



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

The Zen Center's Collective Journey

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



In 1998, when we were challenged with recreating the Zen Center of Los Angeles, we asked this question: Can a Zen organization be spiritual? In other words, can it operate on all levels in accordance with the principles that Zen espouses: that everyone and everything is the unborn nature, that all is interconnected and included, that the

precepts are a true guide for individual, community, and organizational conduct?

Our experiment with forms and structures that reinforce these principles on a daily basis led us to more questions. What is collective awakening? What is collective wisdom? What is the collective journey?

We examined these questions again at the conclusion of our recent year-long exploration of the Ten Ox Herding pictures. Like most Zen awakening stories, the traditional Ox Herding pictures depict a typical individual journey of grueling effort, an enlightenment experience, followed by a life dedicated to serving others. Sometimes people believe that the journey ends with individual awakening, but that leaves one perched at the top of Zen's proverbial one-hundred-foot pole. What then?

Awakening is a portal into an expansive sense of reality and multiplied perspectives that radically transform how we live, however imperfect we may believe ourselves to be.

In today's culture of highly prized individualism, can we awaken together? Can we shift our attention from our own quest to the collective quest for awakening? Can we invite collective wisdom to arise as a way of fulfilling the Bodhisattva Vows to end suffering and increase the field of beneficial action? What are the group shadows and follies we need to be aware of?



Zen Center Mandala has feet!

These questions have been alive for our Sangha since 2008, when the issues emerged spontaneously during a nine-month exploration of leadership called "Under the Bones of the Master." During this exploration, the fact that a convicted child molester was practicing here became known. This revelation, and the subsequent bearing witness to the upheaval that followed, created a portal for collective wisdom to arise.

Around 2,500 years ago, Siddhartha Gautama, after seven years of striving, sat under a Bo tree, became one with the morning star, and awakened. In the intimate merging with the morning star, he exclaimed: "Wonder of wonders! That's it! That's me! That's me shining so brightly! How wondrous: all beings are endowed with this pure

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THE ZEN CENTER'S COLLECTIVE JOURNEY *(Continued from page 1)*

nature! This great earth, all the trees and flowers, all beings and all things everywhere are shining brightly, are awake!”

Siddhartha's questions about the nature of reality woke him up from his small story and revealed him as All – everything and everyone. In a moment of total availability, he knew intimately that nothing is excluded. You and I, too, endeavor to wake up from our small stories, from the narratives that keep us confined. Collective awakening – this intimacy of our common nature – summons a shift from our limiting individual stories to new, all-encompassing stories that open a portal to group wisdom.

How do we include? How do we let ourselves be included?

The Heart Sutra, which we chant most mornings at Zen Center, concludes with a resounding mantra: Gaté, Gaté, Paragaté, Parasamgaté, Bodhi Svaha! It means: Gone, Gone, Gone Beyond, Completely Gone Beyond! Our founding abbot Maezumi Roshi often improvised his translation as: Gone, Gone, Gone Beyond. All together, Gone Beyond. What is this “all together”?

Awakening is a potential of every group.

Is there an awakening that is only available to groups? Can we stretch this “all together” and reveal the potential invitation for collective awakening and wisdom to arise that is not about individual effort alone, but the efforts of all individuals in concert with each other? Can we investigate a way of practicing that awakens the group field of wisdom-compassion that is not dependent on any single person—usually the teacher -- but on all of us together? How would we know that such a thing is occurring?

Group awakening, and the wisdom called forth, is a potential of every group. At Zen Center, we have been nurturing the field of group wisdom through our Shared Steward circles, which represent the basic form of our organizational Mandala or Circle of Life. The organizational practices of councils and circles, guiding questions, and the application of the Three Tenets all prime the Dharma pump. We have confidence in the group's capacity to move beyond habitual thinking or traditional responses, calling forth fresh and creative approaches. We know that this can lead to loving actions that serve the whole in surprising and generative ways.

Cultivating group wisdom continually challenges each of us to practice with inclusion. In attending to the very

complex situation of the convicted child molester, we created a Many Hands and Eyes Circle of twelve persons to actively nurture and carry the field of group wisdom and compassion. This Circle developed extensive guiding questions arising from the issues that surfaced in a Sangha Council attended by all the parties involved, including the former inmate, the prison chaplains, Sangha members, the Abbot, the stewards, and those who in the past experienced traumas of molestation. For a year-long period of intense and thorough exploration, we carried our intention of serving the whole of the situation, not just the interests of a few parties. We practiced steadily in this way throughout the difficulties and challenges of our situation.

After about ten months of intense bearing witness with this situation, the Sangha came up with a solution for including the former prisoner, which was one of many issues being addressed. When I called to tell him of the proposed arrangements, I asked him if, after all that had transpired, did he want to return? And if so, how did he feel about it? “I'll admit I'm scared,” he responded, “but here's the thing: you have all worked so hard to include me. That's never happened to me before. I want to respect that.”

Inclusion is difficult. In a culture that prizes individualism and consumerism, it is all too easy to opt for the quick and easy solution, for acting like a Lone Ranger, for not wanting to engage others, for forcing our opinions and views on others, or for not allowing ourselves to be included.

A crisis is often a portal for exploring collective awakening and wisdom. Our own experience has taught us, however, that unless we continually nurture the group field of group wisdom and love, we are unlikely to enter such a portal at crucial times. Our collective muscle will be stiff or, at worse, atrophied. Furthermore, without ongoing attention to the group field, we'll lack the tools, container, or vision for such an effort.

As individuals, each of us must strengthen our own potential to engage in the collective journey. At the end of our Ox Herding discussions, we identified three important practices for each of us. These are to embrace not-knowing, to engage in continual self-reflection, and to strengthen our relationships with each other on an ongoing basis.

Please reflect upon these practices as we continue to engage our exploration of collective awakening and nurturing the field of group wisdom.

Roshi Egyoku is ZCLA's Abbot & Head Teacher.

*Blue Cliff Record Case 25***The Hermit of Lotus Flower Peak**

by Sensei Merle Kodo Boyd

**Pointer**

If your potential does not leave (its fixed) position, you tumble down into the poison sea. If your words don't startle the crowd, you fall into the streams of the commonplace.

Suddenly, if you can distinguish initiate from lay in the light of sparks struck from stone, if you can decide between killing and giving life in the light of a

flash of lightning, then you can cut off the ten directions and tower up like a thousand fathom wall.

But do you know that such a time exists? To test I'm citing this old case: look!

Case

The hermit of Lotus Flower Peak held up his staff and showed it to the assembly saying: "When the ancients got here, why didn't they consent to stay here?" There was no answer from the assembly, so he himself answered for them: "Because they did not gain strength on the road."

Again he said: "In the end, how is it?" And again he himself answered in their place: "With my staff across my shoulder, I pay no heed to people – I go straight into the myriad peaks."

Verse

Dust and sand in his eyes, dirt in his ears
He doesn't consent to stay in the myriad peaks
Falling flowers, flowing streams, very vast.
Suddenly raising my eyebrows (to look) - where
has he gone?

I first came to know this koan years ago when Senseis Kipp Ryodo Hawley, John Daishin Buksbazen, and I went through the ritual marking our passage into the role of Dharma Holder. Becoming a Dharma Holder is one of many ways to be of service to the Sangha. This ritual marks a change in the kind of service one is being asked to offer to the community and subtle adjustments in our individual practice. No matter how long we practice, it is always becoming clearer to us that this Zen practice that seems all about us is actually the direct experience of supporting the lives of others and the great earth that supports us.

When we begin to explore Zen practice, it arises out of our own curiosity, need, and desire, but teachers tell us that this practice may appear to be about us, but it is, in fact, for others. Although we are told this from the beginning, knowing deeply with the whole body takes patience, spaciousness, and lifetimes.

Thus, the hermit's words "When the ancients [finally] got here, why didn't they consent to stay here?" When the ancients received a staff marking the transmission of the dharma from their teacher to them, they were said to be fully empowered in the Dharma. Where does one go from there? In the metaphor of climbing and ascending, one has reached the summit. But rites of passage are not promotions. Receiving dharma transmission is not receiving a diploma.

The hermit of Lotus Flower Peak was Lianhua Fengxian. He was a disciple of Fengxian Daoshen in the lineage of Yunmen. In recognition of the hermit's insight into the Dharma, his teacher gave him the staff he holds up before the assembly.



There is little known of the hermit's biography and lineage. There are no dates given for his birth and death, no information about his early life. I could find only these few details regarding his dharma family. It is said that he withdrew to the mountains after receiving his staff. He lived in a thatched-roof hut on Lotus Flower Peak in the mountains of T'ien T'ai. For me, these few details gave him the flesh and bone of ordinary life. Still, the koan has always seemed a bit mythical to me.

Sometimes the hermit is simply one of many who practiced in the mountains after their time of monastery practice. He was alone much of the time, accorded with arising conditions, and therefore accorded with the Dharma. Yuan Wu's commentary on this koan begins with a reason for this common practice: "His feet still aren't touching the ground."

This time of quiet and solitude is sometimes called "nurturing the sacred fetus." It is a time to live deeply and less formally into the experience of formal practice, to cultivate the bit of insight they had during monastic practice and at the time of Dharma transmission, to further ease the grip of deluding conditioning. It takes time to live more deeply into the view arising from their time of formal practice. It takes time for nascent insight to become lived insight. Seeing him in this way, the hermit seems a figure grounded in real life and the human condition, like the

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THE HERMIT OF LOTUS FLOWER PEAK *(Continued from page 3)*

spirit or energy one meets at a significant time of passage or transition, when there is not just a shift in role but in how others see us and in how we see ourselves.

“Unsuï,” the Japanese term for a novice monk, means cloud-water, neither solid nor liquid, and is an example of the marginal state one enters upon becoming a monk. Even beyond the stage of novice monk, through many transitions and passages, an ordained person lives a threshold life of neither this nor that, neither here nor there. Summing it up with the word “monk” does not really cause the fluid to become solid.

If we look closely at our own lives, it could be said that whether we are lay or priest, practitioner or non-practitioner, we live threshold lives that must be both fluid and grounded. Ultimately, the hermit’s question is put to us all regardless of role or identity.

There is a line in the Diamond Sutra that is said to have evoked a deep and sudden awakening in the Sixth Ancestor, Daijian Huineng: “Manifest the mind that abides nowhere.” That line points also at the hermit’s warning that the summit is not a nest. The hermit asks: “When the ancients got here, why didn’t they consent to stay here?” The line affirms the condition of neither staying nor going. With or without a formal change or rite of passage, “here” is always a threshold, always a marginal place. For each of us, this very moment is a marginal place.

Life does not stand still. Neither can we.

One cool spring morning, with the river on our right, I caught a flash of movement out of the corner of my eye. A gull was flapping its wings wildly against the current of the wind, holding itself in place about ten feet or so above the water. It flapped rapidly for a brief time, held itself upright and hovered there in the air. Then it landed on the water and rested.

This game of staying was quick and brief and fun to watch. We enjoy the same kind of play. As dancers, skaters, and other kinds of athletes, we find joy in the observing or managing the grace of balancing stillness and motion. If we try to nest in it, however, the grace will disappear and suffering will follow as naturally as the wind blows. Life does not stand still. Neither can we.

To mark “here,” the hermit holds up his staff. Here we are where we cannot stay. If we are entangled in the conditioning of becoming and staying someone who attains something, then we need to free ourselves from our self-created entanglement. As the hermit says: “They didn’t gain strength on the road.” Insight into the empty nature of all things will deepen, eventually informing more and

more of our interactions with all things and beings. However, if we see only the emptiness, we cannot have any interactions, for then there is neither other nor self, subject nor object.

Yuan Wu’s commentary on this koan says: “In truth, though gold dust is precious, when it falls into your eyes, it becomes a blinding obstruction.” Ironically, clinging to an aspect of wisdom may blind us to the uniquenesses of our reality and give rise to ignorance. How do we maintain clear vision?

We try not to tell ourselves a story about what we see. We nurture a patient openness to uncertainty and not-knowing. We nurture a patience with discomfort, especially our own emotional discomfort. Practice dropping thoughts midsentence and returning to a quiet and open count of one that at first may feel like waiting. In time, maybe waiting, too, will drop off. Listen. Attend. Breathe.

The hermit asks: “In the end, how is it?” Fundamentally, what is the situation? Not consenting to stay calls forth the dynamic of the specific and the universal and invites its expression. Whatever circumstances we encounter, we know they are shaped by impermanence, selflessness, and cause and effect.

The hermit answers: “With my staff over my shoulder (I accept responsibility for this human condition of limited view), I pay no heed to people. (I atone for my impact on others and am therefore less paralyzed by fear of error.) I go straight into the myriad peaks. (Dharma gates are numberless, reality is boundless.)”

Essentially, we accept our freedom and the discipline it naturally imposes on our lives. The experience of freedom depends on the acceptance of responsibility for everything. That may sound like a burden, but maybe there are other ways for us to view our situation. We have been so strongly conditioned to regard freedom as personal pleasure and comfort, we may not notice the empowerment that comes with responsibility. We may not notice the feeling of freedom that comes with being able to apologize and atone and drop the need to be right all of the time. Becoming aware of being both cause and effect is not only the acceptance of responsibility. It also heightens our awareness of the power embedded in our actions.

A basic reality is the inseparability of freedom and the three seals of all existence: impermanence, selflessness, and cause and effect. Fundamental freedom is a given, but perhaps we experience it most clearly and directly when we are in accord with both aspects of the One, our particular situation and the universal flowing way of things.

Sensei Merle Kodo Boyd is a teacher at The Lincroft Zen Sangha in New Jersey.

Guiding Questions and the Gradients of Agreement

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao

The development and use of Guiding Questions is a core practice at Zen Center. Whether for personal or for group exploration, the use of Guiding Questions is a skillful means for exploring the collective effort by going beyond conventional or habitual thinking patterns. Guiding Questions, skillfully framed, awaken us to not-knowing and inclusion, thereby broadening and deepening inquiry into the complexities of life. The questions engage us in investigation, individually and collectively, and challenge our limiting expectations about answers or who may have them.

Questions have long been fundamental to Zen practice. The case koans abound with questions which, at first glance, seem mundane, but upon closer examination penetrate into the very nature of life. A Zen question is rarely meant to elicit a conventional response (unless, of course, that is its intention).

“Where have you come from?” deepens from “I was at Venice Beach,” to “Right here, now, no coming, no going!” You might respond to “Have you eaten yet?” by exclaiming about the delicious tamale you have just eaten. “Have you eaten yet?” can also lead one to investigate the Supreme Meal, as in “Have you tasted awakening yet?”

How does one create effective Guiding Questions? Here are some ingredients to keep in mind:

- Does the question keep the energetic field open?
- Does the question touch what is alive for oneself

or the group right now? Does it touch the heart of the matter?

- Does the question generate the revealing or penetrating of many layers of a situation?
- Does the question wake you up, thereby calling forth creativity and new ways of seeing?
- Do the Guiding Questions, when taken together, open up as many facets and possibilities of a situation as possible?

Guiding Questions help us to remain awake and open up the Dharma in particular situations. The intention of the questions is to invite collective wisdom to arise – a wisdom that affirms inclusion, upends us-and-them posturing, and delights in surprise and unpredictability. The questions range from the very specific and practical to the broader and visionary, often combining flavors of both spectra. For example, a practical question around inclusion may be: “Is there a viewpoint or person that I am not listening to?” A visionary question around “turning suffering into wisdom” may be: “Can we turn this painful situation into medicine, something meaningful, wholesome, and healing?” A practical-and-visionary question for bodhisattva action may be: “What do we need to learn to become bodhisattvas more fully and effect the change we wish to see in the world?”

The Zen Center’s Collective Awakening and Wisdom Pod (the smallest group that is considering a particular

issue) adapted a chart entitled “Gradients of Agreement” from our allies John Ott and Rose Pinard of Luminescence Consulting. The Gradients are skillful means for exploring various organizational dharmas or making a decision. In the chart, statements that capture the spirit of the gradient appear in the middle row; suggested checking questions are in the bottom row. These components can be helpful in keeping us awake and grounded in Dharma when engaging in collective exploration, which, in our Sangha, has ranged from discussions of how to create a Tenzo Circle to issues around refinancing or how to best integrate former prison inmates.

While we encourage the development of Guiding Questions for specific situations, we also offer several basic questions for use with the gradients. Particularly

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Gradients of Agreement

Endorse	Agree with minor point of concern	Abstain	Disagree but will support the decision	Object and will not help implement	Can't go forward
<i>I support it wholeheartedly. This serves the whole. Let's move forward.</i>	<i>Basically, I like it. It's beneficial action. My concern is not enough to hold it up.</i>	<i>I have no opinion. I'm neutral.</i>	<i>I want my disagreement noted, but I will be supportive.</i>	<i>I won't stop anyone else, but I don't want to make this happen.</i>	<i>We have to continue working.</i>
When can we start?	What can I offer to improve it? How can we keep these concerns in mind as we go forward?	Are you engaged or checked out? Is this outside of your expertise? Do you feel your view has been heard? Are you hearing others' views?	What complexities or shadows are emerging?	Am I being objective and open minded? Do I have enough information? Does the group have enough information?	How is this harmful? What important ingredients really need to be addressed?

GUIDING QUESTIONS & GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT *(Continued from page 5)*

when developing organizational precepts or policies, a thorough examination of these practical questions is helpful.

Guiding Questions:

- How engaged am I?
- Do I/we have enough information?
- Do I/we have enough viewpoints?
- How are my perceptions changing with additional information?
- Who will this have an impact on?
- How will this benefit the people that it will impact?
- How will this harm the people that it will impact?
- Is this good common sense?
- How does this support the Zen Center's mission, vision, and core values?
- Is this my personal objection or a sound objection? Is my objection a habit pattern?
- Are we glossing over anything?

Is there a viewpoint or person that I am not listening to? How would this be implemented?

Inviting collective wisdom to arise calls forth a lively, inter-relational way of practice. It flexes the muscles we need to emerge from the still and silent cocoon of *zazen* to the dynamic inter-being of community. Implicit in this invitation is the use of questions to reach beyond the knowing mind and plumb our creative, life-giving depths together. Let's create and engage skillful means that will permeate our lives, our families, our workplaces, and, most of all, our Dharma organizations!

ZCLA's Collective Awakening & Wisdom (CAAW) Pod members are: Roshi Egyoku (Steward), Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown, Katherine Senshin Griffith, and Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen.

The Health Circle

by Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson



Health Circle: (From left) True-Joy Fazjo, Luminous-Heart Thompson, Heart-Mirror Trotter, Myokai Snodgrass, Enju Katz, Getsuren Alfonso and Pat Way. Absent were Jingetsu Fong and Jibo Sterling.

The ZCLA Health Circle currently offers several programs and services. Our newest effort, the Caring Net Program, offers short-term assistance to Sangha members requesting support following an illness or surgery, such as home or hospital visits, food shopping, prescription pick-up, preparation of meals, or transportation to doctors and hospitals. Each person requesting support is assigned an Ally, who helps the potential recipient define their needs.

Once a recipient's needs have been identified, the Ally contacts Caring Net volunteers with a sign-up sheet where volunteers, who have attended a training workshop, can indicate how they can help. The Caring Net is a special way to respond to the needs of our Sangha in the spirit of no giver, no receiver, no gift.

Recently, the Health Circle offered a workshop on preparing an Advanced Health Care Directive. Those who attended were followed up to see if they needed help choosing an Agent, thinking through their medical care or funeral wishes, or making other arrangements. It is our experience that Directives are often started and then set aside to be done "later."

Our Circle is currently exploring the best form in which to offer support to persons considering final-years issues, such as where or with whom they might live, or are considering assisted living.

The Health Circle maintains the Prayer Chain which enables the Sangha to give support through chanting and prayer on behalf of Sangha members undergoing surgery or other medical procedures. The Health Circle also maintains the Prayer List from which we recite the names of Sangha members or loved ones who are ill.

If you are interested in joining the Caring Net program as an ally or volunteer or in coming to our next meeting, please contact Luminous-Heart at pbt9@aol.com.

Seesaw Thinking

by Diane Enju Katz



When I received an e-mail from Sensei Shingetsu asking me to lead the Day of Reflection in May and present a talk about one of the Precepts, my first task was recovering from the surprise at being selected. I must have been having an interesting week because I went straight to the Seventh Precept.

“I will speak what I perceive to be the truth without guilt or blame. This is the practice of Not Elevating Myself and Blaming Others. I will give my best effort and accept the results.”

In Face-to-Face, Roshi suggested that I ground my talk in the words of the ancestors and then move on to my personal experience. This is how I was already working, so that felt good.

The Ten Grave Precepts are at the very core of our Zen practice handed down from the Brahma Net Sutra to Bodhidharma to Dogen Zenji. We receive them and vow to maintain them as part of our jukai ceremony.

Roshi Ekyoku once said that the Precepts are like a cool breeze on a hot day. We can be heated by our lives and the thermometer can go very high. The Precept can cool us down before we reach explosive levels.

We often use the metaphor of a glass of water as a metaphor for our work with the Precepts. We need water, so we must drink from the glass, and in so doing, we defile the glass, and that’s okay. We needed the water and now we have to wash the glass. That is our atonement. Then we fill it again and drink again and on and on.

We vow to maintain the Precepts for Jukai, for Ango, and at our altars. The Precepts are with us on the cushion and off. We drink from the glass, dirty it, and mindfully wash it. Returning to the Seventh Precept, there are different versions.

In the Brahma Net Sutra, it is: “On Praising Oneself and Disparaging Others. A disciple of the Buddha shall not praise himself and speak ill of others or encourage others to do so. He should be willing to stand in for all sentient beings and endure humiliation and slander, accepting blame and letting sentient beings have all the glory. If instead, he displays his own virtues and conceals the good points of others, thus causing them to suffer slander, he commits a Parajika (major offense).”

Roshi Robert Aitken translates Bodhidharma’s statement of the Seventh Precept as: “Self-nature is subtle and mysterious. In the realm of the equitable dharma, not

dwelling on I against you is called the Precept of Not Praising Yourself While Abusing Others.”

Dogen Zenji renders the precept as: “Not Elevating Oneself and Blaming Others. Buddhas and Patriarchs realized the absolute emptiness and realized the great earth. When the great body is manifested, there is neither outside nor inside in the emptiness. When the Dharma body is manifested, there is not even a single square inch of soil on the ground (earth).”

For me, this Seventh Precept brought to mind a seesaw in a children’s playground. There are a few ways to play on a seesaw. In all of them, I can’t do anything without another person. In order for me to go up, you have to go down. In order for you to go up, I have to come down. It is fun to soar up, even if you experience the thud of your rear end on the ground. If I’m big enough, I can keep you up, and vice versa. Another way is to just sit balancing each other. And so we play.

But isn’t the desire to elevate oneself built into human nature? The verbal seesaw is seductive. One way I elevate myself verbally is to blame, to get to the top by making the other person go down. This is what the Seventh Precept warns us against. It asks us to refrain from getting on the verbal seesaw at all.

Blaming requires subject and object. They can be the same, as when I blame myself for not understanding the consequences of my behavior. I can blame another person, a group of persons, a leader of the government, a law, even the weather. There has to be a blamer and a blamee. I become the person who is right and, therefore, superior to you. And thus I achieve elevation. Seesaw.

To look for a blameworthy person or object means that we have separated self from other and are stuck in inside/outside thinking. We are not living in the “equitable Dharma” that Bodhidharma speaks of. Non-separation is compromised when I elevate myself over another and use blame to do this.

So how do I work against the seductive high ride on the seesaw? By raising my awareness, by consciously turning away from blame and opening myself to what is happening. Open-ended curiosity.

The Zen Peacemaker version of the Seventh Precept suggests that we speak our truth without guilt or blame. If I pause and examine my thoughts before I speak them, I have the opportunity to expunge guilt and blame from my speech. When working with the Seventh Precept, I discover that I must literally zip my mouth, step back, and shine the light within. I must refuse to blame. Otherwise, I am just reacting. Just riding my seesaw to the top. ■

Earth Day and CicLAvia



In honor of Earth Day on Saturday, April 20th, ZCLA held a special Day of Reflection with the theme “Healing Ecology.” Roshi Egyoku led us in an exploration of what Buddhism can contribute to our understanding of the worldwide ecological crisis, and, together, we read from David Loy’s excellent book “Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution.”

The following day, the Brown Green Circle hosted a send-off to join the sixth celebration of CicLAvia, a highly successful ecological festival held in Los Angeles and other cities. We gathered in the jizo garden and, as part of a brief service, placed our wishes for a healthier planet in the Zen Center’s Earth Treasure Vase.

The Earth Treasure Vase is the handiwork of Richard Bresnahan, potter-in-residence at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The vase can be seen in the Dharma Hall next to the gold-leafed statue of Mahapajapati Gotami, the Buddha’s step mother and the first woman he ordained.

We then grabbed sack lunches, and headed out to join the CicLAvia crowds, thousands of LA folks walking, skating, jogging, and riding bikes along miles of smog-and-congestion-free streets barred to cars and trucks. To learn more, go to www.ciclavia.org/about/.



The Brown Green Circle is part of the Service Sphere of the ZCLA Mandala; its mission is to protect and restore the health of our planet and to make the Zen Center a model of sustainable urban living. A main activity of the Circle is group study and discussion of important books about care of the environment. The Circle also created ZCLA’s butterfly garden, a combination of plant species designed to lure these colorful visitors to the neighborhood. The Circle’s current members are Diane True-Joy Fazio (steward), Mukei Horner, Heart-Mirror Trotter, and Pat Way.

The Priest Training Retreat



In June, the Zen Center Priest Circle held a 3-day training retreat led by Roshi Egyoku. In attendance were priests-in-training Jeanne Dokai Dickenson, Deborah Faith-Mind Thoresen, Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert, and

Mark Shogen Bloodgood and two who will receive priest ordination this summer, Darla Myoho Fjeld and Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown. We were fortunate to have Sensei Gary Koan Janka in full-time attendance and Senseis Raul Ensho Berge and Patricia Shingetsu Guzy for part of the retreat.

The retreat topics included a review of liturgy, developing a priest-training template, and a healing circle. Cliff Shishin Collins led us in a fun, energizing one-day workshop on improving our public speaking skills. Participants presented inspiring 8-minute prepared speeches on “Why did you decide to become a Zen Priest and how has that decision affected your life?” The speeches were videotaped, and speaking skills were evaluated. We also did impromptu 2-minute talks on random Zen topics. Priest retreats are scheduled throughout the year.

Calling All Sangha Artists!



*"Butterflite" by Lynda
Jikai Golan*

Over the years, we've constantly been delighted by the varied artistic talents and accomplishments of many of our ZCLA Sangha.

Writers with their stories and poetry; visual artists with paintings and drawings; sculpture and jewelry making; those with attainment in tea ceremony and flower arranging, ink brush and calligraphy;

creative workers in the performance and theater arts, in film, photography, and music.

So that we may all enjoy, and be inspired by, this artistic cornucopia, the Water Wheel would like to bring Sangha artists to its pages, sometimes by showing examples of Sangha artistic work. Or, if that isn't feasible, to offer space to Sangha artists where they can tell us, leanly, about their work and how it may be interwoven with their Buddhist practice, as expression in the moment without expectation of reward.

Please, Sangha artists, don't be shy. Contact Burt at bookstore@zcla.org to discuss how you might contribute to the Water Wheel.

Just Picking Up Trash



On a very hot, sunny May 11th, 14 Zen Center bodhisattvas gathered in the Jizo garden, pulled on t-shirts supplied for the occasion, and, after a brief service, headed out into our immediate neighborhood armed with garbage bags and long-handled trash tongs. The theme of this Loving Action Day was "Just Picking Up Trash."

The participants were Roshi and Eberhard, Dharma-Joy, Heart-Mirror, Yudo, Jotai, Sunim Taeheo, Carla, Jitsujo, Kaizen, Faith-Mind, Enduring-Vow, Rich Vallina, and Michael Huber. When we got back hot and sweaty an hour later, we grabbed for waiting bottles of ice cold water. We had filled several big blue trash bags for the dumpster and several blocks around the Center were trash free.

"What for you was the significance of picking up trash or any other Loving Action Day?" we asked Heart-Mirror Trotter. "The intention and the joy you bring to it," he said. "You do it without judgment and with a clear understanding that's it's fleeting and impermanent. The streets

will soon be littered. It's an invisible action. It's going to be done and you enjoy doing it. Establishing even that little amount of order and beauty is sufficient in itself. It doesn't need anything more."

"What other activities might we do on future Loving Action Days related to our surrounding community?"



"One thing that's being done is watering the many trees that Sensei Koan has planted in our neighborhood. We might also prune overhanging branches that obstruct stop signs and street parking signs. That would make them more visible to drivers. It's a public service the city doesn't get around to. And, of course, there's always graffiti removal.

"Speaking personally," Heart-Mirror went on, "I'm sometimes tempted to go out at midnight with orange cones and a bucket full of cement and fill some potholes. By God, I'm so tired of beating my car up on the streets of L.A. I would risk getting arrested just for the fun of filling those potholes with illicit cement. That would be a wonderful commotion to be author of." ■

Our New Driveway



After decades of use, the sloping driveway to the lower ZCLA campus and the flagstone path to the Kanzeon statue were worse for wear. Crumbling and loose pavement underfoot was dangerously unstable. It was time for a significant commitment of funds for the safety of the Sangha and visitors.

Under the attentive eyes of Faith-Mind and Mary Rios, a team of workmen did a top-notch job of tearing up the old and laying down the new. Work began on April 29 and was completed on May 10.

In the course of tearing up the old driveway, a strange discovery was made – a pile of dental molds (at left). Our Zendo was originally a private house and the dokusan room, where Roshi holds face-to-face, was a dentist's office. In the course of rebuilding the house decades ago, the molds were dumped in the area that became the old driveway.

Next time you're at the Zen Center, look for the final touch to the driveway project – fossil-like patterns of Bodhi Tree leaves imprinted in the fresh smooth concrete.

The Dharma Training Fund

Each year as spring turns into summer, we ask for your financial generosity to help sustain the Zen Center's Dharma Training Fund. The DTF supports the Zen Center's long-standing tradition of not turning away any sincere practitioner from membership or from any of our programs due to lack of funds.

Who are the beneficiaries of your compassionate giving? Most often, they are students, the elderly, those who are ill or injured and pressured by expenses, and, in these difficult times, people with reduced income because they are out of work.

Because of the DTF, no sincere practitioner need feel they have to reduce their membership or not take part in a sesshin, zazen instruction, workshop, class, or any of our other offerings because there is a fee. While we are happy to offer this form of Dana, we always ask recipients to pay a portion, as much as they can.

So please take time to support our Dharma Training Fund with your donation so that everyone who feels drawn to the teachings and practice of the buddhadharma can fully benefit from them.

With deepest bows: Muso Giggans, Plum-Hermit Swanger, Enduring-Vow Brown, Cassie Riger, Jiho Sterling, and Myosen Nadzam of the ZCLA Development Circle.



The Brown Green Circle members installed tree signs for trees planted on the occasion of Dharma Transmission. This one is for Roshi Bernie's pine tree planted in 1973 to commemorate his Shuso (Head Monk) training.

The Legacy Circle

Please consider joining the Legacy Circle by arranging for a bequest or other estate gift to ZCLA. For more information please contact Muso or Plum-Hermit through the ZCLA Office.

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

To **Tara Jiho Sterling** for completing several rakus for the Abbot;

To **Diane Enju Katz** for ongoing care and cleaning of the garden Jizo Bodhisattvas;

To **Katnerine Senshin Griffith** and **Jiho** for the Precept and Jukai series;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for public talk at UCLA Simms/Mann Integrative Center for Oncology and **Sensei Raul Ensho Berge**, **Sensei Pat Shingetsu Guzy** and **Tom Yudo Burger** for support;

To **Shengzhi** for the offering of fruit and a large vase of flowers in memory of her parents;

To **Hannah Seishin Sowd** for her simple recipe meal plans;

To **Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** and **Darla Myoho Fjeld** for leading the Sangha Forum;

To **Dharma-Joy** for donating a Dropbox for ZCLA photos;

To **Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen** for offering her leadership to the Rakusu Sewing Class;

To **Diane True-Joy Fazio** and the **Brown Green Group** for organizing the CicLAvia send-off in April and **Mujin Sunim** and **Taeheo Sunim** for fixing the brown bag lunches;

To **Roshi** and **Sensei Shingetsu** for teaching this year’s Precept and Jukai Class series;

To **Patricia Pfost** for offering demonstrations of the Dynamic Facilitation process;

To **Tim Zamora**, **Gary Belton**, **Ric Vallina**, **Yudo**, **Jane Chen**, **Taeheo Sunim** and **Shengzhi** for Fushinzamu Kitchen Cleaning;

To **Roshi** for leading the Growing a Plum Blossom Sesshin in May;

To **Mark Shogen Bloodgood** for leading zazenkai in June;

To **Yudo** for being the driving engine behind the Loving Action Day “Just Picking Up Trash” and to all the trash picker uppers: **Roshi**, **Eberhard Fetz**, **Ty Jotai Webb**, **Dharma-Joy**, **Reeb Kaizen Venners**, **Ric Vallina**, **Gemma Cubero**, **Taeheo Sunim**, **Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown**, **Tina Jitsujo Gauthier**, **Faith-Mind**, **John Heart-Mirror Trotter**, **Michael Huber** and **Shogen**;

To **Heart-Mirror**, **Enduring-Vow** and **Faith-Mind** for always being there to help record the talks when needed;

To **Tim Zamora** for his offering as Tenzo for the Priest Training Retreat and **Gemma Cubero** for assisting;

To **Mary Rios** and **Faith-Mind** for spending a big part of spring break overseeing work on the new driveway;

To **Jared Oshin Seide** for offering Council training for the residents;

To **Jitsujo** for being Tenzo for the Growing a Plum Blossom sesshin in May;

To **Gemma** for serving as Tenzo for the June Zazenkai and assisting with the May Sesshin;

To **Senshin** for covering the snacks for Day of Reflection;

To **Heart-Mirror** and **Enduring-Vow** for graffiti removal;

To **Charles Duran** and **Gary Belton** for taking care of the neighborhood trees that **Sensei Gary Koan Janka** planted;

To the **Tree Watering Group** for watering 36 neighborhood trees since Feb. 2012: **Kaizen**, **Tom Pine-Ocean Cleary**, **Susanna Knittel**, **Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson**, **Carla Flowing-Mountain Schmitt** and **Sensei Koan**;

To **Rosa Ando Martinez** for the gift of framed Maezumi Roshi calligraphy “UnSui (Cloud Water)” to the Zen Center;

To **Roshi Bill Yoshin Jordan** for the gift of the large taiko drum to the Zen Center;

To all those who donated to the **Dharma Training Fund**;

To all our **Sunday Tenzos**: **Oetsu**, **Mujin Sunim**, **Luminous-Heart**, **Tim**, **Bill Ware**, **Cassie Riger**, **Kaizen**, **Jim Hanson**, **DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass**, and **Gary Belton**;

To all our **Day Managers**: **Steward Enduring-Vow**, **George Mukei Horner**, **Luminous-Heart**, **Jitsujo**, **Jotai** and **Kaizen**;

To all our **Zendo Jikidos**: **Enduring-Vow**, **Heart-Mirror**, **Luminous-Heart**, **Tim**, **Enju**, **Carla**, **Patricia**, **Gemma**, **Jonathan Kaigen Levy**, and **Kaizen**.

To **Cliff Shishin Collins** for mentoring the Zen Center priests in public speaking;

To all the Security Check people that keep us safe: **Ando**, **Matt Goodman**, **Jiho**, **Enduring-Vow**, **Charles**, **Carla**, **Heart-Mirror**, **Jolene Beiser** and **Patricia**;

To **Faith-Mind** for the beautiful green umbrella at the table in the garden;

To **Bodhi-Heart** for being the Assistant Cookie Tenzo with **Dharma-Joy** for many years;

To **Gido** for the delicious cookies that we enjoy on Thursday nights;

To **Mukei** for the rakusu holder rack in the kitchen. ■



Tim Zamora as Tenzo



Pat Way preparing new altar flowers for Mahapajapati



Kaigen as Jikido

ZCLA Affiliated Groups

The Lincroft Zen Sangha (NJ)

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

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)

led by Sensei Patricia Shingetsu Guzy

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)

led by Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley

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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Abbot 1995-1999: Roshi Bernard Glassman

Abbot: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Shared Stewardship Entering

Priest Circle Member:

Darla Myoho Fjeld

Altar Flower Group Steward:

Lorraine Gessho Kumpf

Tenzo Resource Person:

Tim Zamora

Shared Stewardship Leave-Taking

Co-Tenzo Coordinator:

Dan Doen Hegarty

Tenzo Resource Person:

Ty Jotai Webb

Circle Members Entering

Altar Flower Group Member:

Gemma Cubero

Diane Enju Katz

Pat Way

Chiden Group:

Kristi Twilley

Executive Circle Member:

Tim Zamora

Tenzo Circle Members:

Jessica Dharma-Lotus Armstrong

Gary Belton

Jane Chen

Bonnie Myosen Nadzam

Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert

Hannah Sesihin Sowd

Tim Zamora

Circle Members Leave-Taking

Disaster Preparedness Group:

Tara Jiho Sterling

Altar Flowers & Cleaning Groups, Dharma Buddy Program, ZP5 Coordinator:

Nina Reiju Wasserman

Resident Member Leave-Taking

Rosa Ando Martinez

Nina Reiju Wasserman