



Water Wheel

Being one with all Buddhas, I turn the water wheel of compassion.

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Go to the Place of No Grass

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



At the conclusion of an intensive practice period, Master Tozan bid goodbye to his monks saying, “Now, it is the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, and some of you are heading east and others are going west. You should go directly to the place of no grass for over ten thousand miles.” Again he said, “How will you go to the place of no grass for over ten thousand miles?”

Later that year, Sekiso heard of this and said, “When you go out of the gate, there is grass.”

A hundred years later, Taiyo said, “I would say, even if you don’t go out of the gate, grass is abundant everywhere.” (The Book of Equanimity, Case 89)

Now here you are, twelve centuries later, engaged in this conversation – what do you say?

I recently become reacquainted with grass during the Native American Bearing Witness Retreat held on Santee Sioux grasslands in South Dakota and during my vacation at my brother’s ranch on the Big Island, Hawaii. My body remembered the grasses of my island childhood, running barefoot over fields of wainaku grass (torpedo grass) with sharp shoots piercing the soles of us barefoot kids. To be back among the grasses stirred something within my being. I heard Master Tozan whisper, *You should go directly to the place of no grass for over ten thousand miles.*

Master Tozan Ryokai lived in 9th century China at a time of the Emperor’s anti-Buddhist persecution. Although many Buddhist monks went into hiding, Tozan himself did not. In those days, people lived on the land, crossing streams on foot (on one such occasion, Tozan himself became enlightened) and making a path through tall grass by placing a foot before and a foot behind in walking.



From left: Senseis Kipp Ryodo Hawley, Merle Kodo Boyd, Pat Shingetsu Guzy, John Daishin Buksbazen (seated), Gary Koan Janka, Roshi Egyoku Nakao, and Raul Ensho Berge.

Being an urban dweller these days, my experience of grass is unlike those who live on the land. Grass in the city, if it exists at all, is made into a lawn and needs mowing, or a so-called weed that needs to be uprooted from the garden, or, sadly these days, something to remove and replace with desert plants and gravel in order to conserve water. It is obvious that the grass does not need me. My being awakens, though, to the reality that I need grass.

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GO TO THE PLACE OF NO GRASS (*Continued from page 1*)

In the koan, “grass” can be seen as a metaphor for thoughts, delusions, and ideas of enlightenment – all the so-called weeds of the mind that create a sense of “me.” But grass itself – the slender green blades, the tall brown autumn stalks – can also be seen not as metaphor, but as the very dharma itself. Tozan says, “*How do you go directly to the place of no grass for over ten thousand miles.*” Go directly to the essence – go directly to the essential nature of who you are, of what life is.

See *the place of no grass for over ten thousand miles* as the essence – the place of No, the place beyond concepts and ideas about something. I recall many years ago at a Harmonia Mundi conference, the moderator asked Maezumi Roshi, “If you could go anywhere in time and be anyone, where would you go and who would you be.” Without hesitation he responded, “Nowhere and no one.” The audience gasped and then roared with laughter. Why? Because the response struck deep – go nowhere, be no one – go to the place of no grass for ten thousand miles!

“... go nowhere, be no one...”

During a three-year period of anti-Buddhist persecution, Sekiso gave up his robes and became a potter. Potters of old lived on the land and were deeply informed by the natural world. A master potter was truly an unknown craftsman in the sense that the pots were made by “no me,” arising from the potter’s intimately lived experience of No.

During one of Tozan’s training periods, one of the monks recounted Tozan’s instruction. Sekiso replied, “*When you go out of the gate, there is grass.*” Even taking one step, thoughts and ideas arise. Sekiso is also saying that having gone to the place of no grass, the moment you leave the realm of no grass, there is dharma everywhere. You must not attach to No.

Several hundred years later, Master Taiyo picked up the conversation and said, “*I would say, even if you don’t go out of the gate, grass is abundant everywhere.*” How marvelous! Just grass! Continuously, go beyond concepts, letting go of attachments to ideas and opinions. As Maezumi Roshi would say, “Have good guts.” Please don’t be afraid of your own effort, of your own body-mind, of plunging into life.

The depth of this koan is not just seeing through the conceptual mind and experiencing No. It also lies in stepping back into the grasslands, the endless expanse of everyday living. As much as you struggle to experience No, it is even a greater challenge to learn to live No in the

world of the great suffering mess of humanity. To live No is to see that every being and every thing is just as is, complete and whole and inextricably interconnected in the wild dance of action and reaction.

How are we to live No in the midst of this messy urban life? Recently, I read an inspiring post by the Catholic writer David Nantias about living in modern day devastated Detroit which he called “Living for the city: spiritual exercises from Detroit.” He lays out three practices that can guide us in living No among the grasses of city life.

First, see a deeper beauty. One does not need to look for beauty, but, rather, the transforming experience of No reveals the beauty of the world – the dandelion growing through concrete, the dog poop, the wrinkled and speckled hand of a ninety-year old. You notice that all is alive in the world; you become inexhaustibly curious about the boundless dharmas.

Second, see yourself as part of a shared struggle, joined with others in a common purpose to improve the life around you. You see that other lives are making your life possible. For the traces of “me,” this is an incredibly humbling experience. Mutuality – the fact of our interconnections – is both humbling and generative. My life is simply not possible without your life. We struggle together; we join together to better our neighborhoods and beyond.

Third, you see the necessity of talking story. Nantias calls this “front porch spirituality.” You talk to others; you share the joys and sorrows of friends, neighbors, and so-called strangers. No enables you not to be caught up in your confusion, but to be open and sharing of the pain of others. You are aware when you are bypassing life by being caught up in the small sense of “me.”

When I was in Hawaii, I sat with my 85-year-old uncle on the front porch of his home. My uncle had placed next to him a cardboard box in which one of his hens had made her nest and laid her eggs. Together, side by side, they sat in quiet communion for three weeks until four of her five eggs hatched. He and I sat watching the hen mothering her chicks, pecking their way through the pasture grasses, and talked story.

Wherever you are, there is grass – the abundant grass of life. Just as the place of no grass is transformative, even more so is the everyday living of the grasses of life. With every breath, the grass moves; with each breath of the grass, you are sustained. With each step, the grass bends; with each sway of the grass, you are received by the earth, by life itself.

Roshi Egyoku is ZCLA’s Abbot and Head Teacher.

Great Heart Way

by Iliia Shinko Perez



The Great Heart Way is the name of the practice (and book) that Gerry Shishin Wick Roshi and I developed about a decade ago. Its name is a reminder that our true mind resides in the heart. In this practice, we use our heart center as the major center for transformation.

How do we connect with our heart? We do it by focusing our attention on our heart center in the middle of our chest. Let's inhale and exhale a few times from the heart. Once we fill our chest with our breath, we can also fill our lower abdomen, our hara center. Then I say that we are grounding our consciousness in the heart and we are grounding our heart experience in the hara. When we exhale, we empty our abdomen and then our chest. You can practice this for as long as you want.

Usually in our Western culture, we seek transformation by using our conceptual mind. Maybe you have tried to exert conceptual power over the patterns and habits that are constricting your life. You might have told yourself many times, "I shouldn't do this anymore. This is hurting me" but you haven't been able to realize your good intentions. This is because the roots of our habitual patterns are in a place much deeper than our conceptual mind can reach. They are in our unconscious mind. The good news is that even Carl Jung himself acknowledged that meditation seems to be the royal road to our unconscious mind.

Author and philosopher Aldous Huxley said that the unconscious is the body, and psychiatrist Alexander Lowen, co-founder of Bionergetics, said that feelings express the life of the body. If we put these two together, we have that feelings are the language of our unconscious mind. By learning how to feel, we will be learning the language of our body, of our unconscious mind, and we will be able to effect the positive changes in our life that we want so much.

In accord with the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, the reason why we don't know ourselves is due to the layers of protection that we have built around our hearts. The heart is the organ of feeling. Being afraid of our feelings and emotions is a symptom of how alienated we are from ourselves. Our heart opens when we learn how to feel. By learning how to feel we can expand our consciousness and use the very limitations and discomforts that we experience as the gateway to a greater realization of our inner space.

The word "compassion" literally means "feeling with." We can't have compassion unless we're first willing to feel what we feel. This connects us with an innocence and vulnerability in our heart that is the seed of Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is a spontaneous wish to attain enlightenment motivated by great compassion for all sentient beings, accompanied by a falling away of the attachment to the illusion of an inherently existing self. The path of the bodhisattva is a path of the heart. A practice done with the intention to benefit all beings should certainly benefit the people we live with and see daily. I have been practicing the Great Heart Way in order to liberate all beings within me that suffer. Since we are all connected at a collective, unconscious level, when we liberate our own inner suffering, we help to liberate all beings that are suffering.

Buddhist practitioner and psychotherapist John Welwood says: *"Feeling is a form of intelligence. It's the body's direct, holistic, intuitive way of knowing and responding. It is highly attuned and intelligent. And it takes account of many factors all at once, unlike our conceptual mind, which can only process one thing at a time. Even if we've been doing spiritual practice for decades, we still find these big, raw, messy feelings coming up... But if we can acknowledge these feelings, and open ourselves nakedly to them, we're moving toward greater openness, in a way that is grounded in our humanness... We are not just humans learning to become buddhas, but also buddhas waking up in human form, learning to become fully human..."*

Usually, traditional Buddhism doesn't distinguish between feelings and emotions, so they are seen as something samsaric to be transcended. Feelings are the natural response of our body to the challenges of life. Emotion is the reverberation of a feeling when the intellect tries to interpret the feeling. Then our ego produces stories to explain that feeling based on associations with the past and projections onto the future. This can create intense emotional reactions that can have negative consequences. For example, someone under the spell of jealousy, who doesn't know how to feel and transform that emotion, could act in a violent way. Emotion is a feeling that has been twisted in the head.

Hosting our feelings with unconditional presence is not emotionality and is different from indulging in feelings. Emotionality is a defense mechanism directed at someone or something "out there." Indulging in feelings is going over and over stories in our head about the feelings. For example, if we are feeling sorrow or grief, we could indulge in those feelings by attaching and identifying with

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GREAT HEART WAY (continued from page 3)

a story line like *“Why does this have to happen to poor me?”* instead of nakedly feeling the actual sorrow or grief itself. These feelings are just raw energy that can transform if we learn how to directly feel the energy or “wind” beneath the label “sorrow” or “grief.” Being able to open directly to a feeling brings a sense of freedom. The freedom of being able to feel whatever we are feeling, the freedom of being able to experience whatever we are experiencing, the freedom of being able to feel and look at our pain directly so we can liberate it. Trungpa Rinpoche said that fearlessness is the willingness to meet and feel our fear. By delving into our feelings (or into our pain) fearlessly and nakedly, we can liberate that pain.

Psychiatrist Alexander Lowen writes: *“An emotional healthy person can display a large range of emotions in a short amount of time. Jealousy can turn into grief, which can turn into loving feelings... These changes are like waves on the surface of the ocean. They don't disturb the deep calm that gives us a sense of joy and fulfillment.”*



When feelings of fear, anxiety, anger or jealousy arise (or whatever feeling it may be), connect with your heart or, to say it in a different way, ground your consciousness in your heart and hara and make a conscious effort to meet the feeling directly without having any preconceptions about it or weaving stories to interpret it. The actual meaning of a feeling can only be clear to us after we have felt it completely. In this way, the energy of the feeling transforms: anger, for example, can transform into sadness, which can transform into joy.

I like the term coined by Eckardt Tolle to describe our suffering. He says, *“The body of pain is my term to describe the accumulation of old emotional pain that almost all people carry in their energy field...”*

The notion of pain-body as “I” or “me” is caused by not knowing our true self. The definition of not knowing ourselves is ignorance, which is the root cause of suffering. The body of pain is not by nature permanent or solid or fixed. Yet this limited experience of ourselves becomes an identity, a place of familiarity where we get stuck and spend far too much of our lives.

Everything we react to in others is a mirror of something we're not facing or acknowledging in ourselves and are unconsciously projecting onto others. *“I like that person”* or *“I dislike that person.”* By being aware of what we are

projecting on others and taking responsibility for the way we feel, we can help liberate our pain-body.

By nature our true self is empty, vast, open and clear, without obstructions. This is who we are intrinsically. Vast emptiness, vast spaciousness, vast openness, vast clarity, like an endless light-filled sky, is the source of our being and, in this vast openness, we are connected to all life. When we are ignorant of our inner space, we are unfamiliar with the space that a problem is occupying or obscuring. If we want to make a change in a situation or in our own behavior, it is essential to shift our attention from the story we are telling ourselves about what is happening to the inward experience we are having. We can learn to welcome our uncomfortable feelings for what they are: gates for transformation. We can learn to feel our discomforts within the inner stillness, silence, and spaciousness of our true self.

The structure of our pain-body is supported by a specific energy force or wind. It is very important that you practice shifting your attention from the story that occupies your conceptual mind and connect with the wind, energy or force, which holds the pain-body together. Connecting to the underlying wind is like catching a horse, a horse that, when you learn to ride it, will transform.

Eckhart Tolle says: *“Every pain-body contains a great deal of fear, since fear is the primordial negative emotion. How do we deal with that? Here again, you recognize it for what it is: the pain-body, an accumulation of old emotion. Once you recognize it, it cannot take over your mind, feed on your negative thoughts, and control your internal dialogue as well as what you say and do. Once the pain-body has come up, don't fight or resist it... There is also a collective human pain-body containing the pain suffered by countless human beings throughout history.”*

What is it that liberates pain? The moment that we realize that we are bigger than our pain-body is a liberating moment. Ask yourself, *“Am I being aware of what I am feeling?”* If you are aware of what you are feeling, you are already bigger than what you are feeling, and therefore you can liberate your pain-body, and as you do so, you will also be helping to liberate the collective pain-body.

May this practice clear what is obscuring your unique gifts so you may bring them forward into this world for the benefit of others.

Roshi Shinko is the Abbess of Maitreya Abbey and co-spiritual director of Great Mountain Zen Center in Berthoud, CO.

Unbroken Circle

by Merle Kodo Boyd



It has been over a month now since I, along with over 200 others, traveled to the Black Hills of South Dakota for the Zen Peacemakers' Native American Bearing Witness Retreat. We were there to bear witness to the 1890 massacre of Lakota men, women, and children by U.S. Armed Forces, as an integral part of the founding of this country, and to the suffering arising from these acts and continuing to this day. Before leaving I agreed to write briefly on what arose for me during the retreat. This has been far more difficult than I anticipated.

Since the retreat, images, emotions, associations and memories have not stopped arising. They have been a powerful stream running through each day, but articulating them clearly to others seems beyond me. At the same time, I tell many people about what I saw and heard at Pine Ridge, at Wounded Knee, and in the tents where we gathered to listen to each other. I am slowly seeing how what I heard and saw affected me.

My many reactions have an intimate relationship to questions I have carried since childhood: How does one make peace with a life of being reviled and physically threatened? How does one live free and happy in a body reviled by many others? I have taken this question to other places of collective suffering, but never to one so geographically vast that it was able to lead the mind to spaciousness. In this wide place, the eye could travel unhindered until it simply couldn't see any more. Overhead the sky was big, as promised, yet the clouds seemed to hang so low I could touch them. This tangible spaciousness, like the ocean receiving all waters, was witness to the deliberate devastation of a people. Here bearing witness to both vastness and deep sorrow included my life-long koan. We bore witness to the land and its people, the land and its people bore witness to us. I listened deeply to the stories of the Lakota elders and grandmothers, and what arose in me was both powerful and wordless. I apologize that my language cannot express it.

I was deeply impressed by the courageous and generous way they shared the stories of their lives. I was moved by the way they identified themselves first, telling us whose child they were, going back as far as they could and coming forward again. I was moved by the way they spoke so openly of their children's suicides, of the link between present causes and historical causes. I was touched by the quiet eloquence with which they conveyed the devastation of being deliberately cut off from their culture and

its spiritual life. And still, when they spoke, the women especially, they reflected a wholeness sustained by the central place they gave ceremony and prayer. They had faith in its power to ground and enrich their lives and the lives of their children. Listening, I was able to see the legacy of my own people's enslavement in a broader perspective. I could see common patterns in the human act of dominating a people. I could see familiar human patterns in a dominated people's ways of surviving and resisting. I could see the cruel and painful intimacy of the one attempting to dominate another, locked together in sad and futile action.

In one of the many conversations I had with others at the retreat, someone asked the question "If the most recent treaty is honored and all of the land returned to the Lakota, what happens to the people who live on that land now?" That question stayed with me throughout the rest of the retreat and is with me now. How is past injustice



made just? How is past cruelty healed? How does atonement occur? So often the sense of being wronged just passes from one "other" to another, the experience of trauma just moves along. How do we avoid that? Because the circle of life is truly unbroken, we are all involved – dominator, dominated, and all between who live out the consequences. All of us – how do we live injustice into justice, especially those of us who feel uninvolved? What are the collective actions of atoning? In deed and perpetration over time, the magnitude of these founding injustices seem vast beyond atoning, and there seems no determined collective inclination to atone.

At times the optimism of my parents' generation slips away from me. I feel anger and despair. But in the presence of the Black Hills' vastness and the grandmothers' wise humor, I was able to glimpse the longer view. I was able to summon, yet again and for a short time, a bit of determination and patience. I must nurture that.

Roshi Kodo is a teacher at the Lincroft Zen Sangha.

Shadows of the Black Hills

by Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown

When I started off for the Black Hills, I wondered which of my invisible assumptions would be exposed and swept away by the time I returned home, leaving me grappling with new perspectives. This wasn't someone else's genocide; it wasn't Rwanda. This was bearing witness to American genocide. I am a descendant of many historical identities, and yet I haven't felt deeply connected to any of them culturally or to their traditions. My paternal grandmother was part Comanche and she completely disconnected herself culturally throughout her life and didn't even discuss this part of herself with my father. Only when my sister and I were born did she begin to talk about being Comanche. That never made sense to me until I sat in the Black Hills this past July listening to the Lakota Elders talk about grandparents' responsibilities, and suddenly, my grandmother's gift to me became clear.

I arrived a few days early to settle and acclimate to a different pace before beginning the retreat. Over the years, I've worked with many Native American youth coming out of drug and alcohol rehab before returning to their home reservations. The problems they face with poverty, abuse, neglect, and despair have often felt so insurmountable. I couldn't envision how they would ever be able to walk through them and heal because in so many cases, they were trying to do so in isolation. I have never claimed native identity because I never lived with that cultural context as primary. I grew up knowing the victor's version of Comanche history and yet, I'm intimately connected to the experience of intergenerational trauma that resulted from it.

There were so many threads to the tapestry woven during this retreat, it's difficult to separate out just one, and perhaps that's the point – nothing can be separated out, no matter how hard we try. I was transformed by the experience of this Bearing Witness Retreat and by simply being in the Black Hills in ways I'm still discovering. I felt the pain of a young man trying to find his place in the world. My heart broke with the chief of police and the painful realities of despair. I felt the indignant anger and frustration in an outburst at Wounded Knee when someone said, "I wish we never agreed to do this." It reminded me of watching a woman try to explain to someone why the *Black Lives Matter* statement could not be changed to *All Lives Matter* because society doesn't value white and black lives equally. Indigenous People face the same reality. Their lives have not mattered in our culture. They still don't matter, and until we begin to accept the biases we have embedded so deeply in our culture and language, we will never begin to collectively change and heal.

Steven Newcomb, co-founder of the Indigenous Law Institute, and the Lakota Elders changed my life. In his book *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* and his newly released documentary *The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking the Domination Code*, he gave me a new paradigm with which to relate to just about everything in my life. Steven traces the effects of papal edicts and shows the causal linking in how our European-American culture came to dehumanize indigenous people (and all people of color) and how we continue to do so. This has caused a cascade effect for me personally, and I hope for others too.

For the first time, I began to experience that change is possible. This is what I found so powerful and refreshing at the Retreat. Experiencing the humanity of Steven

Newcomb, Charmaine White Face and other Elders standing in the wholeness of their being and functioning as bodhisattvas with such integrity was so powerful; it shifted something fundamental in me. I wanted to cry at the



John Gast's American Progress shows the great westward expansion.

beauty of how these people are living out their vows. They inspire me. After the retreat, I visited the sacred site, Hinhan Kaga, where Black Elk has his famous vision at the age of nine. For the past 150 years, this sacred Lakota site has been officially called Harney Peak after a general who massacred 100 innocent Lakota. In May of this year, the Peak's name was returned to its Lakota Sioux name. Walking up Hinhan Kaga is really walking through a field of crystals. The Lakota asked us to come and pray with them and simply receive what they had to offer. My final takeaway: Steven Newcomb pointed out that the Latin roots of the word America – Ame and Rica – can be translated as Love of Riches or Riches of Love. Reminds me of an old Indian story about two wolves. Which will I feed?



1870s photo of a pile of American bison skulls to be ground for fertilizer.

Enduring-Vow is a priest-in-training at ZCLA.

From Cancer Patient to Patient Advocate

by Jonathan Kaigen Levy



In 2009, I was diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer. The urologist told my wife Doris and me that a CT scan showed that the cancer had already metastasized (spread) to my liver. Any treatment would only be palliative, since a cure was now impossible. We were in total disbelief and shock. We felt helpless, confused and numb. At

the time, I didn't think to ask to see the radiology report. Later when I did obtain it, I noted the radiologist's suggestion that I be re-scanned. The urologist had failed to pass this along. I learned a fundamental lesson: always get copies of your medical records.

I discovered that liver lesions, besides being dangerous, are also very rare. So I requested further testing to confirm the diagnosis. The re-scan revealed that what had been assumed to be cancer were actually benign blood vessels. No, I did not hire a lawyer; I immediately ended treatment with that doctor. But more importantly, I became my own health care advocate.

While searching for a new doctor, I began doing guided meditation with a group of cancer patients. It calmed me and taught me that I was not alone. I also meditated at my friend Robert's house, where a remark about ZCLA led to my present Zen practice.

After much research, I chose radiation treatment along with hormone therapy. My cancer responded well. But after treatment ended, the numbers started to rise again. In an effort to find the source of recurrence, my wife and I crisscrossed the country scanning and biopsying. The results were all negative. We couldn't find the cancer.

I then contacted the Prostate Cancer Research Institute (PCRI), a patient advocacy organization. We discussed my situation, some possible options, and in the process, I ended up training to be a helpline educational facilitator. I now encourage the men and women I speak with on the hotline to ask the questions that I learned to ask.

- Is my diagnosis correct?
- Should the pathology be reviewed?
- Are there tests that need to be done to provide additional details, including newer tests for genetic markers?

My current doctor values and respects my opinions and the knowledge I have of my disease. He and I practice shared decision-making. Sound familiar? This process

highlights the importance of clinicians and patients working together to produce the optimal treatment decision for the patient at a particular point in time. It invites patient engagement, is flexible and able to change with circumstances as they arise, and is always fresh and open to discovery. I wanted to try a state of the art molecular PET scan useful for detecting bone metastasis. My doctor agreed and wrote the order. The scan showed several bone lesions in brilliant illumination. It was quite a light show. The upside? Now I was eligible for a clinical trial that I had long been hoping to enroll in. Participating in a trial brings with it two benefits:

- You get to try an experimental drug, not otherwise available, that may offer as yet unknown benefits.
- You are loaning the prostate cancer community your body and disease in the hope that others will derive a future benefit.

After six months on the trial, we re-scanned. My doctor could have easily waited – instead he phoned me as he was coming off a plane from Europe to give me wonderful news, knowing that it would make the next day's holiday celebration a true Thanksgiving. The results were astounding: No suspicious increased activity to suggest active metastases. The majority of previously noted metastases are without significant activity. I was in remission!

I recently attended a convention for doctors who specialize in molecular imaging. I represented PCRI as the spokesperson for patient-centered care. The response to my presentation took me by surprise. Doctors stopped me to tell me how moved they were by my story, and best of all, they were enthusiastic about my message of patient-centered care. Actually, in my view, which has changed many times throughout my journey, this type of healthcare is neither doctor-centered nor patient-centered. It is a shared endeavor. I couldn't have done it without my doctors, and they couldn't have done it without me.

Men know instinctively that a prostate cancer diagnosis will change their lives forever. Ironically, my disease has turned out to be a gift, a gift that allows me to give back. As a patient advocate for PCRI and a Zen practitioner, I listen deeply and with an open heart as men try to express what they are going through. I support them, their partners, and their families, sharing with them what I have learned along the way.

For more information, contact Jonathan Levy at Prostate Cancer Research Institute, 310-743-2116.

Kaigen is a priest-in-training at ZCLA.

My Ego! My Amigo!

by Conrad Butsugen Romo



How has my writing been influenced by Zen practice?

Great Faith, Great Doubt, Great Determination!

Often things I've written started with a single word like shorn. I chewed on that one for weeks. Other times, it'll be an opening line like: When I'm dead, promise me that my brother Jaime doesn't sing at my funeral. Sometimes it'll be an image that I'll want to feature, but don't quite know how to get to it.

And there are times that I really don't know what I have until I've wrestled with it and then, when read aloud, it comes alive. Years ago, a writing teacher gave me *Black Spring* by Henry Miller and told me to not attempt to copy his style, but to get a feel for his rhythm, his tone, and perhaps an essence of Miller would then influence something that I would write for class. I didn't like Henry Miller and hated this book and the exercise. I protested and cursed and begged the teacher to give me something else to work with, but he wouldn't relent. Every day, I would attempt to write something, but it was only after immense effort that I'd eke out a few sentences one day or a paragraph or two the next.

A week passed and I didn't have anything good enough or long enough to bring to class. Time was running out with but an hour or so before I had to go to class empty handed or skip it. I gathered up everything that I had written that week into one document and started rearranging a sentence here and a paragraph there. I added a few more words to a sentence and deleted a few others and ultimately wound up with a short something that I printed out and took to class. I felt a mix of relief and despair at the same time. When my turn came to read that night, I thought of making a disclaimer to my classmates that what they were about to hear was total crap. Instead, I just read my piece. I read it without apology or any excuses. It turned out much better than my very discriminating mind would have me believe. It turned out to be the first piece of mine that was published.

Sometimes, it's all an effortless process of flow and unfolding. Time and time again, it's about me showing up and being as present as I can and bearing with all the ingredients in my life that want to be lived and doing my best to give voice to some of them.

Butsugen is a writer and longtime practitioner of ZCLA.

Dharma Training Fund Surpasses Its Goal of \$10,000

by Darla Myoho Fjeld

The Dharma Training Fund is one of the Zen Center's funding sources, along with the Annual Fund, Membership Fees, Program Fees, and Legacy Gifts. What is unique about the Dharma Training Fund is that it allows the Zen Center to encourage everyone to participate fully in all of our programs: no one is turned away for lack of funds. Each year, 10 to 20 practitioners would be hindered by lack of funds if the Dharma Training Fund did not exist. Most of these folks are able to pay something toward their training, but not the whole amount. In addition, the Dharma Training Fund supports our classes, workshops, retreats, and other programs; it supports all of us in our practice.

This year, our goal was to raise \$10,000. I am happy to report that we reached our goal and more. A generous 78 donors helped us to raise \$12,228, giving in the following way:



27 gifts in the \$15 to \$50 range
33 gifts in the \$60 to \$151 range
12 gifts in the \$200 to \$300 range
6 gifts in the \$500 to \$1,000 range

In addition, we are particularly grateful that an anonymous donor came forward early on in the Dharma Training Fund campaign to offer a matching challenge of \$1,000. This challenge was met by another anonymous donor. These two donors, along with all our donors, truly embody the spirit of Bodhidharma's teaching: "Since that which is real includes nothing worth begrudging, they give their body, life, and property in charity, without regret, without the vanity of giver, gift, or recipient, and without the bias of attachment." We are deeply grateful to each of our donors for your heart-felt gifts to this fund.

Myoho is the Steward of the ZCLA Development Circle.

The Zendo Practice of Face-to-Face, Part 2

by George Mukai Horner



Face-to-Face is the practice of student and teacher meeting privately during *zazen* for one-to-one instruction. In my previous article, I presented the protocol of Face-to-Face: how we join a line, wait, enter the room, and leave. Now we can look at the meeting itself.

The protocol and forms are not mere formality. They enable us to collect and settle ourselves, to become present, attentive, and open to our current situation, or to whatever aspect of it is pressing most upon us, so that when we meet the teacher, we are ready to consider whatever arises in light of the fundamental fact of life:

- We do not exist separately from anything. Every aspect of our life is nothing other than our very own being, which is simply manifesting itself just as it is.
- Even so, we recognize the diversity of our life, make distinctions between one thing and another, and particularly between ourselves and others, thereby opening a space for wisdom and compassion to manifest.
- These not-being-separate and recognizing-the-diversity are so completely interdependent, so thoroughly inseparable, that they truly aren't even *aspects* of our life; they simply *are* the harmonious functioning of our life itself, altogether, just as it is.

We call this fundamental fact of oneness, diversity, and harmony, the Three Treasures. It is the touchstone for working in Face-to-Face. It may sound theoretical and abstract, but it is not. What makes it not is how we work.

As we sit in the Zendo awaiting a call to join the line, as we sit in line awaiting our turn, we are in *zazen*. We let our minds settle, and open ourselves to the full situation of our life. Not imposing anything on it, we set aside our opinions of how things are – or at least, try to hold those opinions loosely enough that a new understanding could arise to dislodge them. We open ourselves equally to what we like and dislike. We don't turn away from anything, but allow ourselves to face even things we don't want to face

and to feel things we don't want to feel. The ability to do that is the power of *zazen*.

When you have seated yourself before the teacher, pause. Breathe. Collect yourself. Then state your name and the practice in which you engage as you sit, whether counting or following your breath, *shikan-taza* (just sitting), your current koan, or whatever else. The meeting of teacher and student, Buddha with Buddha, will go from there.

Perhaps there will be something you strongly need to bring to the teacher, or the teacher will have something to bring to you. It is like the practice of council. Be attentive to what is arising. Don't be abstract, but stay connected to your actual life. Almost any aspect of our life could be raised in Face-to-Face, because every aspect reveals ourselves to us. But whatever the details, keep returning to this fact: amid all the distinctions, considerations, judgements, problems, opportunities, likes and dislikes, we are not separate from any of it. We, each of us, are the harmonious functioning of oneness and diversity. We use this fact to untangle the situation, and we use the situation to help us appreciate this fact.



Working this way with a specific aspect of our life, something will arise, a realization, a shift in our understanding, a change in how we relate to it. Maybe an

action will suggest itself. This way of working, of being open, willing to feel, and seeing what then arises, has a name. These are the Three Tenets of the Zen Peacemakers: Not-knowing, Bearing Witness, and the Action to which they give rise. It is the embodiment of our true nature.

I will leave you with this. The meeting of student and teacher is an essential Zen practice. But it is not about getting something from the teacher. A teacher is a gift to the student. A student is a gift to the teacher. This is a mutual sharing of the Way.

So when you hear a call for Face-to-Face, and the call fits you, you don't need to consider whether you will have something to say, or how you feel about going. Entering that room, you bring your entire life with you. So go. Just go. In doing so, you will discover why you went.

Mukai is a longtime practitioner and the Zendo Steward.

The Legacy Circle

The Legacy Circle was launched in 2006 and currently has 40 members. It is comprised of members, donors and friends who have arranged for future gifts or bequests to the Zen Center in their wills or estate planning.

What a Legacy Gift Can Do

The Zen Center has greatly benefited from the generosity of donors who have left bequests and estate gifts. The Buddha Hall and the Pine House were brought back to life and the Founders Room was moved to the Buddha Hall. All of our buildings have been painted and repaired. Our driveway and our grounds are now inviting to practitioners and passersby. Soon we will be able to create a new altar for the Buddha Hall and make improvements to the Zendo. A future goal is to renovate the Dharma Hall to provide more space for talks and workshops.

Planning Ahead to Give a Gift for the Future

Taking the next step: Your Estate Plan is about what is most important to you. It leaves a Legacy for your family and other cherished people. Members of the Legacy Circle, after taking care of their families, have provided for future members of the Zen Center. A good first step is to research your options on-line: www.leavealegacy.org and meet with a lawyer.

For more information on becoming a Legacy Circle Member, please contact Darla Myoho Fjeld at dr.fjeld@gmail.com or (310) 486-7752.



Legacy Tea tenzos (left) Ellen Reigen Ledley, Nan Reishin Merritt, and Melissa Merritt.



Dharma Dudes (left) Chris Hackman and Frank Genku Martinez.



Lunch is served!



Legacy Circle Members

Mark Shogen Bloodgood
 Karla Dare
 Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown
 Daniel Nagacitta Buckley
 Gale Buckley
 John Daishin Buksbazen
 Concetta Getsuren Alfano
 Tom Pine-Ocean Cleary
 Elizabeth Jiei Cole
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 Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson
 Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen
 John Heart-Mirror Trotter
 Nina Reiju Wasserman
 Ty Jotai Webb
 Tom Yudo Burger

Your Gifts are Received with a Heartfelt “Thank You!”

The Zen Center is maintained by the hands and eyes of each one of you.

To **Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen** and **Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for leading the Precepts Class Series;

To **Jonathan Kaigen Levy**, **Kathy Myoan Solomon**, and **Mark Shogen Bloodgood** for leading the Day of Reflection;

To **George Mukei Horner** and **Tom Yudo Burger** for leading the Dharma Chat;

To **Jim Dojun Hanson** and **Chris Daian Fields** for their Personal Practice talks;

To **Lorraine Gessho Kumpf** for leading the Tangaryo and **Mukei** for leading Wall Gazing;

To **Jenny Bright** for providing the breakfast for the Wall Gazers;

To all those who helped with the Legacy Tea: **Roshi Egyoku**, **Darla Myoho Fjeld**, **Patti Muso Giggans**, **Ellen Reigen Ledley**, **Faith-Mind**, **Shogen**, **Jessica Oetsu Page**, **Nan Reishin Merritt**, **Melissa Merritt**, **Yudo**, **Tara Jiho Sterling**, **Mara Shiko Cohn**, **Shawn Shaon Nichols**, **Cody Pham**, **Jeanne Dokai Dickenson**, **Yuen Yuesen**, **Dharma Dudes Chris Hackman** and **Frank Genku Martinez**, **Sarah McCarron**, and **Janet Ko Ren Sager-Knott**;

To **Jane Chen** for teaching the Tenzo Cooking class and to her students: **Hilda Bolden**, **Josh Berkowitz**, **Mukei**, **Jeff Sekiun LaCoss**, and **Kane Buzen Phelps**;

To **Jane Chen**, **Yuesen**, **Katherine Senshin Griffith**, **Oetsu**, **Tim Zamora**, and **Myoho** for kitchen cleaning;

To **Kodo Watanabe** for work done around the Zen Center;

To **Jitsujo**, **Gessho**, **Mukei**, **Senshin**, **Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson**, **DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass**, and **Sensei Merle Kodo Boyd** for their Dharma talks;

To **Jiho**, **Patricia Keian Pfof**, and **Reishin** for preparing snacks during the Day of Reflection;

To **Mukei** for leading the Entering/Leave-taking ceremonies;

To **Dharma-Joy** for leading the August Zazenkai;



Dokai helping to clean the Founders altar.



Faith-Mind and Rev. Kodo preparing breakfast for the SZBA board members.



The neighborhood altar to save the trees. From left: Rev. Kodo, Jitsujo, Yuesen, Gessho and Charles. The sign says “The Earth is for us to protect. Please don’t litter.”

To **Roshi** for leading the Priest Training;

To the HEAR Circle (**Reigen**, **Shogen**, and **Gessho**) and **Roshi** and **Myoho** for reviewing the Ethics documents;

To **Myoho** and **Faith-Mind** for leading the Sangha Forum;

To **Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley** for leading the Just Summer Sesshin;

To **Kim Kimu DeBacco** for the July Dharma Chat;

To **Buzen** for stewarding the Sacred Circle Dancing;

To **Shogen** for the many years of stewarding ZP1 and ZP2;

To **Kaigen** and **Jitsujo**, the new stewards of Introduction to Zazen (formerly ZP1 and ZP2);

To the **Pepperdine** students, **Ryan Allen** (Pepperdine alum), and **Jerry Velasquez** (tree planting coordinator) for their work on the neighborhood trees;

To **Ty Jotai Webb** for stewarding the Disaster Preparedness Circle;

To **Faith-Mind**, **Myoho**, **Kodo Watanabe**, **Yudo**, and **Jitsujo** for hosting and housing the Soto Zen Buddhist Association members;

To **Enduring-Vow**, **Kaizen**, and **Myoho** for organizing the Q&A meeting with LAPD Officer Ashpaugh;

To our third quarter tenzos **Mujin Sunim**, **Jitsujo**, **Yuesen**, **Jane Chen**, **Buzan**, **Kaizen**, and **Josh Berkowitz**;

To **Rev. Issho Fujita** for the Thursday night Dharma talk;

To **Leon Berg** and **Andrew Taggart** for the money workshop;

Our third quarter Jikidos **Kaizen**, **Robert Doetsu Ross**, **Jitsujo**, **Yuesen**, **Genku**, **Dojun**, **Chris Hackman**, and **Tim Zamora**;

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To **Gessho**, **Faith-Mind**, and **Sensei Ensho** for preparations and cleanup for the Inka Ceremony.

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Lincroft, NJ Zen Sangha
led by Sensei Merle Kodo Boyd

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)
coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The Ocean Moon Sangha (Santa Monica, CA)
led by Sensei John Daishin Buksbazen

The San Luis Obispo Sitting Group (CA)
coordinated by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Santa Barbara Zen Center (CA)
led by Sensei Gary Koan Janka

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)
led by Sensei Patricia Shingetsu Guzy

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)
led by Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Outreach Groups

**CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group
California Men's Colony (CMC)
San Luis Obispo, CA**
led by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

**One Essence Sangha
California Institution for Women (CIW)
Corona, CA**
led by DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass

Contact info@zcla.org for information.

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Our mission is to know the Self, maintain the precepts, and serve others. We provide the teaching, training, and transmission of Zen Buddhism. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized, and compassion flows unhindered.

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Welcome New Members

Jenny Bright
Ben Marshall
Beth Sternleib
Jarrett Wilson
Debra Shinko McKay

Welcome New Resident

Dave Kakuon DeFrank

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Diane True-Joy Fazio - *Tenzo Circle Member*
Darla Myoho Fjeld - *Development Circle Steward*
Tina Jitsujo Gauthier - *Disaster Preparedness Co-Steward
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