my friends.”

This shaman dancer poet calls us to take action, find our song, and develop the powerful intention of sitting for all

beings. If you are to follow in his footsteps as a writer artist advocate for nature, you must become “a lover of that vast world of energies and ecologies,” a teller of stories that awaken the heart of compassion. This is no small hike. It is more like a life project in wayfinding, a continuous returning to wild mind, to truth-telling. In this fierce dedication, Snyder evokes Fudo the Wisdom-King, the dharma-protector, blue-faced and glowering on the cover of the book, enveloped in flames—the tough and unrelenting guardian of the path. This is what it will take to follow in these footsteps: an immovable commitment to the work, the real work at hand, calling to us, demanding everything our practice can muster. ❖

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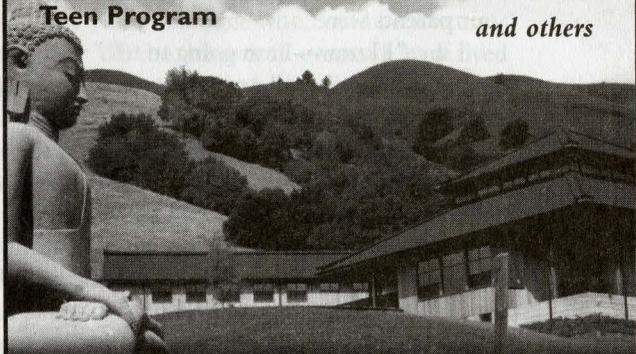
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# Beyond Trauma

by Annette Herskovits

Our family broke apart in early 1943. My sister, age 13, and I, not yet 4, were sent to a foster home some 100 miles from our home in Paris; my brother, 17, found work as a farmhand nearby. My parents stayed in our apartment and my father continued working as a typesetter. They hid from the authorities, then conducting roundups of Jews, by sleeping in a room separate from the apartment with a door that opened directly onto the building's stairwell.

Early on the morning of May 29 (a neighbor later told my brother), there was a knock on the door: "Police!" And a voice yelled, "Open up! Open up! We know you're there!" My father, a strong man, climbed onto the roof from the windowsill—the apartment was on the top floor—but my mother could not follow. So he climbed back down. They were taken to Drancy, a camp near Paris where French police held Jews before their deportation to the east. Three weeks later they were put on a train to Auschwitz.

Later, my brother found out that it was the concierge who had informed the police, in this case the Special Service on Jewish Affairs, that my parents were staying in the building.

Today, I can write these words knowing they will enter the world and that I have no control over where they will spread or how readers might respond. I still experience the anxiety I have always known and the habitual reflex of protecting myself by dissociation. "Someone" writes these words, but "I" am not fully aware of what they mean.

I learned about the dangers of mentioning the fate of my parents in that first foster home, a farm where many children were boarded. One day we were all sitting on the grass, and one child asked my sister where our parents were.

I say: "I know—I am going to tell."

"You must not tell, you must not tell," says my sister. "If you tell, I will slap you."

"They are in a concentration camp," I say anyway. She slaps me.

Hard to know what goes on in the mind of a four-year-old in such circumstances. Was I bragging about "knowing" what someone had mentioned in hushed tones? Or was I trying to find out what this mysterious place was—a "concentration camp"?

Eventually, thanks to my brother, a clandestine rescue network took charge of my sister and me. While waiting for the false papers we needed before being placed with

foster parents, we stayed in a shelter run by Catholic nuns. There, I was taught a new, French-sounding name, "Annette Escande," and instructed never to mention my true name. My brother, on his occasional visits, tested me: "What is your name?" I did not want that new name, but breathing in the adults' fears and overhearing their conversations about *les Allemands* ("the Germans"), I understood that revealing my true name to strangers was dangerous. So I said "Escande."

Then, one day, thinking that if my brother was asking again, after he'd asked so many times, it meant my own name was safe again, I said, with hesitant hope, "Herskovits." He got very angry.

From the time I left my parents' home until the end of the war, fear was with me constantly. It is present in all the episodes engraved in my memory. The central event is the day my brother arrives at the farm on his bicycle, sobbing. I ask our foster mother why; she says he has fallen from his bicycle. But that makes no sense—I have never seen my cocky brother sob.

In my mind, that was the day I knew my parents had been taken, that something terrible had happened to them. Some 56 years later, my brother confirmed my memory: he had come sobbing, on his bicycle, then gone into the woods with my sister to talk about my parents' arrest and what they might do.

Later, in one of several foster homes I passed through, I hear adults talk about Germans raiding houses and taking people away. What will I do if they come for me? There is a terra-cotta vase in the courtyard big enough to hold me. I imagine climbing into it. If the Germans come, will there be time to hide? I listen through the day for noises at the front door.

\* \* \*

Living in fear over such a long time, combined with the losses—of parents, of the presence of my brother and sister, of the abundant love and attention they had all given me, of home and safety—left a complex injury. It felt as if a black hole inside me captured most of my attention, keeping me on alert all the time and preventing me from being present to what was happening right now. The dark heavy mass held memories of the war years, stories of horrendous cruelty and an incomprehensible catastrophe. At its center was the place into which my parents had disappeared and which we children had escaped by some miracle.

Growing up, I could not explore or speak of that world. Ever-present anxiety dulled other sensations and feelings. I felt tied up and paralyzed, inept; I

thought of myself as a bad person, someone who had to hide her real nature, someone who could not be frank, open, spontaneous, and affectionate.

A silent, sad, and constricted child is not easy to like. I was lonely and had no friends. School was the only place where I stood out and teachers liked me, but I knew the “good pupil” was a fraud—I was hostile to my adoptive parents, who never spoke with me about my past and were unaware of my true feelings.

This inability to connect with others became more painful as I grew into adulthood. Being alone with someone else was excruciating, even for 10 minutes. My mind froze; I did not know what to say. My interlocutor would soon flee. My silence and clumsiness met with sarcasm from a cousin and his circle—sharp, witty, budding intellectuals I wished to have for friends.

In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman writes, “Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion.” Few understood this when I was 20.

From time to time, I tried to break through to freedom, to a place where I could talk easily, experience joys and sorrows instead of a uniformly dull and fearful emotional state, and inspire immediate affection in those I encountered. I reached for deliverance by re-creating in imagination and sometimes more concretely my own losses or the death of my parents. Herman describes powerlessness as the essential insult of trauma; “reenactment” is a spontaneous attempt at healing, at restoring “a sense of efficacy and power” by making things come out differently.

Confused ideas about Buddhist renunciation mixed with this compulsion to relive the past. Once, I spent an entire night imagining step-by-step the final journey of my parents. I saw that part of the horror must have been the thought that their children might encounter the same fate.

Another time, I walked the streets of Paris for several days, dropping along the way everything I carried—purse, IDs, jewelry. Eventually the police found me lying on the sidewalk at the corner of some building. I am not sure how, but they found my adoptive father. I spent the next two months in a mental hospital.

\* \* \*

I immigrated to the United States in my late twenties, went to graduate school, did postdoctoral research, then started teaching in a college at age 46. Lecturing was terribly difficult. I felt as if I were in a bubble, aware of the smallest sign of displeasure from the students yet unable to adapt my delivery to their

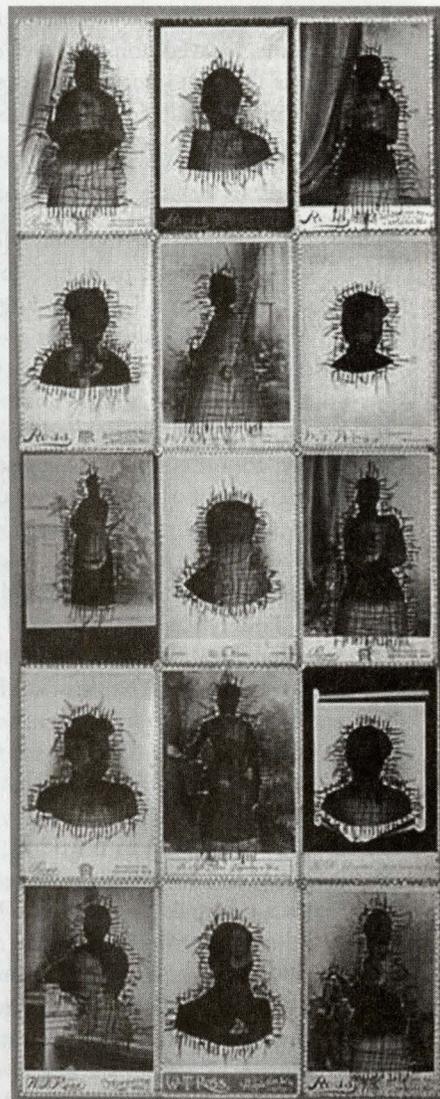
reactions. But I kept trying—again, I now realize, trying to repair the traumatic injury by making myself fully visible to an audience and exercising power and control instead of cowering.

Yet, over the years, close and warm personal relationships and the protective envelope of Buddhist groups, lectures, and retreats helped me gain some trust in the world and myself. But I still could not find the words or the appropriate emotional tone to speak about my war experiences beyond one sentence (“My parents died”), even to my husband. The memories were, literally, unspeakable.

December 1990 was a turning point. Distraught by the rumble of the approaching Gulf War, I sought professional help, and through a Buddhist priest, met a wonderful psychiatrist. There was something profoundly intelligent, clear, kind, and attentive about her. She was a midwesterner of Catholic descent, and much younger than I, but despite our very different backgrounds, I found in her, after all those years, someone who could be a witness to the reality of the historical events I had lived through and the wounds they had inflicted on me, and who could also provide protection from the terror held in the memories I brought forth.

For a long time, I spoke only of losses and atrocities. But after a while I started wondering how my sister and I had survived and realized that some people had risked their lives to save ours. The perception of human beings as a dangerous indistinct mass started to crumble, and my fear of mortal danger associated with speaking out lessened.

In 1992, I wrote an article about my childhood as a faculty contribution to an issue of the college news-



*Persona*,  
by Lisa Kokin

*Lisa Kokin, whose work has been exhibited internationally, is a recipient of a California Arts Council Fellowship and a Eureka Fellowship from the Fleishhacker Foundation. To see more of her work go to [www.lisakokin.com](http://www.lisakokin.com).*

paper on racism. Unable to face colleagues and students, I stayed home for two days. When I returned, I was met with curiosity and empathy—affirming my intuition that opening oneself to the public gaze could lead to recovery.

\*\*\*

In 1997, I left academics, and the 10 years since have brought me more stability and peace of mind. I write and speak in public about my war experience, about Palestine-Israel, and against the demonizing of Arabs and Muslims. This work answers my deepest desire—that of playing a part in fostering reconciliation across the artificial and murderous boundaries of nation, ethnic group, and religion. It has reconnected me to others and to myself. I have found new friends—Muslims, Jews, and others—and experienced strong and healing connections with those who have given me the support and safety I needed to overcome fear of exposure: my husband, friends, and sangha.

Four years ago, I learned of a documentary film about how the Paris Mosque sheltered Jews during World War II. The director, Derri Berkani, was, as it happened, a friend from my days in Paris. Thinking I could show the film and tell my own story in a short program, I obtained a copy of the film and added English subtitles.

In preparing to introduce the film, I found many instances of Muslims rescuing Jews during the war. In Nazi-occupied Albania and Bosnia, Muslims hid or otherwise protected Jews. In Algeria, then considered part of France and ruled from Vichy by a puppet government of Nazi collaborators, authorities applied anti-Jewish laws enthusiastically. But indigenous Muslim Algerians—themselves deprived of civil and political rights—supported the Jews. For instance, the French offered Muslims the chance to earn significant income by managing confiscated Jewish property. All refused. And when French paramilitary collaborators attempted to foment anti-Jewish riots, Muslim leaders in Algiers issued an order forbidding Muslims from participating in violence against the Jews.

Derri Berkani's own story was another discovery. Derri is of Algerian descent. One of his ancestors was a lieutenant of Abdelkader, the man who led Algerian resistance to the French invaders in the 19th century. After 16 years, Abdelkader, whose intellectual and spiritual stature inspired admiration even in his French enemies, was defeated and exiled to Syria.

Derri's ancestor was also captured and exiled to an island off the coast of France. His descendants became French.

Derri's experience paralleled my own. His father joined the resistance inside France during World War II. Captured by a paramilitary group of French collaborators, he disappeared. Derri's mother was deported

to Ravensbrück, a women's concentration camp in Germany. Derri, then six years old, was taken to safety by the Resistance—the Gestapo was known to torture children to extract information. He was sent to live with Jewish children in hiding in the south of France—a Muslim child, who, like thousands of Jewish children, had experienced the constant fear of being discovered and handed over to the Nazis, the anxiety of not knowing what had happened to his parents, and the pain of waiting for their return after the war.

I now regularly present the film in churches and schools. Derri wrote to me: "I can never thank you enough for working to reduce the hostility between the two communities which were friends for centuries.... Even if my story is unique, I would like my experience to serve to soften discord. I would so much like to be a link between the two communities—I, who by an accident of history crossed the path of Jewish children who were victims of the Shoah [Holocaust]."

\*\*\*

I also speak and write about the Palestine-Israel conflict.

Growing up after the war, I learned history from books showcasing French greatness, and I participated in rituals of patriotism—singing the Marseillaise, celebrating Bastille Day. All this made me feel confused and excluded. Where did I belong? Was I a Jew? Romanian like my parents? French?

It seemed to me, even as a schoolgirl, that any patriotism, including Jewish, was based on the delusional belief that one's own people were better than all others. That delusion had led the Nazis to kill millions; where was the line between the "moral" loyalty I was taught in school and the murderous one? Then, when I discovered Buddhism in my late teens, I resonated with its universalist message and trusted its promise of personal and communal healing. Liberation was a potential given to all everywhere. There was no place for borders or national interest in this vision.

At age 21, I spent six weeks in Israel on a youth tour, a present from my adoptive father, which surprised me, since he and his wife were assimilated French Jews who raised me in complete ignorance of Jewish traditions. I remained unmoved by the tour organizers' attempts to instill nationalist feelings in us. I doubted the wisdom of the belief that the world would forever be hostile to Jews, so that Jews could only be safe in a strong, militarized Jewish state. What state has ever lasted "forever"? The lesson I had taken from my own encounter with genocide was that power itself and human tendencies to draw satisfaction from dominating others were the main danger.

In 1967, I was preparing to leave for the U.S. and could pay little attention to the war in which Israel took control of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and

the Sinai. Once in the U.S., almost all my energy went to survival in a new environment. But as a graduate student at M.I.T., I attended Noam Chomsky's lectures on Palestine-Israel and watched angry exchanges between Jewish and Palestinian students.

As years went by, I learned more about how Israel's creation had wrought a terrible injustice on Palestinians, with 750,000 brutally forced from their villages in 1948 and another 200,000 in 1967. But what about the plight of Jews fleeing Nazism whom no country would accept?

These contradictory thoughts were unsettling enough to keep me away from the Palestine-Israel issue. Only after I started writing for *Turning Wheel* did I feel able to take it on. Working with people committed to "right speech" and reconciliation seemed to bring safeguards against my doing harm.

I read extensively about the conflict and talked with Palestinians and Israelis. I had condemned the Israeli occupation but had not known how brutal it was and how it had ravaged Palestinian lives. As inadmissible as the killing of Israeli civilians by Palestinian militants was, the ongoing dispossession and maltreatment of Palestinians was unsupportable and at the root of the violence. Eventually, I wrote a first article about closures and curfews in the West Bank, then several more pieces.

When Palestinian friends tell of their pain, I recognize my own. Added to their grieving over the death of a loved one at the hand of Israeli soldiers, or the long imprisonment and torture of another, or the destruction of homes and olive groves, there is the sharp sting of demonization: they are the ones painted as violent and evil. The suffering of Palestinian children growing up amidst violence, death, and poverty touches me to the quick. I see it as my responsibility to stand for and with Palestinians, inasmuch as these injustices are committed in the name of Jewish victims of persecution.

Yet I cannot forget the depth of anguish in the cry of a Jewish man in an Arab-Jewish dialogue group I participated in: "If it were not for Israel, we would be nothing!"

In my inner and outer struggle (jihad, in its true sense) with this tragic unfolding of history, I keep in mind the words of Rabbi Abraham Heschel: "When we put ourselves at the opposite pole of ego, we are in the place where God is"—a Jewish version of the Buddhist practice of exchanging self and other. My attention is no longer the captive of pain-filled memories; I feel increasingly able to attend to the needs of the present. ❖

This article is dedicated to P., Susan Moon, and Denah, who kept me on the road to recovery by holding me in love and friendship and by helping me spin the thread of language from the tangle of feelings and thoughts that tormented me.

*Annette Herskovits writes about politics and human rights for Turning Wheel.*

**Kisha Lewellyn Schlegel**

## SEARCH ENGINE

BIG HOLE VALLEY, Montana, Feb. 17—  
The oldest boy coils rope as his parents tend the gravid cow. Greased elbows and hands form forceps, opening the canal's nauseating curve. He listens for instructions but imagines the aquatic air of distant cities—the abstract places of desire found on

the computer. The sound of dial-up, a whining mimicry of crickets that ties up the phone line. He googles this home-valley as if already outside it, reading the effluent links: ten thousand pages of real estate ads and visitors' guides.

Online, the alimentary landscape is defined by an economist in Missoula and an agronomist in St. Paul who agree that developed land is worth more than livestock. Nutritionists note the atomic persuasion of antibiotics, botanists peel back the chaff and an artist reveals the muscles of bodies without skin. Each search quickens the occasion for leaving—

the young desire to prove up and reside in different acreage because combines and haystacks cannot order life the way a search engine can.

After calving, he will move to some wireless city of cappuccino where fog is a filter that obscures the stars and the drying beans are forgotten.

He will not stay in the valley—even for the harvest dance held in the gym, held in the arms of the prettiest girl who will wear her hair like this land, silken with open space from the crown of her head to the back forty of her neck; acres of alabaster skin bloom from her poppy dress. ❖

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# The New Mahayana

by Robert Aitken

Yunyan asked, "Every day we have hard work. For whom do we do it?"

Baizhang said, "There is someone who requires it."

Yunyan said, "Why not let that person do it?"

Baizhang said, "That one has no tools."

—Sayings and Doings of Pai-chang: Ch'an Master of Great Wisdom

Yunyan Tanshang (780–834) was dead serious, but to get at true nature he had involved himself in humorous dialogues like this one. He studied with Baizhang Huihai (740–814) for 20 years but then went on to Yaoshan Weiyuan (751–834), from whom he ultimately received transmission.

This was early in the rise of Chan, not to mention the Mahayana. Classical Buddhism, which Mahayana was in the process of replacing in China, was a religion supported entirely by lay members. Monks did no work at all—a custom still observed in certain streams of South and Southeast Asian Buddhism.

The old custom was tied up with the notion that work inevitably creates bad karma—digging the earth, for example, inevitably harms little beings, and so violates the precept not to kill. Baizhang very boldly set forth the spirit of the vow to save the many beings, overriding a literal observation of the precept. Not working dumps any bad karma of working on those laypeople who do the work, and in the old system the total amount of karma is carried entirely by laypeople. The leveling of responsibility between clerical and lay in the Mahayana has been a process of laicization of the ordained sangha, beginning with Baizhang, whose famous dictum, "A day of no work is a day of no eating," personalized his view that the Mahayana is a religion of my responsibility and yours for all beings. He didn't even acknowledge that the old emphasis on retribution was on the table:

A monk asked, "In cutting down plants, chopping wood, digging the earth, and working the ground, do you think there would be any kind of retribution for wrongdoing, or not?"

Baizhang said, "One cannot definitely say there is wrongdoing, nor can one definitely say there is no wrongdoing. The matter of whether there is wrongdoing or not lies in the person concerned—if he is affected by greed for anything, if he still has a grasping and rejecting mind and has not passed through the three stages, this person can definitely be said to be doing wrong. If he passes beyond the three stages

and has an empty mind, yet has no concept of emptiness, this person can definitely be said to be blameless." (*Sayings and Doings of Pai-Chang*)

Masterful Baizhang! He knew perfectly well what the monk was asking, but he replied as though Yunyan were asking about something else.

"We are the Mahayana," Baizhang is saying in effect. "The buck stops here. Retribution kicks in with self-centered attitudes and purpose. If we are preoccupied with ourselves and our roles as special agents of pure dharma, then pure dharma is out the window. If we forget ourselves and forget the forgetting, then there is some hope."

Thus the process of laicization of the priesthood began—a process that is still playing itself out. And as priests became lay, they learned to lighten up.

The movement to the natural and human is glacial, however. More than three centuries after Baizhang, Shinran Shonin (1173–1263), founder of the Shin school, boldly married and fathered five children. But it was not until the Meiji period from the late 19th to early 20th centuries that we find marriage of priests authorized by imperial rescript.

Today in Japan, priests, for the most part, are thus no longer waited upon, and if one of them forgets he will be reminded by his wife that today is the day for garbage pickup and he should set out the cans on the curb.

The shift from celibacy to an acceptance of marriage in the priesthood, at least by lip service, contrasts with the lack of movement in the field of social responsibility. The vow to save the many beings has often been limited by the extent of the temple compound. This partial kind of interpretation of Mahayana vows was justified in the minds of our Japanese progenitors by a long-established loyalty to the Imperial House. Early in the seventh century Shotoku Taishi, Prince Regent of the Japanese nation, set forth in his 17-point "Constitution," which formulates veneration of the Emperor in cosmic terms:

When you receive the Imperial commands, fail not to obey them scrupulously. The lord is Heaven, the vassal is Earth. Heaven overspreads, and Earth bears up.... Consequently when you receive the Imperial commands, fail not to carry them out scrupulously. Let there be a want of care in this matter and ruin is the natural consequence. (*The Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society of London, Supplement 1*)

Prince Shotoku authorized the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, and urged veneration of the Three Treasures in his 17-Point document. However his language about Buddhism is much less comprehensive than his words about the Imperial House:

The three treasures, which are Buddha, the (Buddhist) Law and the (Buddhist) Priesthood, should be given sincere reverence, for they are the final refuge of all living things. Few men are so bad that they cannot be taught their truth. (*The Transactions and Proceedings of the Japan Society of London, Supplement 1*)

I suggest that events in the world today have brought all Buddhists, Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana, face to face with their vows. The Theravada Thai master Buddhadasa set forth socialism as the fundamental system of the universe that human beings would do well to acknowledge as their own:

The entire universe is a socialist system. Countless numbers of stars in the sky exist together in a socialist system.... All living beings are able to exist to the degree they form a society, a mutually beneficial cooperative.... If nature lacked this character, we would all die. (*Dhammic Socialism*)

In fact, we would never come into being in the first place. Likewise the Dalai Lama said:

Today, more than ever before, life must be characterized by a sense of universal responsibility, not only nation to nation and human to human, but also human to other forms of life. ([www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/dalai\\_lama.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/dalai_lama.html))

It is true that there have always been wars, there has always been exploitation, but "today, *more than ever before*, life must be characterized by a sense of universal responsibility," even though history remains persuasive:

Tartars in chains,  
Tartars in chains!

Their ears pierced, their faces bruised—they are driven into the land of Ch'in.

The Sun of Heaven took pity on them and would not have them slain.

He sent them away to the southeast, to the lands of Wu and Yüeh.

A petty officer in a yellow coat took down their names and surnames.

They were led from the city of Ch'ang-an under escort of an armed guard.

Their bodies were covered with the wounds of arrows, their bones stood out from their cheeks.

They had grown so weak they could only march a single stage a day.

In the morning they must satisfy hunger and thirst with neither plate nor cup.

At night they must lie in their dirt and rags on beds that stank with filth.

Suddenly they came to the Yangtze River and remembered the waters of Chiao...

This poem about prisoners of war was written by Bojui in 809 C.E. (*Translations from the Chinese*). Surely even earlier writings about war can be found across the world. Technology, hand in hand with "national interest," makes a huge difference today, however. Not only are artists and musicians and their studios and concert halls at risk, but Bach and Rembrandt themselves are threatened. The interview with Joanna Macy in the Fall & Winter 2006 issue of *Turning Wheel* makes this clear:

I'm convinced that it's too late to turn around the collapse of the industrial growth society, and that the task we all have, and one that I find worthy and exciting, is to help each other through it, saving what we can, and making sure that the collapse destroys as little as possible.

It is vitally important to acknowledge the impending collapse. Whereas we have had drastic economic and political depression and revolution before, and the plight of the Tartar prisoner is replicated in the field over and over down through history, the effects of the forthcoming collapse at home are qualitatively almost unimaginable. It is an error to regard the future with the relative tools of history.

Soon after the emperor of Japan made his speech announcing the surrender of his country, I walked the streets of Kobe. This was just after Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed with atomic weapons, and three months after Kobe itself had suffered a second napalm bombing. Almost every home and business

*The effects of the forthcoming collapse at home are qualitatively almost unimaginable. It is an error to regard the future with the relative tools of history.*

building was flattened. However, here and there were little huts constructed with cobblestones from street-car lanes, with streetcar wheels for windows and salvaged corrugated iron for roofs. I admired the spirit and even good humor shown in the construction of those temporary dwellings, and reflected that it wouldn't be long before Kobe, and indeed the nation of Japan, would rise again.

The devastation of the country was terrible and old Japan was gone forever, but train stations and train tracks were deliberately left untouched by the napalm bombing. The imperial system of the country was modified only slightly in the terms of surrender. I visualize, and Joanna visualizes too, a collapse far more total in that same *TW* interview:

I think that the Earth will survive, and that some humans will survive, but that they will be condemned to live in a severely degraded world.... So let's look at how we can serve the generations that will come after us, to save what we can, and do it with joyous gratitude that we have the opportunity .

I was captured by Japanese forces on Guam on December 12, 1941, and held with other American residents in the cathedral of Agaña, the capitol of Guam. After a month of sleeping on pews we were marched to the port of Piti, where we embarked for our internment in Japan on the *Argentina Maru*. On that short march to the harbor, we noticed a striking

*Even with total devastation, and I do mean total, something lovingly good-humored remains. That's the human default, and it's indestructible.*

change in the appearance of homes of Guam residents. Every single house had a vegetable garden. It was an endearing sight.

This, I suggest, can be our cue. Even with total devastation, and I do mean *total*, something lovingly good-humored remains. That's the human default, and it's indestructible. Joanna lives a postdisaster life in a predisaster culture as a workshop leader in programs designed to help participants visualize the disaster to come. We too can begin our recovery before

the disaster hits. Even apartment dwellers can have a vegetable garden. Even students who live in just a single room can have a vegetable garden. There are books at neighborhood libraries and bookstores that set forth how to do it.

What would Baizhang do? Well, when Hurricane Iniki devastated the island of Kauai, a contingent of Amish showed up with tools to help rebuild homes that had been destroyed. They arrived by airplane, defying their refusal to use power-driven machinery on their farms in Pennsylvania. No one invited them to help—they just showed up with their cheery smiles. I am guessing that Hurricane Katrina must have offered them a similar opportunity.

Red Cross training in disaster relief offers ways to help serve those in need, and with the experience of rooting around in community gardens we would have the beginning of our practice in the face of unprecedented challenge, not just in isolated crises but across the world. It would be a focused practice, but it could be a joyous one, as Joanna Macy says:

There is a door, sometimes a quite narrow one. It's a door that's painful, but if you just walk through it, then you're in a big place. Everything is shot through with radiance, and you think, "Ah! We can do this."

This is the new Mahayana. It is difficult, and can be profoundly discouraging sometimes, just as Joanna's work with resistant workshop participants must surely be discouraging sometimes. The radiance is there, but so is profound loss. Reading Matthew Arnold, so prescient in "Dover Beach" 150 years ago, the good humor of the huts along the streets of Kobe can be seen as the love that "never faileth":

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and  
flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night. ❖

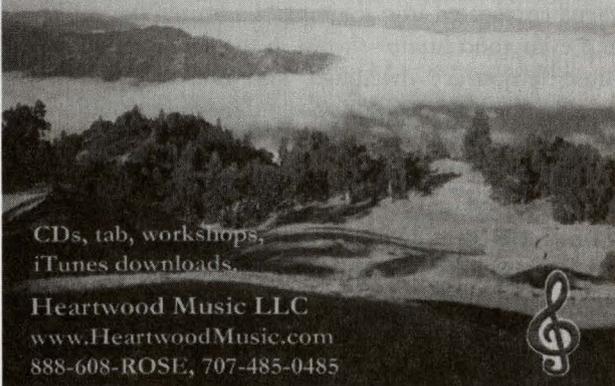
Robert Aitken Roshi is the cofounder of BPF and the founder and retired master teacher of the Diamond Sangha. He is the author of many dharma books including *The Morning Star*, *New and Collected Zen Writings (Shoemaker and Hoard)*.

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—Colette DeDonato

# Grandmother Mind

by Susan Moon

*You can understand all of Buddhism, but you cannot go beyond your abilities and your intelligence unless you have robai-shin, grandmother mind, the mind of great compassion. —Eihei Dogen*

My son Noah told me he wasn't going to have children when he was about four and I was a harried single mother. It was time for me to take him to nursery school, and he refused to wear anything but his fringed cowboy shirt, which was in the washing machine, clean but wet. I exploded in irritation, and he announced, "I'm never going to have kids. It's too much trouble!"

I was chastened. "It's worth it, sweetie," I said. "It's definitely worth it!"

As he grew up, I watched him cuddle pets and babies, but he held to the plan of not having children into adulthood. My younger son Sandy likes kids but is presently single, and I was beginning to think I might never become a grandmother.

A person can take certain actions to make it more likely that she'll become a parent, but there's not much a person can do to produce grandchildren. So even when Noah got married, I tried to keep my mouth shut. I reminded myself that he didn't come into the world for the express purpose of giving me grandchildren. It was his and Arcelia's business. They had their careers to think of, and the economic challenge of parenting, and the imperiled planet. Still, I did mention that I would be glad to babysit.

I was well loved by both of my grandmothers, in their different ways. "Grandma" took me to Quaker meeting, wrote out her favorite prayers for me in a little notebook, and took me down the lane to her sculpture studio, where she gave me clay to play with while she sculpted. I was her first grandchild, and when I was visiting her I liked to climb into bed with her in the morning. She'd take off her strange black sleep mask and reach out to me so that I felt the cool soft flesh that hung from her upper arm, and she'd say, "Good morning, my Number One Grandchild!"

My other grandmother, known as "Ma," kept lemon drops in a white glass chicken on her dresser, and if you wanted one all you had to do was cough a little fake cough and she'd say, "My dear, you must have something for your throat!" Whenever we children vis-

ited, there were fresh-baked chocolate cupcakes with vanilla frosting on a blue tin plate in the kitchen, and you were allowed to help yourself whenever you wanted to. She always smelled delicious, of a certain perfume that nobody else ever smelled of, and she wore a gold chain bracelet with a tiny gold airplane dangling from it. When I asked her about it, she told me it was a replica of the Air Force plane her youngest son, my uncle Morton, was piloting when he was shot down over Japan, and she wore it so she would never forget his courage. It had the exact serial number engraved on the wing, so small you couldn't even read it.

I learned from my grandparents the amazing truth that my own parents had been children long ago. I was stunned to learn, for example, that my father had been shy, and that my mother had been mischievous. They weren't that way with me! I learned that sad things happen in people's lives, yet they keep going. I learned of the turning of the generations: children turn into

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parents, and parents grow old and turn into grandparents. Grandparents changed a still shot into a movie.

I was at home in Berkeley when my son Noah called me on a Sunday afternoon from a San Antonio, Texas, delivery room to tell me that Paloma had arrived. His voice was like a bowl of water he was trying not to spill. She was 20 minutes old at the time and everybody was doing well. "Are you happy to be a grandma?" he asked eagerly, even though he knew the answer.

"Are you kidding?! Nothing could make me happier!"

Then I heard Paloma crying in the background. She wasn't exactly crying for joy, as I was; she was crying, Noah said, because they were sticking a needle in her heel to get some blood for a bilirubin test, and she didn't like it.

Driving around Berkeley that afternoon, running errands, I kept shouting out, "Paloma! Paloma!"

I thought of all the other babies born that day, all over the world, so many of them born into war, or

*To see your child happy to be a parent affirms the whole spiraling project—our ancestors coming down from the trees so long ago, and the babies staring back up into the branches.*

crushing poverty. I have since learned from Google that there are about 353,000 births a day on Planet Earth. I guess you could say that all the babies born on the day I became a grandmother are my grandchildren.

On that particular day, the front page of the *New York Times* told of civilian casualties in Beirut resulting from Israel's bombing of Hezbollah. I found myself wanting to propitiate the gods—God, the Universe, whatever—to thank them for Paloma's safe arrival and ask them to keep her and all babies safe. What offering could I make, and to whom? Checking my e-mail that birthday afternoon, I found a request for help from the Middle East Children's Alliance, and I made a donation in Paloma's name. A small gesture, standing for the juxtaposition it was now my job, as a grandmother, to keep in mind: Paloma, and all the others.

Zen master Eihei Dogen, founder of the Soto School of Zen in 13th-century Japan, told his monks they should all develop "grandmother mind." He said, "You can understand all of Buddhism, but you cannot go beyond your abilities and your intelligence unless you have *robai-shin*, grandmother mind, the mind of great compassion. This compassion must help all of humanity. You should not think only of yourself."

You don't need to be a grandmother to have grandmother mind. You can even be a celibate monk in a monastery. But you certainly get a leg up on grandmother mind if you have a grandchild.

When I arrived in San Antonio, Paloma was two

weeks old. She was asleep on her back when Noah brought me into the house from the airport, so I could see her whole face. (Nowadays they tell parents always to put infants down to sleep on their backs, because of SIDS [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome]. This was new to me.) Right away I saw how much Paloma looked like Noah when he was a baby—distinct, her definite self already present in her face. And I saw that she has her mother's huge eyes. Soon she woke, and Arcelia nursed her, and then I held her against my chest.

I stayed for a week, in the hot Texas summer, leaving the house only twice to go to the grocery store. I did a lot of cooking while the family napped. I danced around the living room with Paloma, trying to soothe her when she was fussy by swinging her in my arms and singing to her. The more vigorously I jiggled her, the better she liked it, and she didn't care when I couldn't remember all the words to the songs I dragged up from the basement of my mind—Christmas carols and old Beatles songs. When she fell asleep in my arms, I lay down on my back on the couch, holding her carefully against my chest, and I let her sleep on top of my heart for as long as she cared to. In that time out of time, in that air-conditioned suburban living room, I smelled her sweet head and watched the oak leaves shifting in the hot breeze out the window.

I learned other new things about taking care of babies—new to me, but based on ancient wisdom. I learned about the five S's for soothing fussy babies: swaddling, swinging, letting them suck, holding them on their side, and making shushing noises. Noah was particularly good at the swaddling, and would coo to Paloma in a deep voice—"There, there, Pumpkin Head, now you're all cozy"—as he tucked the blanket corners around her arms and wrapped her into a snug little package. During the course of my visit I also heard her addressed, by both parents, in torrents of affection, as Petunia, Little Miss Piglet, Florecita, Sweet Pea, Calabacita, and even Bunion Cake.

As for me, to my great delight, Arcelia called me "Abuelita."

Sometimes I carried Paloma out into the backyard, even though it was 102 degrees. She instantly quieted. She looked up at the trees and the big space of sky, and I could see her feeling the fresh air on her cheeks. I could see she knew things were different here, in the big outdoors. Noah, too, had loved to look at leaves when he was a baby.

Parents have to have a different kind of mind than grandparents. Parents have to attend to the nuts and bolts of their children's needs—feeding them, sheltering them, keeping them warm. They have to protect them from cars, from sugar, from kidnapping. Parents take care of the foreground, while grandmothers—both literal and metaphorical—can pay attention to the background, to the water and the air. We can tell

the babies stories about the stars.

But sometimes, grandmothers have to take the place of parents. Sometimes the parents are in prison, or are children themselves, or have died of AIDS. Sometimes their ability to take care of their children has been destroyed by warfare, homelessness, or addiction. More and more grandmothers are heads of household, heroically raising their grandchildren in circumstances that don't leave them much time to waltz the babies around the house singing "Norwegian Wood." I want to keep all those other grandmothers in mind.

One day in San Antonio, I rose, made tea, and brought the *New York Times* in from the doorstep, while the rest of the family were having their morning nap. A front-page story about the bombing of Beirut was continued inside—I turned the page and suddenly there was a photograph of an infant half buried in rubble, her face coated with dust, a small hand showing between broken boards. I closed the paper and put it back on the table.

Later, when Noah sat down with his bowl of granola, I saw him open the paper to the same photo. I saw his eyes looking at that dead baby in the broken concrete and I heard him make a low groan in the back of his throat as he closed the paper even faster than I had done. It was harder for me to see him see the picture than it had been to look at it myself. I'm still a mother, as well as a grandmother. We didn't speak of it.

But looking at Noah looking at Paloma—that was quite another matter. Arcelia told me the experts say you're supposed to gaze into a newborn's eyes in order to promote its healthy emotional development, but I could tell that when Paloma's parents gazed into her eyes you could tell they weren't just following directions from a book.

To see your child happy to be a parent affirms the whole spiraling project—our ancestors coming down from the trees so long ago, and the babies staring back up into the branches.

Noah, the "too-much-trouble-to-have-kids" boy, is now a dad. It is a lot of trouble, he's right about that. He's tired out from lack of sleep, though he's not as tired as Arcelia. It's trouble getting up in the middle of the night, it's trouble doing all that laundry, it's trouble working to make the planet a safe place for children. It's trouble, but not too much.

It was hard to tear myself away at the end of the week. Noah put my bag in the trunk and we got in the car. Arcelia stood in the doorway with Paloma in her arms. As Noah backed the car out of the garage into the blazing Texas sun, Arcelia picked up Paloma's hand and waved it for her. "Good-bye, Abuelita!" Arcelia called.

"Goodbye, Calabacita, little pumpkin," I answered. ❖  
Susan Moon is the outgoing editor of *Turning Wheel*.

Ellery Akers

## The Word That Is a Prayer

One thing you know when you say it:  
all over the earth people are saying it with you;  
a child blurting it out as the seizures take her,  
a woman reciting it on a cot in a hospital.  
What if you take a cab through the Tenderloin:  
at a street light, a man in a wool cap,  
yarn unraveling across his face, knocks at the window;  
he says, *Please*.

By the time you hear what he's saying,  
the light changes, the cab pulls away,  
and you don't go back, though you know  
someone just prayed to you the way you pray.

*Please*: a word so short  
it could get lost in the air  
as it floats up to God like the feather it is,  
knocking and knocking, and finally  
falling back to earth as rain,  
as pellets of ice, soaking a black branch,  
collecting in drains, leaching into the ground,  
and you walk in that weather every day.

*Ellery Akers is the winner of five national poetry awards and author of Knocking on the Earth (Wesleyan University Press). She is a writer, artist, and naturalist who lives in Point Reyes Station, California.*

"The Word That Is a Prayer" was originally published in *Witness Magazine*.

# Chrysanthemums and Black Battleships: Haiku and Social Engagement

by Ken Jones

*A monk on board  
how quietly  
the black battleship leaves*

*Numb with cold  
I make false teeth  
for the poor*

*Those in line  
watching the wind  
sweep the earth*

These are three haiku of Saito Sanki (1900–1962), who was one of the greatest of 20th-century haiku poets. Much of his early life was spent in poverty, scraping a living as a dental technician. He was one of that heroic minority of haiku poets (and Zen Buddhists, like Santoka Taneda) who spoke out against Japanese imperial aggression. The police considered such avant-garde poets a threat to national security and locked him up, only releasing him on condition that he didn't write any more haiku. The third poem above refers to the long hunger years after the Second World War, but could stand for the experience of the common people anywhere during the Terrible Twentieth Century.

Haiku are one of the ancient Japanese “ways” of spiritual practice (like calligraphy, the tea ceremony, and the minimal ink paintings, *zenga* and *haiga*). They give expression to insight and help to deepen it. Our root unease, our sense of *lack*, originates in the countless and subtle ways in which we try to evade the totally open experience of just how it is, and how we are. The only effective remedy is, in Blake's words, to “cleanse the doors of perception” and let reality flood in. As all the spiritual traditions affirm, this brings a sense of joy and release and an ability to live more freely in the world—and in the moment. The Zen school is particularly concerned with the cultivation of a profound, down-to-earth awareness of this “suchness,” and haiku are the most thoroughgoing expressions of literary Zen.

Although very few of the contemporary haiku in over 30 world languages were written as Zen practice, all of those featured in this essay are in tune with the Zen tradition. They offer a glancing opportunity, without explicit poetic prompting, to accept for ourselves how it is. At their best, classic haiku offer a little whiff of the ultimate reality that is always just under our noses, a little bit of existential therapy shared between writer and reader, a little bit of mutual compassion.

The Western convention is to write haiku in three

lines. The first line may set the scene, within which the second line makes an observation. The third line then presents an image contrasting with that in the second. The effect is subtly to throw our normal expectations out of gear and to hint at a deeper experience that may be both elusive and allusive.

Of all literary genres classic haiku are the least “in your face”; they have the least “attitude.” The speedy modern mind is attracted to haiku by their brevity while commonly failing to appreciate their subtlety, let alone their existential power. Many Western poets see them simply as three-line poems of 5:7:5 syllables, or as an opportunity for the artfulness of wit, word play, and epigram, but this is to miss the point altogether.

Classic haiku are inspired by a “haiku moment” of direct experience, the fruit of a cultivated alertness. They aim for simplicity, understatement, and concrete imagery, and eschew simile, explicit metaphor, heavy symbolism, philosophizing, explanation, and abstraction. Instead, the best haiku of social engagement display the characteristic haiku virtues of irony, ambiguity, and paradox. They are the antithesis of the black-and-white ideology typical of much social engagement. In their own modest way, socially engaged haiku embody the bodhisattva ideal of a clear-eyed acceptance of the rumpled reality of our world. And from this acceptance springs the compassion to try to make it a better place.

Traditionally haiku are confined to nature subjects, but almost from the beginning they have also concerned themselves with human frailties, as with this contrasting pair by two of the greatest haiku poets, Yosa Buson (1716–1784) and Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) respectively. Note in the Buson example the space given to the reader to experience a wide range of possible responses, typical of the “open metaphor” of haiku.

*The ends of the warriors' bows  
as they go, brushing  
the dew*

*Pitiful...fearful  
these poor scarecrows look like men  
in autumn light*

The civil war in Yugoslavia produced haiku that tell how it was amidst the nationalistic rhetoric and bombast. These are from the Croat poet Mirko Vidovic:

*Hush, for the  
tramp of cicadas  
across the drum*

*So calm a day—  
whose flag  
hangs from the pole?*

Meanwhile, Leo Lavery, at a Belfast bus stop:

*"Peace among Men"  
thinking about this sometimes  
while waiting for the bus*

And a woman's experience? Here is Karen Sohne's, with characteristic haiku understatement:

*The men on both sides  
have taken  
my armrests*

There is also institutional suffering, compassion, and violence, as in these two examples from Sean O'Connor and Honour Thomasin Stedman:

*he attacks me  
my raised arms blocking punches  
our eyes connect*

*Above this floor  
screams and bangs from the locked ward  
how near we all are*

Both of the following are from run-down industrial areas. Peter Finch writes from the South Wales valleys, and Donald McLeod, below, from the American rust belt:

*Cherry blossom on the coal shed  
kid inside  
killing a cat*

*Unemployment office  
a metal chair  
scrapes the linoleum*

Jim Norton, a Shambhala practitioner, had lodgings in inner-city Dublin, behind the Guinness brewery. Here are two examples of his classic Zen haiku:

*Coughing—  
and the stranger upstairs  
coughs too*

*Between tenements  
red ball of winter sun  
she hobbles on home*

Socially aware haiku often have a dry irony about them. Here are two of my own from Wales, where flags and language can be hot issues (*Cymru Rhydd*: "Free Wales"):

*Battered bus shelter  
in runny letters  
CYMRU RHYDD!*

Today the ancient haiku ideal of being at one with nature takes on a more urgent significance. "Perhaps we can learn to think like a cricket, a rainforest, a river, or a coral reef," writes Patricia Donegan in *Dharma Gaia*. "This is the heart of deep ecology. The practice of writing haiku is a way of thinking and being in nature—a deep way to practice deep ecology." She quotes Seishi Yamaguchi:

*On the winter river  
a sheet of newspaper  
floats open*

Of the many ecological paradoxes and follies to be observed, here are two about renewable and unrenewable energy, the former my own and the one below by Marco Fraticelli:

*Beside the roaring torrent  
chattering in its little hut  
his diesel generator*

*As she fills my tank  
we chat  
about endangered species*

Finally, what of the life of the activist, with its own conflicts and ironies? Here is my own take:

*Green activist  
standing upright  
in the waste bin*

*Out of the brightly lit house  
off to the brightly lit meeting  
the moon at the gate*

Socially engaged Buddhism is now well established in both Asia and the West. To its substantial literature socially engaged haiku has something unique to contribute. Classic haiku is, I believe, an important and neglected resource. A group of British Buddhists who follow the Way of Haiku have joined together in a Haiku Sangha, and would welcome contacts with mainstream Buddhist poets. Our website, which is still under development, is [www.redthreadhaiku.org](http://www.redthreadhaiku.org). ♦

*Ken Jones is a coeditor of the annual volume Contemporary Haibun, contributes regularly to U.K. haiku magazines, and is represented in British and American anthologies. He was awarded the Sasakawa Prize for Original Contributions in the Field of Haikai. His most recent publication, The Parsley Bed, is reviewed on page 45 of this issue. Jones is a Zen practitioner and teacher of 30 years' standing, and secretary of the U.K. Network of Engaged Buddhists. Of his numerous publications in that field, the latest is The New Social Face of Buddhism (Wisdom Publications, 2003).*

# Daughters of the Buddha Rising Up

## The Sakyadhita Conference 2006

by Sandy Boucher

It takes 21 hours to get to Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. At the airport I see groups of women wearing headscarves and long sleeves, and others covered head-to-foot in black cloth, a reminder that a majority of the population in Malaysia—about 55 percent—is Muslim. There is also a large Chinese population, with some Sri Lankans interspersed (35 percent of the total), most of whom are Buddhist. As I step out of the air-conditioned airport into the enveloping heat of this tropical country very close to the equator, I am entering the world of Chinese Malaysian Buddhism to participate in the ninth Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women.

live in a secular society, which, however much it is influenced these days by the Christian right, nevertheless maintains a separation between church and state. As American Buddhists we make up a tiny minority in the United States—we have virtually no social influence, and we are ignored by our government. The situation in some Southeast Asian countries is radically different. The vast majority of citizens adhere to Theravada Buddhism, the Buddhist establishment has tremendous influence over the people, and the government supports the religion. Women within the religion hold a low status, and their devaluation reflects that of women in the culture as a whole.

Consider Thailand, where the huge problems of prostitution, sex trafficking, child prostitution, domestic violence, and the spread of HIV/AIDS are facilitated in part by the low valuation of girls and women in the society. The status of women in robes mirrors this situation. The *maechees* (Thai “nuns”) are housed in monasteries but essentially function as cooks and servants there; they wear the white robes of the beginner until they die; they are denied Buddhist education and ordination, and are generally viewed as being comparable with laywomen. While the monks are supported and venerated by the laypeople, there is much less encouragement to support a nun—and you will gain little merit from doing so.

If a fully committed female religious renunciant is neither supported nor respected, is it any surprise that in the society at large women are seen as lesser beings to be exploited? If Thai nuns could succeed in achieving full ordination and take their places as teachers and heads of nunneries and other institutions, they could provide refuge for endangered women and positive models to support and encourage laywomen and girls to work toward equality and economic self-sufficiency in the civil society.

It is not just Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism that maintains this kind of gender inequality. Tibetan Buddhist nuns also are denied full ordination within their own tradition. In Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, the order of fully ordained nuns thrives and holds a position of great social visibility and honor in countries such as Taiwan.

The Buddha ordained women as well as men, and he said that the sangha should consist of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Efforts to reestablish or



Conference participants—  
Fifth from the left: Karma Lekshe Tsomo, founder of Sakyadhita

I am here to support the women who are slowly, determinedly, effecting a major shift in Asian Buddhism as they organize and push for the full ordination of nuns. This movement is reflected in and supported by Sakyadhita (“daughters of the Buddha”), the International Association of Buddhist Women, whose worldwide conferences are held every two years. Full ordination of women is a movement within Buddhism to right a wrong perpetrated over centuries against religious women, but it also reaches out to affect the lives of all women in society.

This reciprocity between religious and secular conditions can be hard for us as Westerners to grasp. We

establish for the first time this fourfold sangha in every Buddhist country by offering full ordination to nuns are why we are gathered here. If Sakyadhita's founders, among them Karma Lekshe Tsomo, an American woman in Tibetan Buddhist robes, and Ayya Khema, a German-born woman in Theravada Buddhist robes, had been afforded full ordination in their own traditions, they would have simply pursued their religious vocations in their respective sanghas. But when they saw that their chosen traditions denied ordination to women, they reached out to Buddhist women throughout the world to create an organization to address this inequality.

At the Sau Seng Lum Exhibition Center, I enter a giant high-ceilinged ceremonial hall with a stage opposite the opening. On the stage sits a large Buddha statue, garlanded in flames, against a gold and green background. Apricot-colored cloth garlands the stage, flowers abound, and theatrical lighting hangs above. Music fills the hall, a lush male voice singing in Chinese.

On the floor in front of the stage, hundreds of red plastic chairs are arranged in rows. The great front entrance doors stand open, and a curtain of cold air comes down just inside the hall. Breezes blow the banners and elaborate hangings. People scurry about, registering, directing, and rehearsing for the opening day of the ceremony.

Sakyadhita was inaugurated in 1987 in Bodh Gaya, India, with the profound purpose of "nurturing [Buddhist] women's potential for compassionate social action through networking, education, publications and training."

I wander the perimeter of the center's hall lined with exhibits. Here I learn about Reverend Chang Heng, trained in Taiwan, and the female head of the temple that is hosting us. I see photographs of old people receiving care at the stroke rehabilitation center run by the temple, pictures of people hooked up to machines tended by white-coated technicians at the hemodialysis center established by the temple, and patients in the community being cared for by the Loving Charity Mobile Clinic. I gather that this is the "humanitarian Buddhism" that is prominent in Taiwan. How different it feels here from our own Buddhist centers in the States. Service seems the main thrust of this temple, and from the photographs it appears that multitudes of people are involved.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo, the undisputed center of this conference, is a remarkable woman. Having gone to Asia as a young hippie, she found Tibetan Buddhism and donned the robes of a Tibetan monastic. In 1982 she received full ordination in Korea. For more than 20 years she has tirelessly worked to benefit Tibetan nuns in India and Tibet, establishing nunneries, teaching the young women to read, and raising

money to support them. She has authored and edited a small shelf full of books that bring together female Buddhist scholars throughout the world on issues affecting Buddhist women. In the last 10 years, Lekshe has also managed to earn a Ph.D. in religious studies and to teach at San Diego State University. Like any other Western woman wearing Tibetan Buddhist robes, she receives no support from the Tibetan Buddhist community or religious establishment. So she chose university teaching as a job that would help her pay the rent and buy the groceries.

In a ground floor room of the exhibition center partitioned with sheets, 150 or so of us sleep on mats on the floor. Some of us from the U.S. are given real mattresses—probably because they know we are Westerners used to comforts—and we settle down in a row among the 15 or so other inhabitants of the improvised room, who have been given thin foam mats to sleep on. Each woman sets her suitcase at the end of her mat and for five days we live out of our suitcases. Sleeping so closely with others, I give up

*If a fully committed female religious renunciant is not supported or respected, is it a surprise that women are seen as lesser beings to be exploited?*

wondering if I will snore and disturb someone. The individualism and insistence on privacy that we enjoy in the West does not operate here.

We eat three sumptuous meals a day and drink an elaborate tea, all of it catered by a local vegetarian restaurant. On the drink table is Malaysian coffee—called "white coffee," strong and thick and tasting of the sugar with which it is roasted. A Chinese Malaysian man at the first of several banquets tells us, "There are certain things you will always find in a Chinese temple, and one of them is that you will be well fed!"

The 530 participants at the conference come from more than 20 countries, among them Nepal, Bangladesh, Tibet, Bhutan, Korea, Sri Lanka, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Mongolia, Germany, the United States, and Canada. On the panels, lay scholars, nuns, and lay practitioners give presentations reporting on Buddhist women's activities in their home countries, offering images of the female divine in Buddhism, and exploring the challenges of cross-cultural communication. They examine sexist assumptions in Buddhist language and institutions, and celebrate new Buddhist communities and learning centers for women in Asia.

As the days progress, we see breathtaking images from the small countries nestled up among the snow-

capped peaks of the Himalaya, and paintings by a Taiwanese female Chan (Zen) master. We hear of nuns' colleges being built in some countries and of research into images of goddesses in Buddhism.

In the giant upstairs conference room where the panels are held, many of the presenters wear monastic robes—the brown robes of the *bhikkhunis* (fully ordained nuns) and the white robes of the Thai maechees. Of the 530 participants, there are 161 women in robes, most of them foreign (that is, from Asian and Western countries other than Malaysia). The majority of the people at the conference are local women and men from the Chinese Malaysian population.

As the need for the changing of repressive rules and institutions is reiterated, I realize that I am witnessing the growth of a feminist movement within

despite the fact that the Thai constitution guarantees religious freedom for both men and women. The legal definition of the Thai Sangha includes only male members: *bhikkhus* (monks) and *samaneras* (novices).

“Both visible and invisible obstacles together have been barring Buddhist women from spiritual development in Thai Buddhism,” Kulavir explains. “Therefore, the visible obstacle—the power monopoly evident in the structure of Thai Buddhism—should be reviewed and adjusted. The non-Buddhist and unconstitutional Sangha Act of 1928 should be amended or canceled. At the same time, all invisible obstacles must be eliminated. The closed-minded, sectarian, gender-biased beliefs and the double standard towards women should be reviewed, deconstructed, and corrected. To tackle these issues will take a policy that integrates education, social action, and public policy reform. Last, but not least, Buddhist women need to organize themselves to empower and support each other.”

Kulavir's rousing statement leaves me pondering the uncomfortable position of maechees in present-day Thailand. In periods of radical transformation or reform, there are always groups caught in the middle. The Thai maechees are housed in temples, and while they must spend many hours each day preparing food and performing cleaning tasks, and while they are rarely given teachings, at least they are protected and can live the simple life of a monastic and pursue the meditation practice that can take them to liberation. Many of them are simple village women, widows, and old women who are just grateful to have a refuge. But in Thailand now the young educated women in robes are not content with this subordinate role. They want to take the vows and wear the robes of the women who lived during the Buddha's lifetime, to be empowered to study, teach, and counsel just as a monk would.

I think of some Western Catholic women, those passionate beings who know in their hearts that they are meant to be priests, to celebrate the Eucharist and minister to the people, yet who are denied ordination.

To accomplish their goals, a handful of maechees have managed to travel to Sri Lanka to receive full ordination. Back home in Thailand they exist in insecure circumstances, are not welcome in the temples, are disapproved of by much of the society, and are ignored or condemned by the Thai Theravada Buddhist establishment. One of these fully ordained nuns speaks enthusiastically of the pieced-together life she lives, most recently working in a small temple where the monks accept her. She asserts, “You have to take a risk, if anything is going to change!”

Tensions rise at points in the conference when this youthful determination meets the resignation of older women in robes. One white-robed woman tells



Asian Buddhism. I think of the early women's liberation movement in the United States. Our activism grew out of the civil rights and antiwar movements, while these Asian women have no such experience in challenging the system. And in the young freewheeling society of America, we could afford to take radical stands and perform radical actions. The ancient, traditional culture of Thailand, on the other hand, presents quite a different environment.

A young Thai scholar from Chiang Mai, Kulavir P. Pipat, maps out the “visible and invisible obstacles” to the full ordination of women in Thailand, emphasizing the “closed-mindedness of conservative Thai Buddhists,” which includes beliefs that women are “polluted and inferior beings” and “cannot attain enlightenment.” She describes the 1928 law passed by the Supreme Sangha Council under Thailand's National Bureau of Buddhism that forbids any monk to ordain a woman as a nun or a novice nun. This act is adhered to

about the lives of the maechees at a Bangkok temple. She describes their practice and work inside the temple in supporting the monks, who take a more public role of teaching, counseling, and leading practice sessions out in the community. She indicates that she and her sisters in the white robes have no interest in becoming ordained as nuns; they are content in their subordinate role.

Of course, nowadays, there are educated maechees who live much more visible and sophisticated lives, involved in social work, teaching, and the building of learning centers. But still the agitation for full ordination has grown, and more women travel to Sri Lanka or Taiwan to become fully ordained bhikkhunis; through pressure from within and with the help of allies from other Asian and Western countries, the Thai societal attitudes toward ordained women may begin to change. There is also a movement to elevate and support the maechee order, and the women in white robes may put their confidence there. Certainly any efforts to offer more opportunity and support to the maechees would be welcome as a step toward empowerment, but as long as the establishment does not open the path to full religious validation, these improvements could wind up further solidifying the maechees' second-class status.

The full ordination of women will be accepted—eventually—throughout Asia, whether it takes 100 or more years to accomplish. (We should remember that here in our “egalitarian” United States, it took women 80 years of steady activism to win the right to vote.) While powerful forces of religious and governmental establishments are ranged against this change, they will find it hard to squelch the burgeoning movement of women demanding full ordination. Once individuals have tasted the freedom and dignity of equal treatment, they will never again be satisfied with less. The struggle to ordain women in Theravada Buddhist Sri Lanka took many years and was finally successful. There are now several hundred ordained nuns and novices in Sri Lanka, while Thailand has only about 20 at this point. Thai women look to Sri Lanka as a model.

Recently, within the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, a possible breakthrough is occurring. Reviewing the relevant research on the subject, the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan practitioners and scholars concluded that conditions warrant the reestablishment of the full bhikhuni ordination. An international congress will take place in Hamburg, Germany, in July 2007 for monastics and scholars to decide the method by which to ordain the women. If this is accomplished, Tibetan Buddhist nuns will no longer have to travel to Taiwan or Korea or Southern California to receive full ordination but will be able to receive it within their own tradition. This would represent an enormous

step forward for the well-being and development of Tibetan Buddhist nuns and, as a result, laywomen.

This experience has given me a more complex view of the small countries making up Southeast Asia, whose populations balance Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian agendas. Some are peaceful, some are wracked by bitter internal conflicts. And now when I think of “women in Buddhism” I remember actual conversations with Korean, Chinese, Thai, Tibetan, and so many other women, each with her cultural and personal perspective.

I am fully aware now of the importance of equality for Buddhist women in developing countries plagued by poverty, prostitution, sex trafficking, the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, and child sexual slavery. Fully ordained and educated nuns could change the lives of multitudes of women by sheltering them from harm and training them for vocations other than the sex trade. “Development” in Southeast Asian countries may on the one hand erode tradition and allow women more choices, but if women’s status remains low they will continue to be exploited and shoved to the bottom as economic and cultural changes take place.

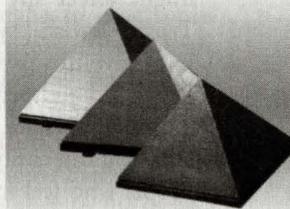
The nuns struggling for full ordination are working to educate, protect, and inspire women so that they can take an equal role in future society—and ultimately so that the great social ills of sexual exploitation and the epidemic of sexually transmitted disease can be eradicated. This is a revolutionary program, pursued with great sensitivity to cultural norms. The women are moving slowly and carefully in most cases, but they are determined to change our Buddhist world. ❖

*Sandy Boucher is a contributing writer and editor for TW. Her latest book is Dancing in the Dharma: The Life and Teachings of Ruth Denison (Beacon Press). She is one of the founding editors of Persimmon Tree, an online magazine by women over 60 (www.persimmontree.org).*

*For more information on her classes and retreats, see www.sandyboucher.net.*

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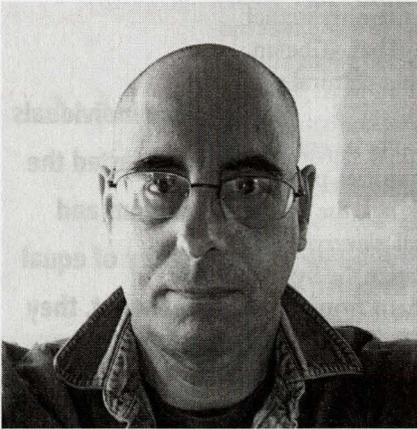
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# Four Jewish dharma teachers

## talk about being allies



○  
**Norman  
Fischer**

*Opening your eyes is not  
a once-and-for-all thing.*

When you're in a non-target population, the experience of the target population doesn't occur to you. You have to go out of your way to notice. And it's heart-wrenching to suddenly be awakened to this pain that you didn't know was there. The turn of mind that comes when you open yourself to this universe of suffering is similar to the turn of mind that comes through dharma practice when you suddenly realize that the world, which you took to be a certain way, actually has another dimension to it.

I've led a few retreats with Ralph Steele, an African American vipassana teacher, in which we basically make the issue of racism the topic of the retreat. This draws people from both target and non-target populations who really want to look at racism together. I've appreciated the focus on these occasions because I find that, as a member of a non-target population, it's easy to keep falling back into blindness. Opening your eyes is not a once-and-for-all thing.

I've been thinking lately about what a strange experience it is to be a Jew in America and how that might affect my relationship to people of color. Typical Jewish psychology (though of course not all Jews have this psychology) includes a sense of being oppressed and persecuted, and yet in America at this moment, Jews are among the most privileged people. Still, you can easily find powerful and wealthy Jewish people who feel inside as if they were members of a persecuted minority. It's a weird thing. I, too, have that Jewish psychology. I always feel surprised to find myself included among privileged, powerful white people. Even though I know I am privileged, it's still weird. Inside, I'm still a Jew who's an outsider and liable to be an object of persecution.

I just do not identify with white males, for example,

even though I am one. Whenever I hear that I'm a member of a privileged group, I always cringe at first because I think, "What are you talking about? I'm a Jew!"

This feeling doesn't come from any experience of being discriminated against or persecuted, because I never was, even though I was literally the only Jew in my class at school. But certainly people of my parents' generation experienced anti-Semitism a lot, and my parents constantly reminded me that I was a Jew and I was different.

I realize that from the point of view of people of color my Jewishness is irrelevant. I don't feel a need to speak about it. If someone looks at me and sees a privileged white male, I know that's a fair assessment, even though I don't feel that way inside. It's an odd contradiction.

I think it's typical for people to feel powerless. It's just human. Most human beings who are honest with themselves would have to admit, "Even though I'm rich and famous, I feel like I could be blown away in a second."

Even the stereotypical brutish white male who's throwing his weight around—well, if you live long enough, you come to realize that behind all that bravado is a sense of powerlessness, which may not even be available as an experience to the person himself. At the deepest level, we're all in the same boat. But we can't deny the social realities. Those have to be acknowledged first. We have to deal with social power and the pain that is caused by conceptions of social power. Then maybe later we can get down to the level where we are all vulnerable, persecuted, pathetic human beings. That's the level of dharma.

In most dharma communities now, you won't find people who are saying that racism and privilege are irrelevant issues and that we should just get down to dharma. But 20 years ago, many white people did say that, and they felt uncomfortable with the idea of diversity training and consciousness raising in the sangha.

Years ago I wrote an article called "Racism, Dharma, and Jazz" for *Tricycle* magazine. My argument was that any American cultural products have to take into account the African American experience, because African American culture is so central to American culture. If you have an American Buddhism it has to be deeply aware of the African American experience and culture.

We white Americans need to go out of our way not only to be allies to African American people but to

make an effort to understand African American culture and experience, because that is part of our experience as Americans. We should listen to jazz and recognize it as something at the heart of American culture, not only American music but American literature.

We need to study other minority cultures in America as well. It's not much emphasized, but to really understand someone in another culture, it's not enough just to talk to them and pledge to be an ally. You have to be willing to go outside of your own culture and learn about somebody else's. That's something that I always try to do. And whatever I'm turning my attention to I also try to include in my own teaching.

*Norman Fischer is a poet and the founding teacher of the Everyday Zen Sangha. His most recent book of poetry is I Was Blown Back (Singing Horse Press, 2005), available online or from the Everyday Zen website: www.everydayzen.org.*

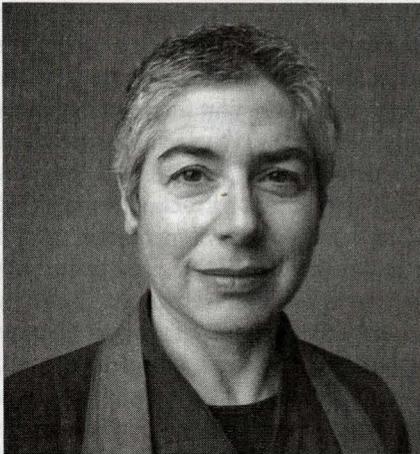


photo by Jae Rhim Lee

## ○ Victoria Austin

*There are other people in my family.*

For me, being Jewish is inextricably linked to being a child of Holocaust survivors. And the experience of having been targeted myself makes it easier for me to be an ally. When someone tells me that they have feelings of internalized oppression that come up, I can hear them.

Sometimes I get mixed up with people of color, and sometimes I get mixed up with white people. When I went to college—I attended Princeton, an Ivy League university—on the first day I realized that all the Black women and all the Jewish women had been put together into one entry of one dorm. That was in 1971. The dorm had one floor that was Jewish and the next floor was Black. So we stormed the dean's office. We said, "How dare you do this?"

The dean said, "We thought you would be more com-

fortable among your own kind." In that rarified, upper-class, good-old-boy American social context, I was perceived as the "other," as something very close to a person of color. But the people of color certainly didn't perceive the Jewish women as people of color. Among people of color I am identified as white. And I *am* white.

Still, it's hard. One time I was invited as a guest teacher for a group of people of color. The day before the event I checked in and was told, "Oh. I guess you didn't hear: You're not coming." And I said, "Why not?" And they said, "We realized we don't feel comfortable having a white person help us in this group."

At other times, people of color have trusted me with information. For instance, one time someone came to see me in practice discussion [private interview with a Zen teacher] and told me that he had sat a meditation retreat and been the only person of color in the retreat. He had experienced the enormous suffering of his internalized oppression. Feeling alienated and alone, he asked the retreat leader for advice. The teacher advised him that his perception was ultimately empty. This advice produced such grief and anger that the student didn't come back to the Zen center for a long time.

I think he talked to me about it because he perceived me as an ally, and we could share the pain of what happened.

The teaching of emptiness isn't meant as a political tool. Emptiness is the emptiness of a fixed idea of inherent self, but it doesn't mean that there is no self. It doesn't mean that causes and conditions don't arise. They do arise, and racism does arise.

The trouble with the word *ally* is that it implies that there is a war. Sometimes I prefer *friend* or *dharma friend*. But *ally* also implies that the main agenda is being set by the person in the target group, and so it's an empowering word. It also implies the need for courage.

As a dharma teacher, I try to be an ally to practitioners of color in various ways. I want to do more to recognize the wisdom of experienced people of color in our sangha. I want to invite them to be *shuso* [head student], or to take lay entrustment when it's appropriate. It's important for our sangha to have more people of color who can have practice discussion with students, who can take a leadership role.

One time, when I was the director of San Francisco Zen Center, one of our guest students went to Whole Foods and bought some bread and some snacks, and on the way out the door he was pulled aside by the security guard and asked for his receipt. He couldn't immediately find it, and they made him turn his pockets out and empty his backpack until he found it. When he came back to Zen Center he was shaking. I ran to Whole Foods to confront the manager. I said, "You've just devastated one of our students." This very young man had been a victim of racial profiling because he was a large

*The teaching of emptiness isn't meant as a political tool. Emptiness is the emptiness of a fixed idea of inherent self, but it doesn't mean that there is no self. Causes and conditions arise. Racism arises.*

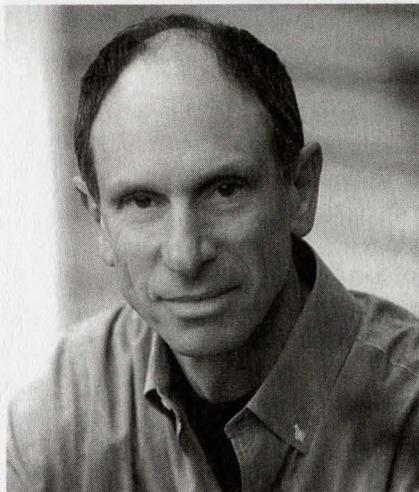
Black man. They didn't do that with white people at the door. The manager basically defended what he had done. So I took it up to the regional level and then all the way up to the national office of Whole Foods in Texas. Ultimately, we got an apology from the manager.

I think this was an example of how an ally can help. The young man didn't want to do anything about this incident until we talked about it a couple of times. It was too disturbing to go there. On the other hand, his store of bitterness increased dramatically when it happened. By making the incident visible and not "OK" I was able to help him and support him.

The San Francisco Zen Center has a Visiting Teachers of Color program. The idea is to provide experienced role models of American teachers of color. Our lineage is from Japan, so we have lots of Japanese teachers who come through, but American people of color also need models who have the unique experience of being a person of color in America and who understand internalized oppression. We have deeply accomplished American teachers stay with us for periods of time. It makes a much more relaxed atmosphere when the teacher can stay long enough to just "hang out."

I think of being an ally as being a way to acknowledge that there are other people in my family besides the people I automatically think of as members of my family.

*Victoria Austin was ordained as a Zen priest in 1982 at San Francisco Zen Center and received dharma transmission in 1999. She is currently serving as outreach director there. Some of the people who have inspired her diversity work are Paul Kivel (peace curriculum for teenagers), Robert Hennessy (training and jobs for at-risk young people), Mushim Ikeda-Nash, and Ven. Bhante Suhita Dharma. She is also a certified teacher of Iyengar yoga.*



○  
**Joseph  
Goldstein**

*The importance of  
the feeling of safety...*

I first started teaching retreats for people of color at the Vallecitos Mountain Refuge in New Mexico. From its beginning, Vallecitos has been committed to providing a refuge for environmental and social activists; its retreat for activists of color has been going on for 10 years now. I

began teaching this retreat with Linda Velarde, one of the founders of the Mountain Refuge, and George Munford. We all felt that it was important to provide a straightforward presentation of the dharma and meditation practice, following the same basic format that we used at other retreats. Although specific issues for different groups of people may vary, the underlying truths of suffering, its cause, and its end are the same for everyone. Our intention was to teach the meditation practice and to have as clear a transmission of the dharma as possible and then address the specific issues of race, class, and privilege as they came up.

At first, I was simply not aware of the depth of these issues brought forward by people of color, and teaching these retreats was a great eye-opener for me. It was a powerful learning about the many forms of racism that exist in our society and how dharma practice might help in the healing of this divide. Over the years, I have come to a great appreciation for people-of-color retreats, understanding the importance of the feeling of safety that these retreats provide and the great work that is done in these environments.

When I went to the first retreat for people of color at Vallecitos, even though I was coteaching with Linda and George, I was a little apprehensive at being a white person in the role of teacher, wondering whether I would have the sensitivity to issues I didn't fully understand and whether I would be able to gain the trust of the practitioners on retreat. But I simply trusted the dharma and the power of the practice, and my experience, both then and in subsequent retreats, has been that after a few days of sitting together there is a growing level of interest and trust, and we begin to go beyond differences of race, background, and culture. This has been deeply gratifying, and it is one of the reasons the retreats for people of color have been such a highlight of my year.

The wisdom of the dharma comes from watching the mind, and the mind has no color or form, gender or age. Its laws are universal, and that is what makes understanding the mind such a powerful tool for global community. Although *ally* is not a word I use very much, through the people-of-color retreats I have come to greatly value both the meaning and the feeling of this word. More than 20 years ago, I was part of one of the early meditation retreats for social activists. I taught it with Ram Dass, Mirabai Bush, Paul Gorman, and Sharon Salzberg at a Salvation Army camp in Sharon, New York. Predictably, since the planning group was all white, there was a fair amount of turmoil at the retreat about decision-making and power, and it became quite an adventure in group process.

At one point, there were fishbowl groups (a small number of people in discussion in the center of the

room, with the rest of the group observing). People in the larger group who were so moved could then join the smaller circle as allies, offering their presence as silent support. My most vivid memory of the retreat was when one group of frontline, activist, African American and Hispanic women were sitting and talking in the inner circle and I suddenly felt pulled by their energy to join their circle as an ally. That was a first for me. In all my years in Thailand and India, I had not been involved at all in political or social activism. But that experience of feeling myself as an ally to these women was the beginning of an opening for me I realized I wanted to do something to help our society heal the deep divide of racism.

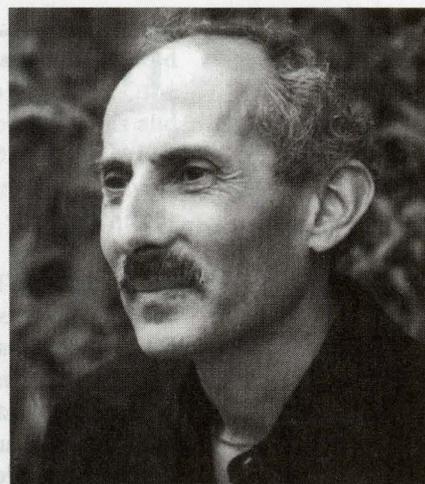
Sometimes people ask if growing up in the Jewish tradition was a factor in relating to the oppression of other minority groups. Of course, it is hard to pinpoint all the many influences that condition us. My family had a summer resort in the Catskill Mountains and we had many Holocaust survivors as guests, so I was definitely aware of this great disaster of human behavior. On the other hand, growing up in the “borscht belt,” going to Columbia University in New York City, and in the time since then, I don’t remember ever having personally experienced anti-Semitism, so it was not something I knew or felt firsthand. On the people-of-color retreats I don’t particularly feel myself as a “Jewish white person.” In fact, at least for me, even “white” begins to disappear. This reminds me of a few lines by the Chinese poet Li Po: “We sit together, the mountain and me, until only the mountain remains.” It’s something like that.

I think that a critical mass has now been reached in this movement of meditation retreats for people of color. Just within the Theravada tradition, the real pioneering efforts of teachers of color, including Ralph Steele, Kamala Masters, Gina Sharpe, Larry Yang, Rachel Bagby, Russell Brown, and many others I don’t know as well, have begun a movement that will help spread the benefits of dharma practice to diverse communities. The people-of-color retreats at both Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center are full, often with waiting lists, and there are many more retreats being offered in different places around the country. The energy of this movement is enormously inspiring and it has been a genuine privilege to be able to contribute to a small part of it.

*Joseph Goldstein is a cofounder and guiding teacher of the Insight Meditation Society’s Retreat Center and Forest Refuge programs. He has been teaching vipassana and metta retreats worldwide since 1974. He is the author of One Dharma, The Experience of Insight, and Insight Meditation.*

## ○ Jack Kornfield

*A foundation from my childhood.*



I really think 40 years of Buddhist practice has had much more influence on my work as an ally than being Jewish. But the work is built upon a foundation from my childhood. In the middle-class non-religious Jewish culture that I grew up in, I learned the importance of helping people, caring for those in difficulty, and, in particular, being sensitive to those who are the underdogs. This was the result of the centuries of anti-Semitism and injustice that my grandparents and ancestors experienced. It was a wonderful set of values. There was hardly any talk of God, but the main value was being a good person and working for the benefit of others, as well as a tribal belief in the importance of helping your people. It was a great foundation.

I remember my mother talking about how when she was little her parents moved to a white middle-class neighborhood in Philadelphia, where they were spit on and stones were thrown at them because they were the first Jews to move into the neighborhood. I remember my great-grandparents talking about how when they had lived over in Russia, there had been periodic pogroms—people coming and burning the houses of the Jews. But I grew up identified with a middle-class intellectual East Coast family—my parents didn’t convey much about the prejudice that had happened a generation before. And although they didn’t experience as much prejudice as my grandparents, they experienced some, but they wanted to put that behind them. However, if I go back just a couple of generations, I know there was tremendous oppression and anti-Semitism. And now, being white-identified, I am keenly aware of how much suffering from racism, oppression, and injustice is still real for so many people in the United States. It feels essential to respond to this. Fortunately, along with the Jewish value of benefiting others, the Buddhist practices of compassion, mindfulness, ethics, and the bodhisattva vows have given me tools and understanding to be helpful as an ally. ❖

*Jack Kornfield trained as a Buddhist monk in Asia. He is a cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock Meditation Center, and has taught meditation internationally since 1974. He holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and is the author of a number of books, including A Path with Heart and After the Ecstasy, the Laundry.*

**When my mother was little her parents moved to a white middle-class neighborhood in Philadelphia, where they were spit on and stones were thrown at them because they were the first Jews in the neighborhood.**

# The Freedom to Sit

## Welcoming People with Psychiatric Disabilities at Buddhist Retreats

by Will Hall

In 1992 I was committed to psychiatric hospitals, suffering from voices, fear, isolation, and visions that led to a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and schizophrenia. Since then, these same experiences have guided me to the deeper questions of self and reality addressed by the dharma, and meditation practice has become an essential part of my life. The methods and outlook of the Buddha not only deepen my understanding of who I am and the “madness” I go through, but also, by focusing my mind and awakening my body, help to soothe and overcome the forces that threaten at times to destroy me.

When I am flooded with terrifying images and voices, stillness clears a pathway for choice and control. Sensory awareness helps me regain a sense of safety in the world. Overwhelming fears become more manageable with observation, and dreamlike coincidences, telepathy, and omens lose their dangerous and seductive fascination when understood as expressions of the timeless unity of mind. Most importantly of all, when I am visited by seemingly demonic forces, I greet them as an opportunity to look more deeply at the trauma inside myself. Western medicine has labeled my experiences “mental illness,” but for me they have been an invitation to a richer and more spiritual understanding of life.

Meditation retreats are important to my practice, a place to reduce the clamor of daily life and increase the

opportunity for discovery. But some of these retreats have policies that would exclude people like me. With the intention of protecting my own safety and the safety of their centers, retreats around the world regularly deny attendance to anyone labeled with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, and ask detailed and intrusive questions about psychiatric

history, diagnosis, medication, and current medical care. Without realizing what they are doing, these retreat centers are stigmatizing and discriminating.

A friend called me recently from Northern California, in tears that his hospitalization as a teenager meant being banned from a retreat, when he knew that others, with far less experience and dedication in their practices, were welcomed. I have spoken to many meditators with mental illness labels who share similar feelings of shame and violation as a result of these policies. Retreats claim to be acting for our own good, but this is no comfort—the painful history of society’s treatment of people labeled “mentally ill” shows that the worst of abuses can be done in the name of a person’s own good.

Meditation center policies do have honorable motives. Retreats often involve great psychological and physical stress and can stir up powerful emotions. Sitting for hours, living in silence, and breaking familiar routines of food, sleep, and work can be overwhelming. From time to time a retreat participant will go into an emotional crisis or need additional attention



*Fear*, by Jan Eldridge

Jan Eldridge is an artist who lives in Vallejo, California.

and care, which is disruptive to other participants and can, on rare occasions, lead to hospitalization. There are fears of insurance liability as well. Retreats therefore try to screen applicants for their suitability to the rigors of the retreat and their ability to complete the program successfully, hoping to prevent any problems.

I understand that meditation retreats, like any difficult program such as wilderness survival or sports training, need to screen applicants. But you can't predict someone's ability to complete a stressful retreat by asking them intrusive questions about treatments, hospitalization history, or whether they've been labeled with a severe mental illness. Such questions invade privacy and are based on stereotypes about what people can and cannot do, stereotypes the disability rights movement is working to end. Being deaf, in a wheelchair, or blind doesn't necessarily mean you can't complete a meditation retreat, and neither does having a psychiatric history, diagnosis, or treatment. To believe people must be less capable just because of a disability, any disability, is to make assumptions that lead to discrimination.

U.S. law has already reached the same conclusion. Passed in 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act is a comprehensive civil rights measure that protects from discrimination people who are, have been, or are perceived to be disabled. The ADA is historic legislation that has spawned revisions of international law and is looked to worldwide as a guide to fair treatment of people with disabilities, including people labeled with mental illnesses. I don't endorse the idea of "disabilities," and prefer instead to see them as "diverse-abilities," but the ADA does set a basic standard for protecting people's rights.

Under the ADA, employers, businesses, schools, and other institutions are not allowed to ask about the specific disabilities of prospective participants, employees, or students. This includes questions such as whether the person is deaf, in a chair, has been in a psychiatric hospital, or is on medication. Asking whether they can complete a specific task is allowed, but asking for personal information about any disability itself is considered discriminatory.

Meditation retreats usually fall under the ADA exemption allowed for religious organizations, even though they offer public services. That is to say, religious organizations are free to deny deaf interpreters, have no wheelchair ramps, or ban service dogs without fear of civil liability and being sued. (A religious organization would in certain specific instances still be bound to the ADA, for example in its hiring practices, or if it were using a federally funded facility such as a public school for its public programs, or were receiving federal funds.)

Any meditation retreat that asks about the psychiatric histories of participants is therefore not technically in violation of the letter of the ADA, but it is cer-

tainly in violation of the spirit.

Given that retreat centers do have a legitimate need to screen people for their ability to participate, the question becomes, Can retreats accomplish this and remain within the spirit of the ADA? Can retreats screen applicants without being intrusive or relying on assumptions about what people with psychiatric diagnoses are capable of?

The answer is definitely yes. There are many Buddhist retreat centers around the world, from a variety of traditions, that are already doing this. They don't ask intrusive questions or exclude people based on their diagnostic label or psychiatric histories. These retreats either describe the challenges of their programs and let participants decide for themselves, or they have found neutral, nondiscriminatory questions to ask applicants, questions that, in compliance with the ADA, focus on what a person can do without making assumptions about who they are. Such questions can even be very detailed. Examples might be, Have you successfully spent extended time meditating before? Have you endured extended periods of silence

*Western medicine labeled my experiences "mental illness," but for me they have been an invitation to a richer and more spiritual understanding of life.*

and stillness in the past? What is your susceptibility to stress? Are you emotionally fragile and vulnerable at this time in your life? Can you do without your daily routine? Are there any vital personal needs that you will be unable to meet during this retreat? Do you think you will be unable to complete this retreat for any physical, emotional, or psychological reasons? Do you have any questions about your capacities that you would like to discuss in further detail?

Many people who have had harrowing experiences going off the deep end of madness, landing in psychiatric hospitals and labeled bipolar, schizophrenic, or borderline, have nonetheless gone on to become perfectly capable of completing rigorous meditation retreats. And many people with no psychiatric history at all have found themselves unable to complete the same challenging retreats. We are not necessarily more fragile, vulnerable, or unstable than others just because of our mental health experiences. Given the growth of mental illness labeling (thanks in part to pharmaceutical company marketing), and given the inaccuracy of psychiatry as a science in general, for many people a psychiatric label might mean nothing more than that one doctor decided to give one diagnosis or prescribe a particular drug where another might have disagreed.

Those of us who have been through a breakdown or a "psychotic episode" (which many traditions

understand in positive and spiritual terms, instead of the pathologies of Western medicine) may sometimes be *more* open to benefit from meditation, and more equipped to deal with strong feelings and emotions when they arise. People often recover from past crisis and emerge stronger than ever. When I began to meditate regularly, my emotional well-being improved so much that dedication and insights came quickly. If sitting for many days unravels familiar patterns of mind and I start to encounter terrifying traumatic memories, distortions of time and space, voices, or other psychic phenomena, I know how to deal with these states because I have met them many times before outside of retreats. Many of us have discovered that our so-called “illness” is actually intimately connected with spiritual awakening and can even be our initiation into practice. Meditation, including on retreat, is a valuable recovery and healing tool, and what is called “madness” can itself be part of a spiritual path.

Buddhist teachings are intended for all. The ADA

*Those of us who have been through a “psychotic episode” may be more equipped to deal with strong feelings and emotions when they arise.*

and the disability rights movement are working to ensure that people who are different from the mainstream are not segregated and excluded based on assumptions, misunderstandings, and stereotypes. If we are on the side of social justice and compassion in the world, we should be on the side of social justice and compassion in our own communities.

I know firsthand how important dharma practice is and the vital role that retreats and sanghas have played for my spirit and my health. I am also diagnosed with schizophrenia, and I know how painful, shaming, and humiliating some retreat policies can be. In the face of admissions discrimination, I have, like many people who go to retreats, kept my psychiatric details hidden. But participants like me shouldn't be put in the position of hiding who we are. Fortunately many retreats are truly welcoming to those of us with psychiatric labels. I look forward to the day when all retreats are. ❖

*Will Hall is a cofounder of the Western Massachusetts Freedom Center ([www.freedom-center.org](http://www.freedom-center.org)), a support, advocacy, and activist community run by and for people labeled with severe mental illnesses, and he is a collective staff member of the Icarus Project ([www.theicarusproject.net](http://www.theicarusproject.net)), an international network of people looking beyond the disease model of mental illness to include artistic, spiritual, and holistic perspectives. In 2004 Will was the recipient of the Disability Rights Award from the Center for Independent Living. You can contact him at [will@freedom-center.org](mailto:will@freedom-center.org).*

## My Way-Seeking Mind

by Roberta Werdinger

When I served as head student at Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery recently, my first talk to the community was, as tradition dictates, an autobiographical “way-seeking mind” talk. I told the story of my life, focusing especially on the circumstances that had come together to prompt me, a middle-class suburban Jewish girl, to become a Zen monk. After the talk, one sangha member said to me: “I appreciated hearing about your life so much, and I was so touched when you talked about going back to Mauthausen with your father for the reunion, and how much that changed your life and your relationship with him.” (Mauthausen was the concentration camp in northern Austria where my father had been incarcerated. In May of 1995 we went together to an international gathering to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of its liberation.)

I instantly felt a sense of profound relief. I had talked before about my father's being a Holocaust survivor and its impact on the rest of the family. I was used to people's reactions—averted eyes, frozen faces, and nervous gestures followed by a change of subject. While others had been quick to say how much they liked my talk, I had been left wondering what they made of such a tremendous topic as the Holocaust and the suffering it implied. The accuracy with which this woman was able to reflect me and the courage with which she expressed it left a deep impression upon me.

Being an ally to a person of color requires the same kind of courage from a white person. The twin tools of wisdom and compassion must be developed in order to overcome the deep chasm that American society has put between us. One of the ways that healing can happen is when a person from an oppressed background feels that his or her experience is truly acknowledged.

What if we white people sat down with our brothers and sisters of color and were willing to not know what was happening? What if we dropped our defenses and just listened? ❖

*Roberta Werdinger, a Soto Zen priest, trained at San Francisco Zen Center and served as co-chair of its Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee. She now lives and practices with the Arcata Zen Group in Northern California, where she is a freelance editor.*

Seeking happiness outside ourselves is like waiting for sunshine in a cave facing north.

—Tibetan saying, from *1325 Buddhist Ways to be Happy* (Ulysses Press)

# Widening Our Circle

## Being an Ally to People with Chronic Illnesses

by Diana Lion

Very few people see me spontaneously any more. I am seldom out in public, due to invisible symptoms: debilitating fatigue, severe chemical sensitivities, migraines, and a tendency towards fainting. I am aware that each of my days has only a few precious teaspoons of energy, so I must choose wisely how to use them. This means clarifying priorities around e-mail, phone calls, tasks, and visits. It's excellent discipline. I am now accustomed to missing out on many things I used to do. But sometimes I need to work hard to respond compassionately when people have strong reactions to the few visible signs of my illness.

"Hey you! You scare me," a man yelled at me while I was on a rare outing to a farmer's market in Berkeley. I was wearing my painter's respirator, which created a bizarre separation between us. I could see him, but he could not see my face clearly. I stood there and breathed, my arms filled with colorful veggies and roses, my heart pounding. Then he yelled it again. This time he laughed, a bit uncertainly, because I was rooted and standing strong. I watched my mind, while he waited. After a moment of anger I felt choking sadness, and then hurt, because I didn't want to look like a monster. I'd almost made it through this venture out to the farmer's market without hearing any taunts. As I calmed down I realized that perhaps he *was* scared. He looked Middle Eastern to me, and I supposed he was often treated like a monster also.

Then I made a choice. I found my voice and asked what scared him. We talked briefly. Apparently he thought that my mask was some sort of freakish costume. I explained about having multiple chemical sensitivities. I kept pulling myself back from the hurt and sadness I was feeling. I decided it was more important to connect with this man through our common humanity than to dip into the pain at that moment. He learned something about chemical sensitivities, and I learned that his name was Ali, he was lonely, and he often stands near the market to socialize with people.

When I drove away in my car, I took off my mask. I stopped briefly at the light and waved to him. He yelled out: "Hey Diana, why you wear the mask? You much prettier without it!"

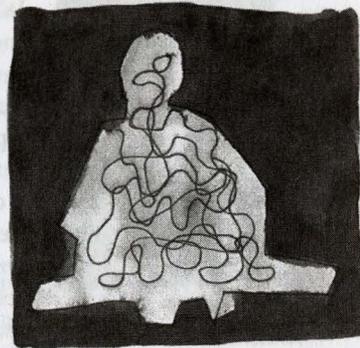
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In July 2005, I stopped my work at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. BPF had been at the center of my life for many years. I had founded the Prison Program

and was still its director, and had also taken on being BPF's associate director. So gradually that it was hard to notice the decline, I was getting sicker and sicker. The debilitating physical symptoms (an average of four to five migraines a week, severe rashes, crushing fatigue, and being ultra chemically sensitive to fragrances and other chemicals) got worse to the point that I could no longer continue my normal activities. By the end I was lying down on the floor working in the dark, still thinking it was "just temporary." The symptoms had been building for years—traceable perhaps to a combination of a tick bite, the Epstein-Barr virus diagnosed three decades earlier, my work at a national chemical lab (ironically as an injury prevention consultant), toxic exposures while working as a refrigeration mechanic, and/or some genetic weakness—but over the past years the symptoms had significantly worsened. It was not until having a talk with Pema Chödrön and Judith Simmer-Brown that I woke up to the seriousness of my situation. When they and a prominent endocrinologist all told me fiercely to stop working for a year, I finally realized how sick I was.

I received a diagnosis of chronic Lyme disease, CFIDS (chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome), MCS (multiple chemical sensitivities), and heavy metal toxicity. I went on extended medical leave from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the faculty of the Sati Buddhist Chaplaincy Program, and all my other teaching commitments. Clearly, healing these illnesses would require concentrated time and focus. I decided to frame this time as a self retreat. Two years later I'm still in it. It has been the hardest, messiest, and most rewarding retreat I've ever done. No bells, no opportunity to leave and go home; I *am* home! No possibility of leaving a note for the meditation teacher. I have been living with tremendous not-knowing on every level.

During this time I have dealt with the deaths of my beloved ex-partner and my second brother, as well as several friends. My mother has been hospitalized twice. I wish I could do more to help my elderly parents in Montreal than the current situation allows. At this point state disability has stopped, and I am living solely on the generosity of family and friends. I am not wealthy nor am I a trust fund baby. I am a Canadian living in the U.S., a country with brutal



*The messiest retreat I've ever done...*

*Drawings by Tiffany Sankary, an artist and Feldenkrais practitioner who lives in the Bay Area. More of her work can be seen at [movementbuilding.org/tiffany](http://movementbuilding.org/tiffany)*

policies towards poor people and no universal medical insurance. And yet I am as happy as I've ever been! Go figure.

The dharma has been central to my life for many years, but I've never appreciated it more than I do now. Spending this much time alone, with so much uncertainty, and physical pain, no prognosis, and the bottom of my world falling out, has been a perfect setup for practice. Fortunately, I had already been practicing for decades. I could never have imagined how challenging this retreat would be. And yet its teachings about mindfulness, patience, equanimity, lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, renunciation, and sangha have been priceless. I never would have chosen this retreat but since it chose me, I have come to appreciate its strictness. Having all identities ripped away was a tremendous shock at first. Who am I really? I keep relearning that there is no solid Diana after all!

Patience deepens each time I long to carry out one of the ten thousand exciting projects still dancing in my mind, and know that I have the energy to do just five minutes of work. Missing out on so many activities I enjoy has offered me a chance to cultivate *mudita*—taking joy in other people's happiness. My close friends used to protect me from stories about their pleasurable pursuits, thinking I'd be jealous hearing about them. I was, sometimes, but now I get a contact high hearing their delight. Another way of tasting interconnectedness.

I feel gratitude for the many people in my communities who have stepped forward to help me. And in turn I can offer them a haven of rest from their overly busy lives. Many friends have napped in my rocking chair while visiting. Some ask for assistance with their overwhelm. I'm happy to help when I can.

There are also the people who have not felt up to relating to me now that I'm so sick. At a grief group I attended after my first brother died, one woman said that losing her husband had rewritten her address book. I knew what she meant. Some people literally stopped calling once I got sick. The reality of life with a chronic illness can be messy. And I'm thrilled with the new people who are in my life since I became ill. The rewriting goes both ways.

After the diagnoses, my natural inclination (as a longtime social justice organizer) was to look for ally networks for people with hidden chronic illnesses. I've been doing ally work for several decades (see *TW* Spring '07). I was shocked to realize that such networks don't exist for illnesses like mine. Ally work for people with chronic illness is where the ally movement for people of color was over 30 years ago. People with Lyme, CFIDS, and disabilities are all doing terrific

advocacy work but I could not find groups of well people (aka "TABs"—temporarily able-bodied people) doing ally work for us. People with the illnesses I have are largely unseen and often too damn tired and sick to organize. But one of the "heavenly messengers" who woke the Buddha up to the necessity of leaving the palace to seek enlightenment was a very sick man. We all know the truth of impermanence of health (among other things). Where are *our* allies?

I sometimes get disheartened at the ignorance about the illnesses I live with. Being so sick is hard enough. Enduring the losses is hard enough. We are also invisible.

And our invisibility is heightened by the fact that we look well much of the time. Plus, symptoms are often cyclical, so we are sick in unpredictable patterns. In addition to holistic medical care, it takes months of extreme mindfulness (my main practice now) to discern patterns and create new life practices to support healing. I used to be a "get up and go" activist. Now I nap frequently. I used to be a joyful jock. Now I exercise in one-minute increments.

Finally, the fact that many people (including some within our dharma communities) think we are not *really* sick is demoralizing. I have been told to do more therapy, and to address my neuroses. The term "yuppie flu" is still used in reference to CFIDS, even though CFIDS is more prevalent among working-class Latino/as than whites (according to a 1999 DePaul University study). Public awareness about chronic illnesses is growing, but we still hear disparaging comments that even friends who are with us at the time may not notice or know how to respond to. I have often been asked to coach friends after one of these incidents. "What should I have said?" they will ask me. This is exhausting and painful. I know how common this experience is from my participation in online groups.

The statistics on suicide by people with hidden chronic illness are shockingly high. In mid-March Bill Chinnock, Emmy Award-winning composer and founding member of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, killed himself, apparently due to hopelessness about his chronic Lyme disease. Particularly tragic, since he'd been a longtime Lyme advocate and supporter of others who live with the illness. (See [www.sunjournal.com/story/203796-3/MaineNews/Lost\\_to\\_Lyme](http://www.sunjournal.com/story/203796-3/MaineNews/Lost_to_Lyme).)

I am fortunate to have a large well-intentioned community that is slowly learning about chronic illnesses through me. However, as we know from our work around unlearning racism, it is exhausting for folks in any target group to also be the educators. To potential allies I would say that having good intentions and a good heart is a good start, but it's not enough.



All identities  
ripped away...

The next step is to inform yourself about the challenges that people in a particular group are facing, and then walk ahead of them, taking actions to make their way easier, like the lead goose in flight formation.

Two examples come to mind: When I first visited my acupuncturist, he burned moxa (an herb used for healing) and used scented bathroom products. His healing was very skillful, but his office was making me sick. I told a friend who was also his patient, and she offered to talk to him for me. After their discussion, he decided not to use moxa on the days I had appointments, and to replace all bathroom products with unscented ones. Another time, a friend who knows I'm ill bought and distributed booklets about environmental illness to several nonprofits. She emailed the nonprofit directors and e-mailed me, saying she wanted to support their workplace awareness about environmental illness for the sake of people who currently have environmental illness (EI), and everyone else, as we're all potential candidates.

Recently I talked with a friend who had chosen not to invite me to teach a short workshop even though my skills were a perfect match. I was upset. My friend had been focusing on my illness, which obscured my gifts and experience to her. When she remembers my wholeness, I become three-dimensional to her again. In any diversity ally work it's important to see the whole person and not just their label. Asking for *my* assessment about whether I could do the work rather than eliminating me as a possibility would have changed the experience for both of us.

After my diagnosis I enrolled in an online self-help course for people with chronic illness. The course's founder then invited me to moderate a global online support group. I have learned a lot by reading others' stories over the last year, as well as doing my own research. I go to a holistic clinic run by an M.D.-acupuncturist/dharma practitioner. Most of the patients have cancer. Each week we "drip" (receive IVs), talk together, and sometimes laugh about our illnesses. One woman walked around our circle wearing two new prosthetic breasts, and asked us each to squeeze them to assess how realistic they felt. Women bald from chemo compare wig styles and colors. Lucia decided to go fire-engine red one week, then cobalt blue the next. One elderly woman made us laugh so hard we almost yanked our needles out of our veins when she described her introduction to pot culture through her medical marijuana dealer (for chemo-induced nausea).

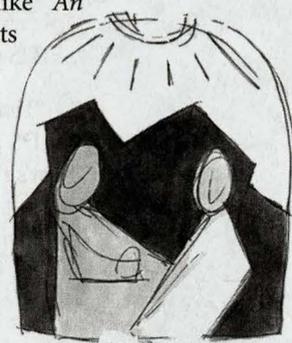
Another day the link between environmental toxins and illness manifested right in the IV room. A man smelled unmistakably of paint as he received IVs for cancer, presumably detoxing from decades of exposure to plastics, solvents, and paints. He had always lived an impeccably health-conscious life oth-

erwise. He reminded us that we can live an individually healthy life and yet we are truly interdependent.

Each of us is evidence that environmental illnesses are increasing. Our illnesses are linked to high profits and low regard for consequences to life in the petrochemical and perfume industries (see [www.perfume-foundation.org](http://www.perfume-foundation.org)). I'd like to see a film like *An Inconvenient Truth* made about the toxic effects of environmental devastation on our health. We are the canaries in the mines, warning of this precious planet's poisoning.

I talked with my friends Eddy and Rory recently. Between them they've done 32 years in prison. We spoke about the similarities between doing time in prison and doing time with chronic illness—the lack of choices, the lack of understanding, the need for allies, *and* the possibility of freedom no matter where we are.

My request for allies for people with chronic illness is actually a plea for us to be allies for everyone without exception, as our interdependence is undeniable. Our planet's fragility reminds of us this truth each moment.



Listening deeply...

### Some Ways to be an Ally

- 1) **Listen deeply** to the person who is ill. Put aside your own stories about illness. Listening deeply changes the listener, the speaker, and the situation.
- 2) **Make sure you understand** the facts and the nuanced emotional content by checking with the speaker.
- 3) **Inform yourself** about chronic Lyme disease, CFIDS, MCS, and other hidden illnesses that get little publicity and funding but are affecting so many. Did you know that 15 percent of the U.S. population suffers from multiple chemical sensitivities and that the number is increasing annually?
- 4) **Speak out** when someone makes an ignorant remark about people with hidden chronic illness.
- 5) **Make your workplace and dharma center accessible** for people with chemical sensitivities by making them fragrance-free zones. Publicize this on all flyers, the way the East Bay Meditation Center does. Berkeley Zen Center has come up with a creative substitute for incense offerings. During service, priests sprinkle flower petals into a bowl of water at the altar. Many corporations (e.g., Kaiser) are scent-free zones since their own employees are becoming increasingly chemically sensitive.

- 6) **Wear fragrance-free products** yourself. See [www.bpf.org/html/whats\\_now/FFproducts.html](http://www.bpf.org/html/whats_now/FFproducts.html).

## What Not to Say

1) "Oh, you're tired? Yeah, I'm low energy, too." People with CFIDS and chronic Lyme are not merely tired; the bone-crushing fatigue is beyond description. Comparing our level of fatigue to ordinary tiredness is akin to comparing a bruised toe to a bulldozed foot. This comment is so common that it is included on a CFIDS sweatshirt as a fundraiser for research.

2) "You look good; are you really sick?" People with CFIDS and other chronic illnesses often look healthy. That's the good and the bad news. Good because who doesn't want to "look good"? However, this increases the invisibility of the illnesses, and makes it harder for people to believe that those of us with chronic illnesses are seriously sick.

3) "Oh, you have chronic fatigue? Just do X, Y, or Z. My friend did, and s/he got better in a few weeks (months, years)." People with any chronic serious illness are usually inundated by well-meaning friends with unsolicited ways to get well. It takes enormous energy to sort through the mountains of information. Since the medical profession is largely ineffective at treating CFIDS and other chronic illnesses we must discern our own path out of the many (often weird) possibilities offered. Ask first to see if it's wanted before offering advice.

4) "How are you?" This is usually an innocent reflexive question which holds little or no meaning. For someone living with chronic illness it can be an unwelcome reminder of the illness. Consider asking "Do you want to be asked how you are?" It shows you remember and also have awareness about how loaded the question can be.

5) "Have you worked on X in your psychological/spiritual life?" This can imply that I would not be sick if I had resolved my issues. Do I have unhealed places? Yes. Do I have psychological/spiritual places I'm working with? Yes. Is that why I'm sick? Way too simplistic. This is a form of blaming the victim, and a misunderstanding of interconnectedness. In any illness the physical, spiritual, and psychological levels interact in complex ways. In my own journey I'm working to address them all. Unfortunately this oversimplification has led to much suffering among people with chronic illness.

## A Few Resources

- **Chemical Injury Information Network (CIIN):** Support/advocacy organization dealing with Chemical Injury. [www.ciin.org](http://www.ciin.org)

- **Debra Lynn Dadd:** Resources to help consumers make environmentally wise, nontoxic choices about products we use daily. [www.dld123.com](http://www.dld123.com)

- **Princess Tiger Lily:** Resources for MCS, CFIDS,

fibromyalgia groups; making your workplace fragrance-free; links between MCS and Gulf War syndrome. [www.princesstigerlily.com/mcs/mcs\\_by\\_area.html](http://www.princesstigerlily.com/mcs/mcs_by_area.html)

- **CFIDS Association:** Primary U.S. CFIDS advocacy group. [www.cfids.org/about-cfids/default.asp](http://www.cfids.org/about-cfids/default.asp)

- **Angelfire:** Excellent worldwide resources for people with CFIDS and our allies. [www.angelfire.com/ri/strickenbk/links.html](http://www.angelfire.com/ri/strickenbk/links.html)

- **Lyme Disease Foundation:** National nonprofit for Lyme disease. [www.lyme.org](http://www.lyme.org) ❖

*Diana Lion is the founding director of BPF's Prison Program, and also was BPF's associate director of programs until going on medical leave in July 2005 due to serious chronic illness. She especially wants to thank Mushim Ikeda-Nash and Larry Yang for their help with this article. She is currently living on dana—the generosity of family and friends.*

*If you want to contribute to her financial well-being, you can either e-mail [David@VillageEconomics.biz](mailto:David@VillageEconomics.biz) to get instructions for giving online; or send checks made out to Diana Lion to Inbal Kashtan, c/o BPF Prison Program, P.O. Box 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703-9906.*

## Healing from White Privilege

by Chad Hagedorn

As a Buddhist, I have come to understand that my sense of self is entirely constructed and empty of its own essence. The awareness of breathing in and breathing out blurs the boundaries of "myself," emphasizes its interdependence, illuminates its construction, and disintegrates its edges.

Recently I've begun to question the effects of "whiteness" on my sense of self, as well as the habitual ways I project my "whiteness" onto the world. Historically, the relationship between well-intentioned white people and communities of color has been a patronizing one, creating roles for those groups that are "in need" (or "at-risk" or "underprivileged") and those that aren't. These classifications reinforce the psychology of white supremacy and create a relationship of dependence. If white people want to repair the damage that has been done, new relationships must be built that establish trust and good faith. In antiracist organizing, white people can actively deconstruct their own notions of white supremacy and find a real understanding of their relationship to power.

I admit that I have failed in this many times by simply not doing anything. The interesting thing about maintaining privilege is that often I realize that I don't have to do anything to keep it. When people make racist comments, I say nothing. When people of color are profiled and targeted in my white community, I say nothing. If I can begin to see all that I am *not doing* as a racist action, I can begin to see my responsibility for racism. And only then can I begin the healing process. ❖

# Allying

## The Original Work of Love

by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel

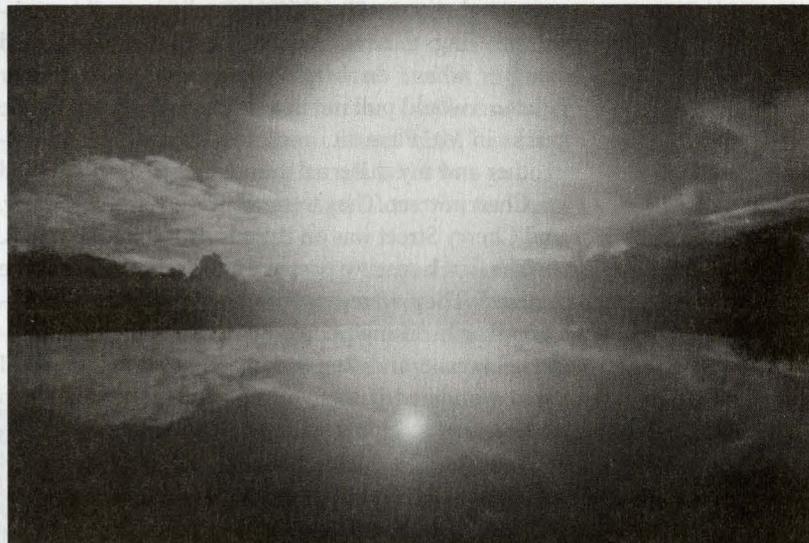
As a child I fell in love with slave abolitionists. With my hair straightened and pulled tight into braids with satin ribbons, I sat upright at my desk listening to the teacher talk about people who, because of the color of their skin, could have owned Black people but did not. She talked about people who cared about the cruelty of slavery. It was a gift to learn that John Brown, a white man, had compassion for people transplanted from Africa as cargo. Women freedom fighters like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who joined forces with Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass, understood that the freedom of white women was intricately linked to the freedom of African Americans.

I suspect there was no ally training back then, but perhaps there was a genuine capacity to open one's heart to another's pain and know the original mind of love and kindness.

Ally work can go beyond the lines of race. This means that anyone can learn to be an ally and anyone can be in the place of needing one. In both cases there must be an awareness of the experience of oppression and the willingness to stand together in the wounding and the healing.

Once I sat in a fine restaurant eating pasta with a friend who had worked as an ally in response to her privilege as a white person. She asked, "What can I do for you as an ally?" She had been advocating for those of us who were marginalized in our graduate school cohort. Secretly, I felt at times that she spoke *for* me in a way that did not cultivate peace. While she was helping me there was a sense in my bones of being disempowered. So I answered her question by saying, "You can help by stepping aside." I could see by her face that what I said was difficult for her to hear. And because I cared a great deal for her and our friendship, I thought about my words for many months afterwards. What *did* I want?

Although ally work can involve opening doors that have been closed in an oppressive society, I felt that I wanted to open those doors myself. I wanted an ally standing *next* to me should a door be slammed shut, experiencing the pain with me. I didn't want her to go to the door before me and use her whiteness for entrance. That would only hold racism in place. If she could stand next to me in the pain, in the suffering, feeling her own life wounding while witnessing mine, then an alliance would be sealed with that act of love. Together we would experience the obstacles to inti-



macy when one person is thought to be bounded and the other free.

I want to believe that slave abolitionists understood how their own illusions of superiority perpetuated the inferiority of certain human beings who could be bought and sold as a commodity. I want to believe that white abolitionists also suffered from the existence of slavery and perhaps sought healing in working to abolish it. As a little girl sitting in the classroom listening to the teacher, I had a feeling that the slave abolitionists acknowledged their own suffering, came forth, and risked being hated by the world they lived in. In the suffering of slavery there is no us and them—no duality.

In the work of activism, as far back as Shakyamuni Buddha and beyond, love has always been the intended final destination. The Buddha was an ally for those who suffered. When he heard the cries of the earth, he felt the misery of others as his own. For this reason his teachings as a path of liberation have stirred my life.

In sitting meditation I am reminded of how the earth reveals itself so fully—its colors, its smells, its warmth. And sometimes the earth reveals its light in the dark, and its wetness showers us. As a practitioner of the Buddha's teachings, an ally, or one who is allied, I must reveal myself as the earth—naked and bold. In this state of openness, breathing in and out is a dance of survival. ❖

Zenju Earthlyn Manuel lives in Oakland, California, and practices Buddha's teachings at Bay Area Zen centers and with small sitting groups.

*End of Days*  
by Lawrence Watson  
Platinum/palladium print

*Lawrence Watson is a photographer living in Sonoma, California. He has been Turning Wheel's art director for many years.*

# Crossing the Tracks

by Stephen Pickard

The journey of this white ally began by crossing the railroad tracks. In fact, it started when, on bright sunny days, my mother would pull me in a tiny red wagon across the tracks in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, to visit my great-grandmother and my maternal grandparents. They all lived on Cherry Street. They were white but they were poor, and Cherry Street was on the wrong side of the tracks.

The first house we passed on the other side was the Joneses'. They were an African American family—quiet, hardworking people living with their two children Laverne and Renae right next to the tracks. I often wondered if their house actually moved when the Burlington Northern rolled through town.

Next we would trundle by the home of "Sis" Wells and Sallie Greenup, where there would always be plenty of action—kids and adults running to and fro through the doors of the neighboring shacks. I wanted to stop and play, but my mother was insistent that we move on to my great grandma Trueblood's house, right next door to Sallie's.

These trips linger in my mind 50 years later because even at a young and tender age, I felt a connection with these poverty-stricken African Americans—a connection that had little to do with skin and more with struggle; a connection that had to do with gut-level feelings rather than the admonitions that my mother tried to plant in my pliable little mind. Even then, I recognized that my mother's fear had grown out of her own lack of experience with those she saw as different from herself, and I took her admonitions with a grain of salt. I felt a connection despite the racial slurs that frequently spewed from my uncle's mouth when he talked about welfare and Sallie and Sis.

But very different attitudes can exist within the same family. My great-grandfather Trueblood, who was also grandfather to my uncle Barney, was a Quaker, a pacifist, and an abolitionist—poor and marginal, supporting a large family, and wondering where he would find his next dime.

My great-grandfather was killed crossing those same railroad tracks. In 1947, when I was just a baby, his car stalled. He didn't hear the oncoming Burlington Northern freight train and he was killed instantly when the train struck him.

My earliest memory is of crossing those tracks, in my mother's arms, even before she pulled me across in the little red wagon. She was carrying me to my aunt's house,

where I stayed during my great-grandfather's funeral.

So I learned very early that crossing the tracks can be dangerous.

When I entered kindergarten, the thought of walking to school by myself was horrifying. I was always afraid of certain houses that I thought were haunted. Plus, I had already been called a sissy, and I lived in constant fear that some bullying classmate would see me passing and try and pick a fight. Sissies were always the object of fights. (Bullies never go after victims who have a chance of winning.) So I was on the lookout for walking companions, and the Joneses were a perfect fit. Laverne was a tall and handsome African American boy. He and his sister, Renae, were both quiet, intelligent, and kind. They welcomed me to join them. They stopped for me at my house. I loved watching for them out the window in the mornings and then skipping out the door to their side of the street for my safe and happy walk to school.

But when Mom noticed that I was walking to school with the Joneses, she intervened. She told me that I was never to walk to school with them again under any conditions. While my motivation was purely selfish, I knew intuitively that I could not let my mother stop me from walking to school with my friends, no matter what color their skin! So each day, I would skip from the house after Laverne and Renae passed by, run down an alley to the middle of the next block, and catch up with them. They never asked me why I did this.

My education is a priceless gift to myself. It belongs to me and no one can take it away from me. My real education started during my freshman year at the University of Iowa. These were years of civil unrest and campus demonstrations. I took courses in sociology, psychology, and anthropology. And as I read and studied about discrimination and racism, it was as if a film was being lifted from my eyes. These were the years when I learned to take a stand.

My stand started quietly and simply at home. I became an ally in my own home, at dinner, with my feet firmly planted under my father's table. I became an ally over the supper table, when conversations about race, homosexuality, women's place, and the Vietnam War would erupt into violent arguments between father and son. My father would intentionally provoke arguments that would turn into screaming matches. Once he bought a George Wallace tie just to make me angry. He would threaten me physically, although he never struck me. He frequently, and without hesitation, asked me to

**I was terrified  
to tell my  
dearest friend  
I was gay.  
She simply  
responded,  
"I know. And I  
love you for  
that."**

leave the house. He frequently, and without hesitation, told me that I was no longer a member of the family. My mother would almost always start crying, asking herself what she had done wrong. Sometimes she would defend me and get into an argument with my father. Then the focus would shift to the issues of their troubled marriage. As an only child, I felt the intensity of these arguments like a blast furnace.

My father had ruled the first 18 years of my life with his anger. Although I hated sports, I had played football, baseball, and basketball. I did this for him, because he loved them. But when I went to college, I gradually evolved into more of my own person. With each visit home on the weekends, I developed more and more courage to stand up to my father. With each step on that journey, I realized that I was experiencing in some small way what other people experience when they encounter racism. To stand up takes a visceral courage, and when you have stood up, you are still left with an uneasy “hangover”—the understanding that the battle is not yet won.

I was afraid of this man, my father, but I realized that the courage “to do” was within my power. I learned to stand alone before him. I came to understand that I could choose my own friends and make my own family.

With courage comes love. They are amazing companions. For me, learning to love myself was a huge step in becoming a better ally. As I faced my own fears, I felt a stronger connection with others who suffer. As far back as I can remember, I was different from most of the boys and men I knew. While I played athletics, my heart was at home in the music and drama departments. At family dinners when I was a little boy, I would always spend time in the kitchen rather than in the living room with the men. There was a part of me that longed to reveal itself, but at the same time I was terrified that it would emerge. These feelings pursued me into a happy marriage with two beautiful children. But I knew that one day I would have to face this fear that lurked below the surface.

As I looked into the mirror seven years ago, I realized that the gay man staring back at me was a stranger whom I loathed and feared, a stranger I had to get to know, because I desperately needed to love him. I also understood that coming out as a gay man would take more courage than I had ever been able to

muster in my life. It is difficult to pinpoint what catapulted me out of the closet. Living as a straight man was like walking a tightrope. Once I fell off the “high wire,” it was all over.

I knew that this gay man in the mirror needed allies—desperately. And these allies appeared! They arrived from all walks of life. They called. They e-mailed. They visited. They appeared in cafés chatting over coffee. They emerged at work and in my own family. The allies were there for me. I still remember having dinner with my dearest friend when I was first coming out. I was terrified to tell her I was gay. She simply responded, “I know. And I love you for that.” She is family to this day.

I have crossed the tracks many times since that first ride in my mother’s arms. Many of you have crossed those same tracks, going in one direction or another. Those tracks can divide and destroy or they can



become the opportunity for building a safe crossing. All of us can cross the tracks and all of us can help each other cross the tracks. We can be there for each other in the face of danger, right before the warning gates come down and the roaring train passes us by.

Being an ally requires nothing more than a commitment to the very thing that holds our practice together: connection. It develops naturally in the renewing silence of our meditations and emerges through our compassionate courage to stand with those we love. ❖

*Stephen Pickard is a professor of social work and gerontology in California. He has worked for the past 20 years serving children and the elderly who are the victims of abuse and neglect. He is the founder of the Compassion Institute to promote compassion in the helping professions.*

*Hamlet Mateo lives in Sonoma County, California. For more of his work go to [www.poemcomix.net](http://www.poemcomix.net).*

## Book Reviews

### **Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace**

Edited by Maxine Hong Kingston

Koa Books, 2007, 614 pages, \$20

Reviewed by John Whalen-Bridge

“Veterans” are soldiers who went to war, peace activists who fled to Canada, spouses and sons and daughters who stayed behind and were met with silence upon their loved ones’ return, and citizens shocked by the militarization of the society around them. In this collection, the term *veterans* is not used to divide people into segregated communities. “Vietnam” is the place where battles happened, the beautiful land revisited decades after, the land from which many are exiled, the place with many land mines, where, in this way, the war continues. Many of these narratives confront the awful persistence of war-related suffering and attempt to understand the causes of this suffering in order to break the repetitive cycle of war. According to contributor Tom Patchell, “Writing captures ghosts and makes them physical.” The telling gives the barely acknowledgeable pain concrete form so that its impermanence can be understood.

To say that heaven and hell are “not two” can be a wish, a description, or a path. *Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace* is an anthology of responses by more than 80 writers brought together by Maxine Hong Kingston’s writing and meditation workshops—workshops initiated by Kingston at the suggestion of Thich Nhat Hanh. The book recollects the hell realms visited by guilt-bearing soldiers and peace activists who didn’t go to war, realms also visited by family members, by refugees displaced by war, and by the care workers who suffered from not being able to help enough. The teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, especially the lessons on how to really listen, suffuse the collection and point toward the way of transformation: the traumatized person is never really alone—ghosts follow everywhere—but the wounds of war can begin to heal with communication, community, and communion. Sharing stories has been the

way for many of these veterans of war to reconnect. Gary Thompson’s heartbreaking and healing selection, “To Touch: A Vietnam War Medic’s Diary,” relates his attempt to go through a healing ritual in which he approached the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, touched it, and found the names of those he had lost. It became possible for him to do this only with the help of a couple he met at the memorial. He then helped others complete the journey.

While 80 authors are represented in this volume, the workshops, which have extended far beyond their anticipated three-year lifespan, have included more than 500 participants. The healing has an unavoidably social dimension. Nightmares may persist or recede, but the stories and poems and essays also narrate the reconnection of father and son, self and world, and even younger and older selves (such as Michael Parmeley’s photographs on page 415). Thompson tells of his children reading his diary and visiting the wall with him. “My eighteen-year-old daughter gave me a big hug and said, ‘Dad, you’re not so weird after all. Everyone here is like you.’ I just held her and cried.”

Emily Dickinson wrote, “After great pain a formal feeling comes.” The formal feeling of art and performance has something to do with the forced recognition of truth. The pain of deep silence gives way to something else through the practices of deep listening and story sharing. Louise Amlong, the daughter of an American officer in Vietnam, tells us: “This story and the healing that continues would not have been possible without the compassionate support of my partner. His willingness to tell his own stories of Vietnam gave me the courage to seek out other veterans and, with their encouragement, begin to give voice to the suffering of the families left at home.” Amlong then tells of her experience on a sailboat crossing the Pacific Ocean. “A blue whale surfaced alongside the boat, and rolled one enormous eye out of the water to look at me. I gazed into the whale’s eye and knew in that moment that I had never truly been alone.”

Kingston writes in her introduction of participation across time zones: “A veteran from the other end of the country will set his clock to Pacific Time and meditate when we meditate, write when we write. The book is a harvest of conversations among multitudes.”

There is much to talk about, and the conversation cannot always be easy. Ted Sexauer quotes Norman Fischer’s idea that “to know is arrogance; to not know, stupidity. The vibrant mystery of life lies somewhere between.” ♦

*John Whalen-Bridge is an associate professor of English language and literature at the National University of Singapore.*

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Why not identify  
Another’s body, calling it my “I”?  
And vice versa, why should it be hard  
to think of this my body as another’s?

—Shantideva

## Down the Rat Hole: Adventures Underground on Burma's Frontiers

by Edith Mirante

Orchid Press, 2005, 200 pages, \$21

Reviewed by Alan Senauke

The tragedy of Burma and the courage of the Burmese peoples is still little known in the West. After decades of plunder and un-development under the psychosocialist regime of dictator Ne Win, Burma's students, monks, intellectuals, and professionals forged a powerful democracy movement. On August 8, 1988, this movement reached its peak, bringing the nation to a standstill with acts of charity, religion, and nonviolence. The army responded with massive violence, killing untold thousands in Burma's cities and countryside. That repression continues to this day under the so-called State Peace and Development Coalition, the junta of generals that rules Burma, preventing duly elected representatives (including Nobel Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi) from leading in the open and democratic fashion the people yearn for.

Edith Mirante has been my friend since the 1990s, pointing me toward people and troubles in Burma that she felt I should attend to. She has opened doors for me and for Buddhist Peace Fellowship travelers to make connections with Kachin, Mon, and Shan people, groups that have resisted and suffered the junta's oppression for decades. Her first book, *Burmese Looking Glass*, documented her underground travels among ethnic groups and tribes in the 1980s. Mirante's human rights work led to the founding of Project Maje, an independent information project on Burma ([www.projectmaje.org](http://www.projectmaje.org)), and her subsequent deportation from Thailand in 1988, after she visited a rebel camp along the Thai-Burma border. She has continued this work for nearly 20 years, lecturing and publishing passionately and widely for the sake of the people of Burma.

Her new book, *Down the Rat Hole: Adventures Underground on Burma's Frontiers*, picks up several years later in the '90s, with clandestine journeys to remote areas of Burma by way of China, India, Bangladesh, and Laos. The title is drawn from the words of an Arakan ethnic group leader who, Mirante says, described "the futility of an army pursuing hill-tribe raiders as an elephant trying to 'enter the hole of a rat.'" But that is where Mirante goes, and the safety of such holes is dubious. Given the state of civil war and ethnic resistance after August 1988, these were dangerous travels for a red-haired Western woman.

Along the way she visits old friends and makes new friends among the Kachin, Rohingya, Wa, Shan, Chin, Akha, and other groups. What she finds is environmental destruction, AIDS, forced labor, crushing poverty, displacement, and guerrilla war. If that is not enough, her book begins in Cox's Bazaar, far in the south of Bangladesh, where she arrived just in time for the April 1991 cyclone that devastat-

ed Bangladesh, leaving 150,000 dead—a harbinger of the Indian Ocean earthquake of 2004.

Mirante writes with urgency, compassion, and gritty vividness. The people she meets along the way are real. They embody hope, loss, despair, ambition, whimsy—the full range of human expression. There is warmth and humor in her writing, too—a kind of self-seeing wit that tempers the tragedies before her and touches the resources we all need in this suffering world.

I strongly recommend *Down the Rat Hole*, along with the earlier *Burmese Looking Glass*, as a place to get a feel for Burma's peoples and for the work one person can do on their behalf. And then I urge you not just to read more but to take up the cause of Burma, and work hard for its long-delayed liberation. This is precisely how Edith Mirante closes her book—with the words, "Free Burma." ♦

Alan Senauke is senior adviser at BPF and head of practice at the Berkeley Zen Center.

## The Parsley Bed: Haiku Stories

by Ken Jones

Pilgrim Press, 2006, 114 pages \$15 post-free from Troedrhisebon, Cwmrheidol, Aberystwyth, Wales, SY23 3NB, UK; or through the Welsh Books Council, [www.gwales.com](http://www.gwales.com)

Reviewed by Everett Wilson

For both readers and writers, the art of haiku is the art of the unwritten. Ken Jones proves in his book *The Parsley Bed* to be quite adept at the art of opening three lines like a doorway into the night:

Nightfall  
the brightly lit interiors  
of other people's lives

The state of mind of the speaker is left unwritten, but the reader is invited to become the person wandering down the street, glimpsing "the brightly lit interiors" spilling warmth into the night, or perhaps the night itself that holds it all.

*The Parsley Bed* is filled with such haiku gems, but it is not simply a collection of three-line pieces. Jones writes masterful *haibun*, as well—prose pieces that frame his haiku in a kind of dance between poetically evocative prose and verse. Here, Jones's skill lies in his ability to extend the frame of a haiku without becoming pedantic. Sometimes it's Jones's sensuality that brings our attention to the page, sometimes it's his ear for rhythm, but often it's a narrative push that propels us through the prose. In "The Bridge," for example, Jones becomes a young Polish poet-turned-soldier, watching a bridge from a rifle pit, before we trip across these magical haiku lines: "Countless tiny sunlit flying things / each its busyness." But it isn't until we see the first Panzers roar across the bridge, and realize we are reading the account of one of the first casualties of the 1939 German invasion of Poland, that those two lines tremble

with a different kind of resonance.

*The Parsley Bed* is many things—a historical exploration of Europe’s bloody wars, a wry commentary on sickness, withering, and death, snapshots of Jones’s own life and his Rinzaï Zen practice—but most of all *The Parsley Bed* shows us how engaged Buddhism must engage life in its most everyday moments, where simple things can resonate with meaning like an “aging address book / the living squeezed / between the dead.” ❖

*Everett Wilson is a Zen student and poet living in Berkeley, California.*

## Awake in the Wild: Mindfulness in Nature As a Path to Self-Discovery

by Mark Coleman

Inner Ocean Publishing, 2006, 224 pages, \$14.95

Reviewed by Katje Richstatter

While reading Mark Coleman’s book *Awake in the Wild* on Baker Beach in San Francisco, I came to the chapter called “Exploring Our Discomfort with Nature,” and the practice suggested bringing attention to something that is “unpleasant, unwanted, difficult, or annoying.” It was a perfectly amazing day, an unexpected gift of warmth in the middle of February. *No discomfort*, I thought, *this is perfection*. Then the fog billowed over the rocky cliffs, the wind kicked up, and the temperature dropped 15 degrees,

causing mass grumbling and an orderly exodus.

I got it—nature is messy, volatile, and constantly changing. We experience discomfort with the natural world because it is so entirely beyond our control. But the nature of the world is our nature as well, and we get to choose whether to relate to it in a combative way or to accept it, and ourselves, with all the imperfections.

Mark Coleman is a vipassana meditation teacher at Spirit Rock in Woodacre, California, and also leads meditation retreats that incorporate nature into Buddhist practice. He speaks of his progression from an angry, London-dwelling, punk anarchist to his life after he began a Buddhist practice and reconnected with the contentment he felt in nature as a child.

The book is intended for a varied audience: dharma practitioners, naturephobes, outdoorsy types, Buddhist or not, looking for a deeper connection with nature. By experiencing, examining, and connecting more deeply with nature, Coleman asserts, we can know and connect more deeply with ourselves. This theme of reconciling a perceived inner/outer split—or how to be both with oneself and with the world at large—is common in Western dharma writing, and *Awake in the Wild* comes at it from a fresh angle. Most of the book focuses on personal transformation, and each two- to three-page chapter is followed by a practical meditation exercise, which might lead the curious beginner to further study while remaining helpful to those more familiar with the concepts.

And thankfully, *Awake in the Wild* does not stop at the individual level but plants seeds throughout to encourage broader engagement. There is a moving section that describes working with prisoners and finding freedom whether behind actual or metaphorical bars. But Coleman’s scope most frequently touches on environmental activism, using examples from naturalists like Muir and Thoreau and describing how engagement can arise from including nature in one’s practice:

Opening our hearts to this earth is not a solely blissful experience. When we open our hearts to love, we also expose ourselves to feeling the pain of the world. The more our hearts love this beautiful earth and everything within it, the more we feel the pain of the life that is currently being harmed on the planet. Though this experience is sometimes difficult to bear, it has a purpose. Our love can help kindle the necessary fire within to protect that which we hold most dear.

In the face of climate change and environmental degradation, increasing work hours and dependence on technology, we are more alienated from the natural world than ever before. *Awake in the Wild* offers a remedy, acknowledging the difficulties and also the joys of opening our senses to the myriad wonders of the wild. ❖

*Katje Richstatter writes fiction and contributes freelance culture pieces to Utne Reader, Punk Planet, Tikkun, SOMA, and the SF Bay Guardian. She lives in San Francisco.*



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 Mountains and Rivers Order of Zen Buddhism

## Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother

by Sonia Nazario

Random House, 2006, 336 pages, \$14.95

### Reviewed by Bill Williams

**L**os Angeles Times reporter Sonia Nazario won a 2003 Pulitzer Prize for her riveting account of a Honduran teenager who risked his life riding north from Honduras atop freight trains in a desperate attempt to reach the United States and find his mother. Lourdes, the boy's mother, had come to the U.S. illegally 11 years earlier to find work, when Enrique was four. She had vowed to return to Honduras within two years, after she had saved enough money to open a corner grocery store to support Enrique and his sister. But years passed without his mother's return, so Enrique set out to join her in the States.

Expanding on a series of newspaper articles originally published in the *Los Angeles Times*, Nazario's account reads like a Steinbeck novel in depicting the perilous journeys undertaken each year by thousands of children from Mexico and Central America.

Nazario's own courage is compelling. To retell Enrique's story, she retraced his journey, riding 800 miles atop freight trains through Mexico, despite the obvious risks. (One dark night she is hit in the face with a low-hanging tree branch and nearly knocked off the moving train.) On these trains, gangs rob, rape, and sometimes hack their victims to death with machetes. Desperate migrants often go days without food, and they drink from puddles laced with diesel fuel when the train stops. Corrupt police take their money and clothing. When the migrants try to board fast-moving trains, they sometimes are sucked underneath, where the train's wheels sever feet, hands, legs, and arms. Dead migrants are placed, nameless, in common graves.

At the Rio Grande River, Enrique connects with a network that smuggles migrants into the United States for a price (his mother sends the smugglers \$1,700 by wire). Nazario describes Enrique's harrowing nighttime trip across the Rio Grande in an inner tube and a journey between safe houses before he and Lourdes are reunited in North Carolina. Enrique spent four months, traveled 12,000 miles, and made seven attempts before finally reaching his mother.

The initial joy of reunion soon turns to anger, with Enrique screaming at his mother about the lost years of her absence. Lourdes is equally furious that her children do not appreciate her sacrifices and the money she regularly sent.

The saddest part of Enrique's story is the fact that this awful cycle seems destined to continue. Soon after Enrique leaves Honduras, his girlfriend delivers a baby girl. By telephone, Enrique pleads with her to leave their daughter with relatives and come join him, so that together they can earn

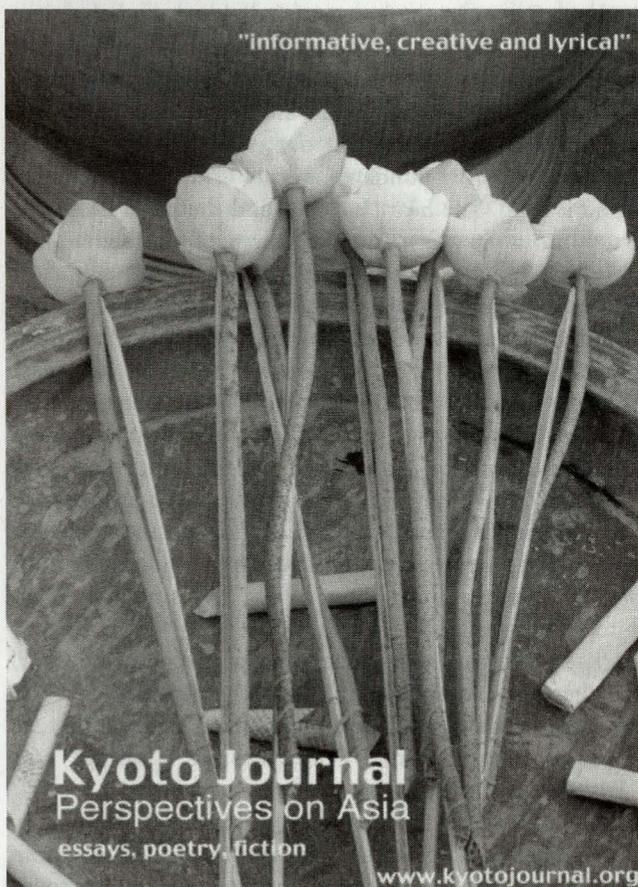
enough money to return home and make a better life for their daughter. His girlfriend balks, but as the story ends, she is walking away from their daughter, age three, to meet a smuggler who will bring her into the United States to be reunited with Enrique.

In an all-too-brief afterword, Nazario connects Enrique's story to the broader issue of immigration reform and the huge social costs of illegal immigration, including the growing number of dangerous border crossings (despite increased security on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border), families torn part, parentless children joining gangs and fueling a rise in juvenile delinquency and drug addiction in Central America, and more children being carried to hospitals with train injuries, including missing limbs.

She suggests that the United States adopt trade policies that give preference to goods from the nations women are fleeing. If mothers had work at home, her thinking goes, they would be less likely to abandon their children in search of jobs across the border.

*Enrique's Journey* is a tough story with no happy ending. Readers confront the suffering endured by adults and children who risk their lives to enter the United States. Nazario has performed a service by shedding light on this painful piece of the immigration maelstrom. ❖

*Bill Williams is a former editorial writer and book reviewer for the Hartford Courant in Connecticut.*



## Practicing Peace in Times of War

by Pema Chödrön

Shambhala Publications, 2006, 128 pages \$12.95

### Reviewed by Jan Eldridge

This little book, only 100 pages in pocket-size format, carries a loaded and timely title, *Practicing Peace in Times of War*. Pema Chödrön is the author of many books, including *When Things Fall Apart*. If you are in touch with the daily news you can't help but notice that things *are* falling apart. Chödrön's books and teachings are delivered in an approachable, down-to-earth style that connects with everyday life.

Pema Chödrön is an American Buddhist nun in the lineage of Chögyam Trungpa, one of the first Tibetan meditation masters to establish a Buddhist center in the U.S. Chödrön is resident teacher at Gampo Abbey, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. She has conducted workshops, seminars, and meditation retreats in Europe, Australia, and throughout North America.

Books previously reviewed in *TW* have explored the idea that each of us is responsible for promoting peace and has a role to play in that process. Chödrön's book echoes this truth in unique ways. Right from the beginning, she points out the contradiction that "We seek peace and happiness by going to war." She goes on to say that both war and peace start in the hearts of individuals and she gives examples of this in the home, at the office, and on the highway, as well as in the bigger world. Through chain reactions, thoughts can fuel small and large wars. When we become self-righteous about our own personal point of view, we become fundamentalists, and fundamentalist mind is rigid. The heart is closed and the mind has hardened into a view that justifies hatred of another human being. Does this sound familiar?

It takes courage to change habits, to soften what is rigid. Chödrön gives several examples of how her friend San Quentin inmate Jarvis Masters has softened his heart through Buddhist practice, and how he continues to prevent harmful actions in his volatile environment. One story that stands out for me is about the time an inmate was about to throw something at a seagull on the prison yard; Jarvis instinctively put his hand out to stop the man. The man reacted aggressively, cursing Jarvis and asking him why he cared so much about a bird. Jarvis replied, "That bird's got my wings."

The book is an edited series of talks given by the author. Chapters in addition to the title chapter include "The Courage to Wait," "Not Biting the Hook," "Changing Our Attitude Toward Pain," "Compassionate Abiding," and "Positive Insecurity."

Chödrön shares the dreadful conflicts a U.S. soldier may experience in Iraq. She also brings up the subject of karma and the fact that "the seeds that the United States has sown

in the last year, five years, 50 years, 100 years are having their impact on the world right now." She believes that an old culture is dying and that we're in a time of major change. Any change brings insecurity with it, and she suggests that insecurity has a positive function if we do not run from it. The teachings in this book—like the experience of sitting on a cushion—lead us beneath our surface reactions to take a long look at ourselves. This looking, of course, is not easy.

Chödrön opens her book with a quote from Chögyam Trungpa: "If somebody doesn't begin to provide some kind of harmony, we will not be able to develop sanity in this world at all." ♦

*Jan Eldridge is an artist and a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner living in Vallejo, California.*

## Intimate Politics:

### How I Grew Up Red, Fought for Free Speech, and Became a Feminist Rebel

by Bettina F. Aptheker

Seal Press, 2006, 375 pages, \$16.95

### Reviewed by Tova Green

Bettina Aptheker wrote this memoir hoping that her story might be of use to any who have struggled to come into their own sense of being, their own sense of life purpose and meaning...[and hoping] that others might know that healing is possible." She resonated with Buddhist activist Bernie Glassman's phrase "bearing witness" as a description of her intention—to shine a light on suffering so that "all those who have suffered are no longer alone, or forgotten, or ashamed."

Aptheker writes honestly about recovering memories of being sexually abused by her father, the well-known Communist theoretician and historian Herbert Aptheker, whom she loved. She was later abused by a mentor in the Communist Party and harassed by the CIA.

For Aptheker, healing came in many ways. She developed a feminist consciousness that enabled her to see the personal as political and to begin talking about, and later teaching about, issues such as rape, sexual abuse of children, reproductive rights, and childbirth, issues that had been spoken of in hushed tones of shame and guilt. "Healing begins when we shine some light, however initially feeble, upon that which has been hidden and silenced," Aptheker writes. "With disclosure, cycles of violence may be stopped."

Healing also came through Aptheker's relationship with her partner, Kate Miller, and through her commitment to a meditation practice in the Buddhist tradition. In addition

to sitting at a Zen Center near her home, Aptheker attends teachings of the Dalai Lama.

In 2006 I heard Aptheker speak about *Intimate Politics* at the Santa Cruz Zen Center. She described her efforts to develop compassion for herself and others, and how practice has helped her transform her anger. As I read her memoir and heard her speak about it, I relived my own activism in the 1960s, my coming out as a lesbian in the 1970s and my path to Buddhist practice.

Today, Bettina Aptheker is a professor of feminist studies at the University of Santa Cruz. Thousands of students have benefited from her experience, insight, and activism. Through *Intimate Politics* the wider community will have access to her courageous and inspiring life. ❖

## **The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942–1946**

by Delphine Hirasuna

Ten Speed Press, 2005, 128 pages, \$35

### **Reviewed by Tova Green**

In 2000, while rummaging through a dust-covered box in her parents' storage room after her mother's death, Delphine Hirasuna came upon a small wooden bird with a safety pin clasp on the back. She had never seen the pin before. Hirasuna deduced that it had been carved in the internment camp in Arkansas where her parents, along with other Americans of Japanese ancestry, were held during World War II. The discovery of the pin led Hirasuna to track down other objects that had been made in the camps. She contemplated the significance of these objects in the lives of the Japanese who were interned and created this book to honor and preserve their work.

*Gaman* is a Japanese word meaning "enduring the seemingly unbearable with patience and dignity." In the spring of 1942, a few months after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States government rounded up nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans who had been living on the West Coast and relocated them inland in hastily constructed camps in desolate areas. Families were allowed to bring only what they could carry; everything else had to be stored, sold, given away, or abandoned. They had to leave behind their homes, furniture, businesses, and farms. Their bank accounts were frozen. Community leaders, including Buddhist priests, had already been arrested and jailed in Justice Department internment camps, run like prisoner-of-war camps, full of "dangerous enemy aliens."

Ten camps were established in Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. Most of the camps were in treeless deserts far from populated areas. Residents were housed in barracks that contained only cots.

"The making of arts and crafts... was both a physical and an emotional necessity for the internees," writes Hirasuna. At first they created carpentry tools and furniture from scraps of metal and lumber. With text and photographs, Hirasuna documents pieces that are impressive in their style, originality, and grace, such as knife blades made from abandoned animal traps, exquisitely carved *butsudan* (Buddhist family altars), and a persimmon-wood vanity made, in the absence of nails, by dovetailing all the pieces.

Old and young alike looked for ways to fill their time. For the older *Issei* (first-generation Japanese in the United States), arts and crafts "became their escape, their survival, their passion, their link to things of beauty." Indeed, the beauty of these objects jumps out of the pages of the book—pins made from tiny shells found in dry lake beds in the desert, traditional dolls pieced from old kimono fabric, crepe paper, and embroidery thread, and teapots and inkstones carved from slate. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that "all these lovely objects were made by prisoners in concentration camps, surrounded by barbed-wire fences, guarded by soldiers in watchtowers, with guns pointing down on them."

Publication of *The Art of Gaman* led to an exhibit, curated by Hirasuna, at the San Francisco Museum of Craft and Folk Art in the fall of 2006 and the winter of 2007. Many Japanese Americans visited the exhibit; one Japanese American friend referred to her visit there as a pilgrimage. Her family, like many Japanese American families, had not talked about their experiences in the camps. And when I visited the exhibit I was moved to overhear conversations between Japanese Americans sharing memories of the camps with each other and with their children.

This large, beautifully designed book is more than a fine art book. Chapters on the history of the internment and Hirasuna's personal reflections make clear the injustice that was done and the cost to everyone of a government policy driven by prejudice and fear. Unfortunately, this message remains particularly relevant to all of us living in the United States today. I hope readers will be inspired by this book to notice and protest the marginalization of any group of people. ❖

*Tova Green is a Zen priest currently working as a volunteer coordinator for Zen Hospice Project.*

## **The Parallel World**

Blackbirds on a telephone line:  
coursing between their talons,  
the news of war.

—Ellery Akers

## **This Tender Place: The Story of a Wetland Year**

by Laurie Lawlor

University of Wisconsin Press, 2007, 190 pgs, \$19.95

**Reviewed by C. S. Soong**

**E**nvironmental advocacy these days makes liberal use of statistics and trends. We're told how many species go extinct each year, or how quickly this or that glacier is melting, or the concentrations of toxic chemicals in our air or water. The goal is frequently to alert us, to unnerve us, to make us more aware of what humans are doing to the environment.

Fair enough. But what often gets neglected is the act of examining, of really getting to know what it is we're trying to save—what's special about an ecosystem, an organism, a vanishing landscape. Take wetlands. Certain facts are regularly circulated: wetlands are disappearing; wetlands perform vital ecological functions; wetlands can be saved if we all do X and Y. But what *are* wetlands, really? What is it like to be among them, *in* them? Who can describe in intimate terms wetlands as living, breathing spaces?

Laurie Lawlor can. In *This Tender Place*, Lawlor, whose backyard in Wisconsin opens onto a 160-acre wetland, describes four seasons in the life of that muddy, windswept terrain, recording what she's "seen, heard, smelled, and felt in all seasons, all weathers, all times of day." Her often lyrical observations are grounded in a sense of awe and amazement; from the moment she first beheld the wetland, she was (and still is) captivated by its beauty, its richness, and its many mysteries.

Lawlor freely admits that she is no biologist, plant expert, or environmental scientist. Rather, her knowledge is what writer Barry Lopez calls "intimate rather than encyclopedic, human but not necessarily scholarly." This kind of knowledge derives, in Lawlor's case, from her habit of quiet, in-the-moment observation. The more time she spends in the wetland, the more she comes to understand the value of patient waiting and an open mind.

Her patience gets rewarded in manifold ways. She witnesses at close range a great blue heron stalk and snag an unsuspecting fish. She hears a diving turtle "set off hundreds of smacking carnivorous traps in the tangled mat of creeping bladderwort." She discovers that animal tracks in the snow tell stories about the habits and survival tactics of deer, rabbit, red fox.

Although Lawlor says nothing about her religious or spiritual affiliation in *This Tender Place*, it comes as no surprise that she's a Buddhist, and a very active one at that. Ordained as a teacher by the Venerable Thich

Nhat Hanh in 2001, Lawlor has been involved in Buddhist sangha-building for more than 15 years. In 1989 she helped found the Lakeside Buddhist Sangha in Evanston, Illinois.

When Lawlor reflects on the ever-shifting character of wetlands, her Buddhist sensibilities come to the fore. "Everything," she writes, "is in a constant state of change. Accepting this fully means recognizing that my actions right now are all that I have to hold on to. *Present moment, wonderful moment.* That is all there is, but it is enough to make a difference."

And she clearly *wants* to make a difference. In addition to sharing personal observations, Lawlor interweaves more than a few facts and figures about wetlands and their destruction. We discover that the wetland behind her house encompasses a fen, one of only 120 left in the U.S. We learn that wetlands are considered the most productive ecosystem on Earth. They also function as crucial storage sites for water, preventing floods and filtering out pollutants. More than half of the wetlands that existed in the lower 48 states in the 1780s have been lost—"drained, ditched, plowed under, or built over." Lawlor also tells us about the glaciers that sculpted the landscape, about native communities that relied on the wetlands, about how early white settlers viewed and treated the terrain.

Scenic places like mountains, canyons, and sparkling lakes tend to attract mainstream attention and concern. Wetlands lack glamour and majesty, and that's been a problem. By the middle of the 19th century, Congress declared swamps a menace. Early Wisconsin settlers "found the wetland detestable.... They skirted this miry place with a kind of terror and loathing." Not until the 1980s, writes Lawlor, did the U.S. government take steps to actively stop wetland destruction.

So what can spur the general public to save and restore wetlands? Fact sheets, policy briefs, and organizing strategies are all essential. But also, perhaps, is a quiet, intimate book like this. It's almost impossible to read *This Tender Place* and not develop a deep appreciation for wetlands. And if deep appreciation leads to passionate interest, as it often does, that can only fuel and fortify efforts to preserve these remarkable wild spaces. ♦

C. S. Soong hosts the program *Against the Grain on KPFA (Pacifica) Radio in Berkeley* ([www.againstthegrain.org](http://www.againstthegrain.org)). His writing has appeared in *ColorLines* and *Media File*.

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Just because some of us can read and write  
and do a little math, that doesn't mean  
we deserve to conquer the universe.

—Kurt Vonnegut

## Books in Brief

### *The Sutras of Abu Ghraib*

by Aidan Delgado

Beacon Press, 2007, 224 pages, \$24.95

What is a Buddhist doing in the Iraq war? This is just one of the many questions former army reservist and current anti-war activist Aidan Delgado grapples with during his year-long stint in Iraq. *The Sutras of Abu Ghraib* tells the story of a young man conflicted. How does a soldier serve his country while adhering to Buddhist principles? For Delgado, there can be no compromise between bearing arms and following the sutras. He files for conscientious objector status and is honorably discharged in 2004. The book describes the violence and abuses he witnesses in Nasiriyah and Abu Ghraib Prison, and chronicles his private struggles with maintaining his Buddhist faith. Although the memoir reveals an inexperienced writer, its candor, and the atrocities it exposes, overshadow its weak spots.—*Gail Bailey*

### *EarthLight:*

#### *Spiritual Wisdom for an Ecological Age*

Edited by Cindy Spring and Anthony Manoussos

Friends Bulletin, 2007, 344 pages, \$20

*EarthLight*, a magazine launched 15 years ago by West Coast Friends, explores the spiritual roots of the environmental challenges facing our planet. This anthology collects articles published in the magazine by writers from many paths, including such influential Buddhists as Thich Nhat Hanh, Joanna Macy, and Gary Snyder. The collection's magazine story-length chapters provide a highly accessible introduction to the important topic of spiritual environmentalism.—*J.B.*

### *Traveling with the Turtle: A Small Group Process in Women's Spirituality and Peacemaking*

by Cindy Preston-Pile and Irene Woodward

Pace e Bene Nonviolence Press, 2006, 283 pages, \$25

This detailed and valuable resource was inspired by *Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living*, a program from the same publisher. Workshops based on that program prompted requests for a similar resource specifically for women. *Training with the Turtle* provides readings and suggests practices for women looking to share a deeper exploration of spirituality and nonviolence.—*J.B.*

### *Light in Blue Shadows*

by Edie Hartshorne

Ellsberg Books, 2007, 233 pages, \$14.95 paper, available at [www.ellsbergbooks.com](http://www.ellsbergbooks.com)

The author tells the compelling story of her journey through the hell realms of suffering following the unex-

pected death of her 19-year-old son. This book—never preachy, always honest—is about meeting suffering with love and about finding generosity and concern for others within a broken heart. Here is dharma teaching on exchanging self and other, not just for anyone who has lost a child but for anyone who has suffered.—*S.M.*

### *Sit Down & Shut Up: Punk Commentaries on Buddha, God, Truth, Sex, Death & Dogen's Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye*

by Brad Warner

New World Library, 2007, 256 pages, \$14.95

In this follow-up to his first book, *Hardcore Zen*, Soto Zen monk and former punk musician Brad Warner unpacks Dogen's masterwork, *Shobogenzo*, or "Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye." (Warner's teacher, Gudo Wafu Nishijima, published an English translation of Dogen's original work.) The book's tantalizing subtitle notwithstanding, Warner's adventures in the hard-core scene of 1980s Akron, Ohio, sound pretty tame and have fairly little to do with this thorough reading of Dogen's interpretation of fundamental Buddhist teachings. Warner's jokey "punk" tone is inoffensive but seems unnecessary, given that he is an articulate and engaging writer whose discussion of Dogen offers much to readers from every background.—*J.B. ♦*

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## Staff News

### Heartfelt Gratitude to Maia

When Maia Duerr stepped into her job as our executive director in the summer of 2004, BPF had just gone through a great deal of transition and was in need of a leader who could both stabilize the organization and move it forward.

Over the last three years, Maia not only brought stability and harmony to BPF, she also helped the organization to grow professionally and spiritually. Maia organized the Buddhist Peace Delegation in D.C. in the fall of 2005 and again in the spring of 2007; our annual fundraising event with Tenzin Robert Thurman and Bhante Suhita Dharma in March 2006; and our membership gathering at Garrison Institute in June 2006.

BPF is now at a point of opportunity as we move into the next phase of weaving the Indra's net of socially engaged Buddhist activities. This growth is an extension of our strategic planning in 2006, in which Maia played an important role (see our strategic plan on our website, [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)). Maia also worked very hard to reestablish and strengthen the relationship between the BPF office and chapters across the country, helping to institute regular chapter council meetings and closer connections with our chapters. Through her cultivation of relationships with donors and members and by securing grants from foundations, Maia has helped the budget grow. Besides having a competent and dedicated staff, the organization is now financially sound and has a clearer vision of where it is going.

Maia's time as an executive director has also been full of challenges. Without much administrative assistance and with limited resources, Maia has dealt with competing demands for her time and attention in areas of fundraising, outreach, administration, and programs. Through times of crisis, Maia has stayed open and engaged, always seeking consensus and listening to others. She has never turned her back on the problems and has not been afraid to admit her mistakes. With her open heart and mind, Maia continues to educate herself and learn from her mistakes as well as her success. This is the quality of a true leader.

But more than anything, it is the personal connection we each have with her that is so special. Like a steady stream that gives comfort and a sense of peace to those she connects with, Maia exhibits true compassion and wisdom in her work and her life. Her commitment and dedication to socially engaged work is clearly felt and appreciated by all of us. She is an effective communicator, a very good listener, and above all, a trustworthy friend and bodhisattva.

On behalf of the BPF board of directors, I offer heartfelt gratitude to Maia for all that she has done for BPF and our community. We are delighted and honored to have shared our time and experience with her. We are excited that Maia will stay on with BPF and wish her the best in her new job as BPF's director of communication and outreach.

—Anchalee Kurutach

### Goodbye to Hong

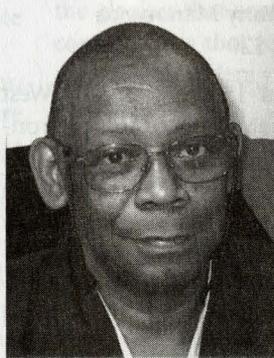
We wish to thank Hong Chingkuang for all of the work he has done with the Coming Home Initiative and the Transformative Justice Program over the last two years. Hong brought joy and humor to his work and to his relationship with the staff. His ideas helped shape and bring life to this new BPF program. Hong's insight into the prison system was invaluable and his compassion for this work outstanding. He continues on with BPF in a new position as an advisory board member for the Transformative Justice Program, but we will all miss seeing him around the office daily.

—Bhante Suhita Dharma

### Welcome Bhante and Catherine

BPF happily welcomes Catherine Cascade and Bhante Suhita Dharma, who will run the Transformative Justice Program and the Coming Home Initiative.

Bhante has been a monk for over 40 years in the the Sri Lankan Theravada lineage, Vajrayana, and the Mahayana Vietnamese Zen tradition of the Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam and America.



Bhante has extensive experience as a chaplain and social worker, including work with Bernie Glassman's Greyston Foundation in Yonkers, New York. He has provided service to homeless people, prisoners, and others in need. He has acted as a bridge between many

cultures in the world, and follows in what he calls the Triyana tradition, the way of compassion toward all beings.

Catherine, a Zen priest, recently moved to Berkeley Zen Center from Arcata, California.

She has led meditation groups in the Humboldt County Jail and at Pelican Bay State Prison for the last five years. She has been a monk at Shasta Abbey, a special education teacher, a child and family therapist, a volunteer coordinator for Habitat for Humanity, and an administrator for the local Humane Society.



We look forward to the opening of a Coming Home practice place and drop-in center within the next month. ❖

—Alan Senauke and Maia Duerr

# Gratitude

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