



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Mountains and Waters

by Katherine Senshin Griffith



Mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way. Each, abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness. Because mountains and waters have been active since before the Empty Eon, they are alive at this moment. Because they have been the self since before form arose they are emancipation realization.¹

— Eihei Dōgen

So begins Dōgen Zenji's *Sansuikyo*, or *Mountains and Waters Sutra*, one of the most beautiful of all the 95 books of his *Shobogenzo*. Dōgen Zenji believed that nature is itself Buddhist sutras, the universe showing its real form. As we contemplate what effect we are having on the Earth, it might be helpful to look at some key passages from this wonderful text.

In China, mountain-water landscape painting developed along with early Chan as a method of teaching and practice. The brush and ink-painted mountains and waterfalls emerge out of the misty void, conveying the myriad forms arising from emptiness. Sensei Myoho and I have a poster of this style of painting (see page 10). Like seeing figures in clouds, we playfully find embedded images: "Do you see the mad scientist? The huge hand, dog, dragon, little lady, Cookie Monster?" Human minds love to be active and project meaning on everything.

Mountains are amazing and there are many ways of looking at them. They are not all alike either. The Swiss Alps, Blue Ridge Mountains, San Jacinto Mountains, Mount Rainier, Mount Sumeru, Mauna Kea in Hawaii, and Enchanted Rock in the Texas Hill Country are all very different. Yet each, abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness.

We can see mountains as a challenge to climb, an obstacle to get around, an eroding example of catastrophic

planetary change, or a towering reminder of Nature's beauty. If we're caught up in our small lives, they may just be an unnoticed blurred background. Besides referring to the natural world, Mountains can symbolize Form and Waters Emptiness. We are also Mountains and Waters, Mountains and Waters are us.

So, there are many ways to see everything, as Dōgen Zenji points out:

Human beings see water as water. Water is seen as dead or alive depending on causes and conditions. Thus the views of all beings are not the same. You should question this matter now. Are there many ways to see one thing, or is it a mistake to see many forms as one thing? You should pursue this beyond the limit of pursuit. Accordingly, endeavors in practice realization of the way are not limited to one or two kinds. The ultimate realm has one thousand kinds and ten thousand ways.

Dōgen Zenji tells us that not only is there water in the world, but there is a world in water and not just in water. There is also a world of sentient beings in clouds, air, fire, earth, grass, and a staff. Here at Great Dragon Mountain, we can find a world of sentient beings in sirens, dogs, ice cream, birds, alarms, cars, litter, helicopters, kids, chainsaws and all of truly phenomenal Koreatown. Wherever there is a world of sentient beings, there is a world of Buddha ancestors.

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¹All italicized quotes are from Kaz Tanahashi's translation of Dōgen's *Mountains and Waters Sutra*.

MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS *(Continued from page 1)*

Water is neither strong nor weak, neither wet nor dry, neither moving nor still, neither cold nor hot, neither existent nor non-existent, neither deluded nor enlightened. When water solidifies, it is harder than a diamond. Who can crack it? When water melts, it is gentler than milk. Who can destroy it?

How we view things reveals aspects about who we are. Dōgen Zenji is asking us to be free from the superficial views of an ordinary person, or we won't truly understand the Buddha ancestors or even our everyday lives.

Do not view mountains from the scale of human thought. If you do not judge mountains' flowing by the human understanding of flowing, you will not doubt mountains' flowing and not-flowing.

What makes up a mountain? Where does it begin and end? It includes soil, brush, critters, rock formations, hidden gems or lava. Where do we begin and end? What are the cultural, genetic, karmic, and other contributing factors that make us who we are? That make this moment what it is?

You should reflect on the moment when you see the water of the ten directions as the water of the ten directions. This is not just studying the moment when human and heavenly beings see water; this is studying the moment when water sees water.

Can we see that we are truly connected to everything else, active since before the beginningless beginning?

Mountains have been the abode of great sages from the limitless past to the limitless present. Wise people and sages all have mountains as their inner chamber, as their body and mind. Because of wise people and sages, mountains appear. You may think that in mountains many wise people and great sages are assembled. But after entering the mountains, not a single person meets another.

Here on Great Dragon Mountain, we all come to practice together. To drop into this great abode. We sit like mountains, paying attention to the ocean tides of our breathing. The deeper we go in our zazen, we too can find that *"not a single person meets another."*

We are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way. Abiding in each of our own phenomenal expressions, we realize completeness. Can we experience that completeness in our inner chamber no matter what external turmoil there appears to be? No matter how we are called upon to serve?

Working with this text, I found myself repeating "complete, complete, complete" whenever a difficult moment came up, letting it wash through me like water down a mountain, till it dissolved into Just Thisssssssssssss.

This completeness is different from our limited views of perfection or how we want things to be. It's just totally, completely AS IT IS right now. Not an iota that isn't, not a dropped stitch in Indra's Net. I don't prefer physical pain, or that we humans keep killing each other or instigating policies that are so harmful. I hate to see what we are doing to our actual mountains and waters. But facing conditions as they are right now sure beats the suffering of avoidance or anxiety over the false view that I am in total control. Deeply aligned with the ancient Buddha Way, I can acknowledge the causal conditions set in motion since before the Empty Eon that are contributing to this very moment. That's the starting point. We don't need to condemn problematic phenomenal expressions or take it personally. But like a skillful physician, we can examine the sources of hatred and greed and see what cultural artery it is affecting and what changes can be made. From that place of *not a single person meets another*, how might life's challenges be viewed? How might we care for the Earth? Dōgen Zenji tells us:

Since mountains belong to the sages and wise people living there, trees and rocks become abundant and birds and animals are inspired. This is so because the sages and wise people extend their virtue. You should know it as a fact that mountains are fond of wise people and sages.

I am terribly fond of all Mountains and Waters, and I'm so grateful to the karma that has contributed to me being alive right now. I vow to be as beneficial as I can during my dewdrop life.

This sutra ends with:

There are mountains hidden in treasures. There are mountains hidden in swamps. There are mountains hidden in the sky. There are mountains hidden in mountains. There are mountains hidden in biddenness. This is complete understanding.

This hiddenness is the Great Mystery, that wondrous ungraspable aspect of existence, "always encountered but rarely perceived."

Therefore investigate mountains thoroughly. When you investigate mountains thoroughly, this is the work of the mountains. Such mountains and waters of themselves become wise persons and sages.

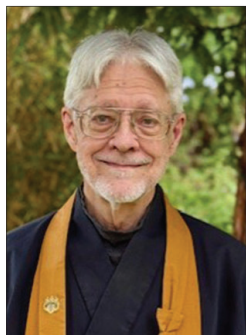
We have been active since before the Empty Eon and are therefore alive right now completely as Just This. Sitting like a mountain, breathing like a great body of water, we are truly liberated and available to freely extend our virtue to all that is needed.

Keep investigating this thoroughly.

Sensei Senshin is the ZCLA Head Teacher.

Seeing What's Here

by George Mukei Horner



Now, mountains, rivers, earth, the sun, moon, and stars are mind. At just this moment, what is it that appears directly in front of you? The sun, moon, and stars as seen by humans are not the same, and the views of various beings differ widely. Likewise the views about one mind differ. Yet these views are nothing but mind. Is it inside or outside? Does it come or go? Does it increase one bit at birth or not? Does it decrease one particle at death or not? . . . All this is

merely a moment or two of mind. A moment or two of mind is a moment of mountains, rivers, and earth, or two moments of mountains, rivers and earth. . . .

Body and Mind Study of the Way
—Eihei Dogen

"Everyday mind" means to maintain an everyday mind in the world of life and the world of death. Yesterday comes forth from this place. When it goes the boundless sky goes, when it comes the entire earth comes . . . This boundless sky and entire earth are like unrecognized words, or the one voice that gushes out of the earth.¹

"You have to know how to see what's here."

It's not an exact quote, but when I was studying economics in the late 70s, a friend of mine in the program said something like this to me one day as we were driving I-95 between West Palm Beach and Boca Raton, and he began pointing things out—old neighborhoods, new developments, business districts, malls—and talking about economic geography, location theory, the study of how villages, towns, cities, and the economic activities that occur within them, come to be located where they are on a landscape.

Back in the 2000s we had an environmental dharma study group here. We met once a month, read and reflected on books, such as *Dharma Rain—Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism* by Stephanie Kaza, or *Teachings of the Earth—Zen and the Environment*, by Roshi Daido Looi, planned activities for Earth Day, and occasionally led meditative hikes in places like Griffith Park and Red Rock Canyon. In early 2008, Roshi Egyoku asked us to look into having our grounds certified by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) as a wildlife habitat, something that several of our members had done for their backyards. On the NWF website there is a questionnaire one can fill out and submit to indicate the features your place offers for the support of wildlife. The basic categories are food, water, shelter,

and places to raise young. Within each of these categories the questionnaire suggests the kinds of things a location might have that would provide these ecosystem services. If enough of them are present, NWF will add your place to their registry of wildlife habitats and send you a plaque.

The purpose of the program is to identify habitat and encourage its maintenance, wherever the necessary elements are found or can be created—whether it be a farm, a neighborhood park, a backyard, or even an apartment balcony. Living in the midst of a vast city, with so much of our daily life devoted to interacting with each other, and immersed in the myriad artifacts of our civilization, it becomes too easy a habit of mind to perceive only the human realm. It makes it difficult to recognize even a backyard for all that it actually is.

On behalf of the group, I printed out the questionnaire and began to walk the grounds. As I walked, I noted how this thing or that one fit into one or another of the categories. It was a wonderful experience. It allowed me to see my surroundings, things I passed by every day, with fresh eyes.

As I checked off things that applied to us, I suddenly understood that it wasn't simply requesting information. Our plants provide food in the form of seeds, berries and fruit, nectar and pollen, leaves and sap. We have sources of water—the Sangha House fountain and the Buddha Hall's small stone bird bath. The trees and stands of bamboo, areas of dense shrubbery, even a log pile in the Kanzeon garden and a rock pile in a corner of the residents' parking lot, provided shelter for all kinds of creatures. Going down the list, looking for what matched, was shifting my awareness of what's present here, allowing me to see it.

On Sunday June 22, 2008, ZCLA held a ceremony to bless our grounds as a wildlife habitat, in appreciation and support of their service to local and migrating wildlife, providing them food, water, shelter, and places to raise their young. Our newly recognized role as habitat was presented to the Sangha. Roshi Egyoku offered a blessing. Together we read a passage from Dogen Zenji's *Mountains and Rivers Sutra*. Then we walked in kinhin all through the grounds, looking around and seeing what's here.

Two years later, in September 2010, we held another blessing, this time to honor our redwood trees. These had been planted at the request of Maezumi Roshi in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Now towering, they had been small when planted. The idea for a blessing grew from one of

¹Epigraph to Chapter 9 of *Nine-Headed Dragon River*, by Peter Matthiessen

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SEEING WHAT'S HERE *(Continued from page 3)*

the articles we read in *Dharma Rain*, in the section “Buddhist Countries in Environmental Trouble.” Entitled “Thailand’s Ecology Monks,” it tells how in the early 1990s monks in forest monasteries began to respond to increasingly excessive logging by holding ordination ceremonies for trees in areas they wished to protect. Adapted from the monks’ own ordination ceremonies, particular trees were blessed and wrapped in saffron robes to deter logging. It became a movement that spread, engaging both local villagers and government.



Our tree blessing began with remarks by Roshi Egyoku and a tree poem by Mary Oliver. We then visited each redwood from the north side of Pine House to the one by the Meyer lemon tree. At each tree we made offerings of water and incense and

chanted the Sho Sai Myo Kichijo Dharani and the Jizo Shingon Dharani (Jizo Bodhisattva being Earth Protector). To mark the trees as blessed we loosely tied a length of sisal rope around the trunk of each tree. They lasted many years before falling away.

More years passed and I began to see that some items I had checked off on the habitat form that were no longer there. They had been removed, for whatever reason, and I hadn’t noticed them leave. In some cases these were things not meant to last, like a huge pile of cut grass, partly covered with a tarp, that for some reason had sat behind the Pine House for weeks.



In other cases, they were overgrown places that provided shelter to birds and insects, but they weren’t like that for that purpose, so they were later cut back or cleared out, made neat and uncluttered.



It’s not that we were no longer a habitat—all the elements were still here, and some new things created, such as a wonderful butterfly



garden—but having finally noticed, I found myself missing some of the old things, despite the fact that a habitat, even without our activity, is never a static place.

Looking at our grounds now, it is yet again different from what it was then. Most of the butterfly garden in front of the Zendo is gone. The liquidambar and magnolia trees, long so prominent in the Jizo garden, had developed problems and were removed, eventually replaced by a sycamore. It reminds me that my ability to see what’s here is something that fades unless I consciously cultivate and renew it.

Our plaque from NWF (photo page 3) is located at the edge of the redwood nearest the Meyer lemon, and a redwood also removed a while back for problems, but which has replaced itself with a forest of new shoots coming up from its still-thriving roots.



*National Wildlife Federation
Certified Wildlife Habitat*

This property provides the four basic habitat elements needed for wildlife to thrive: food, water, cover, and places to raise young.

The National Wildlife Federation’s habitat certification program is found at certifiedwildlifehabitat.nwf.org.

Sensei Mukey served as Zendo Steward for 15 years.

Wildlife was found on the ZCLA grounds. Photos by Yudo.

Embodying Ecodharma

by Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran



Climate change, ocean acidification, habitat destruction, collapsing animal populations shout at us that we have fallen disastrously out of harmony with the earth and one another. Living in an unprecedented ecological crisis, many of us feel grief over the losses of the present and the losses to come. How do we respond as Buddhist practitioners?

The crisis can seem so broad, the grief so hurtful, that we often turn away. Human beings have never before dealt with this scale of destruction driven by our own behaviors. We need to create and learn practices to engage with the reality of our situation. With this need in mind, during our recent Earth Week Zazenkaï participants were invited to turn toward their grief and to cultivate gratitude for our planet and all forms of life. A ritual offered to participants is reprinted in this newsletter.

In the United States, we generally lean toward a belief that things will always get better as we hurry along to the future. It can be hard to allow ourselves time and space for our grief. Francis Weller, a Jungian therapist and grief ritualist, believes that we are descending into what he calls “the long dark,” in which we’ll need skills and ritual forms to acknowledge and be present to our responses, especially grief. Because our culture generally lacks these, he has developed a framework for mapping our grief and adapted and invented grief rituals to support people in experiencing their grief individually and communally.

In my own experience, encountering grief and gratitude in deeply vulnerable ways has been a pathway to experiencing the true nature of interconnection and interdependence. For many years I was a professional environmental advocate. In that role I leaned into action and away from vulnerability while confronting the corporate and political powers destructively exploiting the earth. What I have learned is that if I am to experience the fact of this earth as my very self, then I must turn toward my grief and descend into loss and death. I need to dive instead of thrashing on the surface. In fact, my suffering increases when I avoid that descent. Franz Kafka wrote, “You can hold back from the suffering of the world...but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering you could have avoided.” [quoted by David Loy in *Ecodharma*]

Rather than isolating us, turning toward our grief makes our heart both more spacious and more tender, opening us more deeply into the human community and the more-than-human community of all life forms. Our descent into grief enriches our life and frees our love and compassion to more clearly emerge and heal us. Our heart, by its very nature, hungers for harmony, to be in deep, edgeless relationship. We should attend to that!

But in cultivating these aspects of our lives, we cannot bypass the realities of how we have gotten to this point. We have transformed the planet’s natural functioning into a machine to produce monetary wealth, trading forests for palm oil or cattle or toilet paper. Plans to mine the ocean floor are being put into action while others talk of detonating nuclear bombs on Mars to warm its climate. It’s madness. Feeling the pain of this madness, turning toward grief to be present with it, gets us beyond the intellectual and abstract and into our own embodied nature – to know the wrongs deep in our bodies and to work with them as our own.

There’s a story of Chinese Zen master Dongshan Liangje (Japanese: Tozan) that poignantly expresses this:

Dongshan and a monk were washing their bowls after breakfast and saw two cranes fighting over a frog. The monk turned to his teacher and asked, ‘Why does it always come to that?’ Dongshan answered, ‘It is only for your benefit, Honored One.’

When the monk observes the cranes struggling over the frog, what world is he seeing? His question places a layer between him and the scene “before” him. He’s expressing dissatisfaction with the world as it is. Dongshan doesn’t answer the monk’s question with an explanation of suffering.

He instead turns the question on its head, inviting the monk to be intimate with what is. By being with the pain of the frog and the hungry struggle of the cranes instead of moralizing about it, we experience our connectedness. When we let ourselves be fully present for pain and grief, we get bigger and more fully realize our relationship with this world, that we are this world just as it is. And when our heart fully opens to the grief, our sense of being separate dissolves. We are not apart! We wake up.

David Loy, in his seminal book *Ecodharma*, writes “We must feel more deeply in order to be transformed more

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EMBODYING ECODHARMA (Continued from page 5)

deeply—in Zen language, in order to solve the great collective koan of our time: how to respond to the horrific things we are doing to the earth and to ourselves. That means opening up to the repressed grief and despair that so often paralyze us, whereupon they can transform into compassionate action.” From this perspective, the cranes and the frog are the monk’s teachers. Who are your teachers?

When we can turn toward grief, we disrupt our habitual mind that is trying to hold things together with one story after another, wrapping us in concepts as though they can insulate us from reality. We can let go into our connectedness and de-center our own self. Then, we can ask whose grief is this? If it remains only “my” grief, then we are still separated and need to keep working. While the details of our grief differ among us, in the end my grief is your grief, yours is mine.

Making this journey with grief, we deepen our gratitude for this impermanent life in which nothing is fixed and in which everything is renewed moment after moment. There is great freedom in the fact that we can’t know where it’s all going!

Joanna Macy placed gratitude at the beginning of the transformative spiral that she and others have developed in the Work that Reconnects body of ecologically-oriented writings and practices. Participants start with gratitude, which buoys us to honor our pain for the world, allowing us in turn to see the world with new eyes and then engage in it. In her long experience working with thousands of people, she found that gratitude grounds and strengthens us, that it clarifies for us our intrinsic right to be here. She calls it “a stance of the soul, it comes like the breath. The primal movement of all spiritual traditions, the primal wow...it’s the gift of life and we don’t control it – it’s delicious and terrifying and that’s what life seems to be.” [Quoted in *Ecodharma*] Yes!

Gratitude, like grief, disrupts our self-obsession. Macy says that “gratitude work is liberating, subversive, that we are sufficient and that means we can be free.” How many of us feel insufficient, less than? Knowing we are sufficient is an antidote to a consumer society that turns our mind and heart into a marketplace to sell us things and services to fill one imagined lack after another. It’s deliciously subversive and liberating to just earnestly express and feel gratitude.

Gratitude practice is transformative. When we participate in ceremonies like service and oryoki, we can experience gratitude as a healing song running throughout ritual forms. Listen for that song in yourself, and you’ll experience the liberatory nature of ritual.

Here’s another story about Dongshan:

Shenshan was mending clothes when Dongshan asked, “What are you doing?”

“Mending,” said Shenshan.

“How is it going?” asked Dongshan.

“One stitch follows another,” said Shenshan.

“We’ve been traveling together for twenty years and you’re still talking like that!” said Dongshan.

“How can you be so clueless?”

“How do you mend, then?”

“With each stitch the whole earth is spewing flames,” said Dongshan. [ZPI translation]

The whole world is engulfed in suffering. Our mending is to face this, to accept it, to turn toward it, be it. Drop your strategies! Whole-heartedly engage, do nothing by rote. We can be wild like the unbound earth, our free life force circulating everywhere, penetrating everywhere. Be fully alive in the midst of spewing flames, fully alive as the spewing flames.

Let’s be thankful for this life, this breath, for the ancestors who turned their lives over to the dharma to benefit all beings. To this great, wild earth and its humbling beauty, its seamless functioning. Our thankfulness is the wellspring of our life together, expressing it in our daily actions, in our ceremonial space, in our relationships with the human and more-than-human realms. Unconditional, non-transactional, non-bargaining gratitude frees us of the grasping self and allows us to plumb the depths of grief and not drown.

This is how we have, instead of Earth Day or Earth Week, Earth Life. We reconnect, we re-member our true nature, together here in the world of seeming chaos and deep suffering. We practitioners are always swimming against the stream. Let’s be grateful that we are doing so together in community.



*Remembering
Joanna Macy
1929-2025*

*Remember is a nice echo of
the reconnection work she
pioneered (re-membering).*

Dharma-Holder Earth-Mirror is the ZCLA Board President and facilitates the Ecosattva Circle.

Finding Harmony with the Natural World

Behold! The body includes and is the meaning, the main concern, and includes and is the soul.

-Walt Whitman

*You are my beautiful home, my only home.
Not one piece of me is made from anything else but your body.*

-Joanna Macy

by Julia Seirin Norstrand



I am fortunate these days to live just a short walk from a sweet little park with a large grassy field surrounded by a line of old eucalyptus and a few enormous, ancient ficus trees. Often I lie down underneath a ficus and feel the embrace of the Great Mother, imagining that my worries and regrets are being lovingly taken by her body.

There I am in the yogic “corpse” pose. What if I were already dead, my body decomposing as I listen to crows calling to squirrels and a distant barking dog. “A great way to go out,” I think as I rise, energized and “smoothed out,” as one second-grader described her meditation experience to me.

These days, we need a lot of smoothing out. Record levels of anxiety, sleep disorders and addictions testify to the dread in our psyches about the fate of our nation, species, and all life on our planet. Since the Ecosattva group began meeting in October of 2023, I have been able to access these uncomfortable feelings more consciously and be guided to wiser responses. Denial, avoidance, and a painful isolation have to some extent been replaced by feelings of connection and common purpose. Dharma-Holder Earth-Mirror Corcoran’s skillful facilitation of our horizontally structured meetings and the open-hearted input of the other members have fostered the courage to show up and be seen when I have wanted, more often than not, to hide. As I’ve begun to face fear I didn’t know was there, a joy that seems greater sometimes emerges.

In one of our first meetings, I had a strong sense of “flashing open” (as Roshi Egyoku says) when I realized that there must be hardly a person alive who doesn’t love nature, whose heart doesn’t sing when their senses rouse to the wind and sun on their faces, the smell of sage and lavender after the rain, or the vision of a pink and orange sunset.

Yet in many of us, the senses have become dulled. For the glories of nature, we are “out of tune,” as the poet Wordsworth said near the beginning of the Industrial

Revolution, and the dissonance has only intensified in the intervening centuries. Information overload and thinking disconnected from our hearts and bellies are primary causes of our being out of touch with nature.

Also, from the blasted places, we want to turn away. Eco-psychologist Chellis Glendinning says that to open our hearts to “the devastated state of the Earth is the next step in the reclamation of our bodies, the body of our human community, and the body of the Earth.” Eco-journalist Trebbe Johnson describes her practice of bearing witness to a devastated place as “gazing” until she allows herself to be “disarranged” by it. A new, more compassionate body is thereby born.

The ancient Taoist practice of Qigong (“life energy cultivation”) has become a skillful means of bearing witness to my feelings and to the world around me and has gained importance since the Ecosattva group started. This movement method of “internal alchemy” fosters an intimate relationship with Earth and sky (Heaven), which meet in the heart-mind (Xin) in the “realm of the living things.” The movements are easy, and you are free to adapt them to your comfort level. Conscious intention infuses the practice with shamanic power to heal, energize and align.

As part of my personal practice, I return constantly to spatial awareness, to seeing from the back of the head (location of the visual cortex), counteracting the habitual squint that so many daily activities encourage and which causes our peripheral and depth perception to atrophy. The Zen instruction to “take the backward step” has taken on a new, more palpable aspect. This is a softer, kinder gaze that makes the visible world more rich.

The most exquisite aspect of Qigong is the delicate interplay of my movements with the movements of nature. Although it can be done indoors to good effect, when I do it outside, the world and I seem to move as one body.

I hope that everyone will find an activity that can bring them into harmony with the natural world. In turbulent times, we need to find a way to conserve and intelligently direct our life force.

Seirin is a long-time ZCLA member.

ZCLA Explores Indigenous Allyship

by Joe Parker



Editor's Note: Before every Dharma talk, we acknowledge the original inhabitants of the unceded land we are on. In an effort to go beyond just words, ZCLA invited Joe Parker to lead a series of workshops on how to be an Ally with our Indigenous neighbors.

I first
met
ZCLA

residents working as volunteers at the Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Conservancy land in Altadena (<https://www.tongva.land/>), where the Tongva had recently received their first tribal land in over a century. We were all there volunteering to help clean up the debris, invasive plants, and rotted wood on the land.

As a white settler, I began working with Indigenous communities in Mexico and the United States in 2005. After meeting Barbara Drake and Julia Bogany, members of the Tongva, the Indigenous caretakers of the land in the Los Angeles region, I began inviting them to teach in my classes at Pitzer College in 2009. As I got to know tribal elders and culture carriers, I learned with my students about the history of colonization in Southern California and the native California plants that are important to the Tongva for food, medicine, shelter, and other uses.

After a couple years Tongva tribal members then asked for assistance with finding places where tribal members could be given permission to gather their cultural plants. As a tribe that was never recognized by the federal government and was without its own land, tribal members literally had no place to gather the plants they needed for revitalizing their cultural traditions, their food ways, and their ceremony. The irony that the original caretakers of the land in the Los Angeles region did not have access to their own land was the result of settler colonialism by Spain, Mexico, and the United States. Finding ways for the Tongva to gain access to the

lands stolen from them by force and fraud became a way to begin giving back to the tribe. So I began work on finding ways to support the tribe in achieving its goals, first with permissions to gather cultural native plants and then through collecting culturally important native plants and giving them to tribal members, finding a location for Tongva to celebrate seasonal ceremony, and other goals that the tribe identified and shared with me. I also continued to learn about Tongva practices through classes they teach each summer at the Idyllwild Arts Center, through other

public presentations that a group of Tongva and other Indigenous and settler communities known as the Chia Café Collective were making, and through growing and gathering California native plants.

The Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples (<https://7genfund.org/>), a Native-run national organization based in Arcata, California, then asked me and two other settlers to put together a guide to allyship with Indigenous communities for settlers. Rather than burdening Indigenous community members

with the labor of educating settlers in the history of colonialism, the guide lays out ways that settlers all over North

America and beyond have educated themselves in the violence of colonialism and the protocols for respectful relations in the present with their Indigenous neighbors. This guide was the basis for the workshops that I led for ZCLA members in 2024.

When two important elders from the Tongva and a central white settler member of the Chia Café Collective passed away, I began to think more long-term about how white settlers and other settlers can self-educate themselves in ways that would allow them to understand Tongva tribal members and their goals. The workshop series with ZCLA was my first attempt to train a broader community and future generations of settlers to build constructive relations with Indigenous communities and support them in material ways through allyship under Indigenous leadership.

ZCLA members were first invited to visit locales where major habitats can be



Opening Circle in front of one of the many murals at Indian Alley.



Sensei Jitsujo and Kyogen Rosania by the Decolonize And Chill mural discussing the Bearing Witness Walk.

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INDIGENOUS ALLYSHIP *(Continued from page 8)*

experienced in a healthy vibrant state, getting to know the plants and animals, birds and fish that the Tongva relied on for their subsistence. As land animals we are the fruit of the land we consume and as water creatures we are the water we drink, just as we are the air we breathe each moment. So, this part of the workshop provides us a chance to encounter those beings and spirits that co-produce us whether under colonialism or before colonialism. The history workshop gave us a moment to consider the devastation that settlers wrought in Southern California on the people that were and still are here, and to reflect on how we in the present may grow into accountability for the genocide and the white supremacy of the settler colonial project.

I had been invited by Craig Torres, a Tongva culture carrier, to sing a Tongva song known as the Ancestor Song by exploring my own ancestry both in human terms and in kinship with the plants and animals, birds and fish of my homelands in Ireland, England, Wales, and Scotland. So, the third workshop invited the participants into explorations of their specific ancestry and their relations to the plants and folk culture and spiritual traditions of their homelands. This project focused on the prehistorical past before the deforestation from agriculture and on ancestral relations to the land before capitalism and the modern nation-state as a way of reconnecting to ancestral roots not shaped by the forces that carried out colonialism. By tracking the ways in which European and other ancestors were cut off from our intimate relations to the land during the emergence of industrialization and urbanization, settlers can find ways to return to reciprocal relations with the land. Considering ancestry also allowed us to reflect on different forms of accountability for genocide and ecological devastation in concrete ways that support tribes materially. The fourth workshop introduced participants to the twenty-first century members of the Tongva and other area tribes, such as the Cahuilla, the Chumash, the Tataviam, and the Luiseño, key individuals and organizations for building constructive allyship relations going forward.

The final two workshops explored the collective practices of reciprocity, gifting, and mutual care of the land and of humans that Indigenous communities have



Sensei Jitsujo Gauthier chanting Om Mani Padme Hum to the skulls in the feathers as part of the opening ritual.

that foregrounds Indigenous sovereignty and leadership. Our group saw invitations by Tongva tribal members into allyship on these terms in the materials presented at the Autry Museum's "Reclaiming El Camino" exhibit that were brought into the workshops. By the end of the workshop series, ZCLA community members were ready to begin developing the respectful and informed interpersonal and organizational relationships with our Indigenous neighbors.



Tibetan Buddhist Will Rigdzin Dorje Jackson (left) talking with Indian Alley curator Steve Ziegler.

After the workshop series was completed, ZCLA took the initiative to explore local history of the Tongva in downtown LA with a group visit to a place called Indian Alley. This was a day of bearing witness within a "Getting to Know Our Streets" series where we explore how the street affects us and how we affect the streets. Together, we walk, listen, bear witness, eat, do council, and offer ritual. This alley was the location for decades of a residence where many LA Indigenous residents would stay when struggling with alcohol dependency and narcotic addictions. Historically it is also one of several nineteenth century locations where Tongva workers were sold into slavery in weekly slave markets in the 1850s-1880s.

The Alley has been spruced up recently with murals from different native artists, including a map of Tongva territory in LA by the Tongva artist River Garza. However, the asphalt and new paint have not erased the traces of the suffering, distress, and loss of life that took place there over the past century as a result of settler colonialism. After bearing witness to the many aspects of joy and suffering, we culminated the day with the Gate of Sweet Nectar ritual. This ritual invites us all into wholeness by honoring and enlivening the boundless wisdom energies, as well as feeding and nurturing all the suffering and dissatisfied hungry spirits.

Grief and Gratitude Ritual

by Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran



We consciously and unconsciously carry grief about the suffering of our earth and all our relations who crawl, fly, walk, and swim. Speaking our grief aloud provides us space to experience it directly and bring it out of the shadows.

Water is the medium in this ritual. It is the boundless flowing forth of life, the endless cycling of this world, and the essential stillness at the heart of our life. It is transparent and still as though empty, it receives without judgment, and it flows freely. It sustains all forms of life.

To perform this ritual, you'll need a water vessel, a non-plastic bowl, and an offering from the natural world. Use a vessel that is aesthetically pleasing or that has a personal association to pour the water into the bowl. Don't use the water tap. Half full is fine. The bowl is the container of all things, the shape of our world and our life. You hold the entirety of the world when you hold the bowl. Carrying the bowl with intention, find a place outdoors where you can sit quietly and let your energy around grief and gratitude gather.

When you feel ready, speak your grief to the water. It can receive it all. You can decide the volume and length of your speaking – follow your intuition. Be aware of the energy moving in your body. Let it flow into the water through your words and hands. Be spacious. When you are ready, speak the gratitude that arises for you. It can be gratitude for your life, for the great earth, all living beings, community, ancestors, whatever feels alive for you.

When you are done, offer something from the natural world by placing it in the water. Dedicate the merit of the ritual to the well-being of the earth and to all beings past, present and future. When the time is right, take the bowl, always holding it with intention, and pour the water and offering onto the earth in a place that feels right to you. You might sing, chant, or otherwise vocalize while you do so.

If the bowl is compostable, please compost it. If it is not, then wash it by hand and put it away. Remain intentional. You may find it helpful to journal after the ritual. Consider sharing your experience with someone who has also done the ritual. Give yourself time to let the ritual percolate through you.

Dharma-Holder Earth-Mirror was inspired by Francis Weller's grief work to create this ritual.



Senseis Senshin and Myoho's Chinese poster.



Corner

Birds' Sunrise Song

by Sunshine (autocorrect Senshin)

Oh oh
Oh my
Yes yes it's true
It's coming
Yes yes it's coming
The sun the sun
Here comes the sun
The world has not ended
The world has not ended
The sun is still here
We've lived to see another day
We're alive
I'm here
I'm here too
Me too here here here too
Alive alive
New day new day
Here alive new

Let's get something to eat
Yes, I'm a little peckish

of Disorder

Turning Points in My Endless Journey

by Nem Etsugen Bajra



Throughout my life, I have encountered many turning points—moments that profoundly shifted my path. One of the earliest was leaving for Japan to study. That decision marked the beginning of a significant change in my life.

Another pivotal moment came when I learned the essence of zazen from Roshi Egyoku. Her guidance helped me unlearn conceptual thinking and inspired me to live a life of vow. Her teaching has become the foundation of my entire practice, shaping every aspect of my path.

The next turning point was meeting Roshi Ryodo and joining his Westchester Zen Circle. The intimate setting of a small sangha allowed me to connect deeply with both Roshi and fellow practitioners, further enriching my practice. Eventually, I was inspired to establish Joyful-Mind Sangha, a sitting group for Japanese-speaking practitioners.

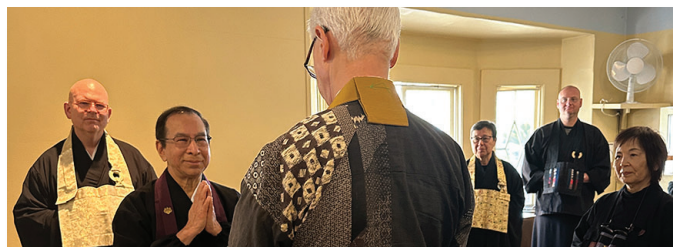
Over time, Roshi Ryodo entrusted me with leading Zen Circle sessions in his absence. Despite my inexperience, he encouraged me to step into this role. This opportunity not only deepened my connection with my sangha but also sparked my interest in teaching. Today, sharing zazen with people in the business world—both in Japan and the U.S.—has become an important part of my practice.

Above all, I am deeply grateful to Roshi Ryodo for continually guiding me back to the fundamentals, especially throughout my koan study. Now, having completed formal training, I find myself returning to the very beginning—studying the Buddha's first sermon anew.

During a recent pilgrimage to India, I sat beneath a tree in the Deer Park at Sarnath, where the Buddha first taught the five ascetics. As hundreds of birds sang above me, I sensed that yet another turning point was unfolding—one that would shape the next phase of my journey along the bodhisattva path.

And now, with empowerment from Roshi Ryodo on March 14 and the blessings of everyone at ZCLA, I am about to embark on a new leg of my endless journey. With deep gratitude, deep bows to you all.

Sensei Etsugen received Dharma Transmission (Denbo) from Roshi Kipp Ryodo Hawley on March 14, 2025.



Sensei Dharma-Joy (left) and Sensei Etsugen, Roshi Ryodo and Gyokuren Bajra (background) Roshi Egyoku and Ryujin McIntyre.



Roshi Egyoku (left) with Sensei Etsugen and Roshi Ryodo.

She is Cleaning

By Wendy Egyoku Nakao

During Etsugen Bajra's transmission week, I spent days cleaning up the archives including wiping off years of dirt from the framed calligraphies by our spiritual ancestors. Here is a poem I wrote from the voice of the dirt:

Oh, she is cleaning.
Humans gotta clean.
Wiping off the layers of me that have settled
oh so comfortably
on the framed calligraphies of old.

I wonder if she is thinking
that the ones who brushed these strokes
were reclaimed by me long ago.

Does she know
that I threw my arms around them,
hugged them in brown,
mulched them into my bosom,
and oh so tenderly.
swallowed them whole?

Roshi Egyoku is the Senior Dharma teacher at ZCLA, currently writing ecologia—voice of the natural world.

A Heartfelt “Thank You!”

To: **Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith** for leading a Public-Face-to-Face, the Thursday night Film Night, and the Conversation about Poetry and Dharma with **Conrad Butsugen Romo**;

To: **Sensei Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for leading the Priest Retreat; and the Hidden Lamp Study with **Sensei Senshin**;

To: **Tom Yudo Burger** for leading the Rakusu Sewing classes;

To **Chris Genzan Hackman** and **Jacque Rabie** for sharing their films;

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To: **Jerry Grenard** for leading the June Dharma Chat;

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To: **Senseis Jitsujo and Mukei, DH Gessho, Banto, Kaizen, Kyogen, Mats, Mike Radice, Brian Sotetsu Huff**, and **Yudo** for doing 2nd quarter Security rounds;

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To our 2nd quarter Jikidos: **Ben Genkai Erlich, Butsugen, Craig Genji Miller, Genzan, Joshin, Mats, Mike Radice, Myoki, Toby Keido Rider**, and **Yudo**.



Jukai for Hajime Shoetsu Yokomizo (left), Preceptor Sensei Etsugen, Sensei Dharma-Joy (Abbot), and Naoki Genjin Yoshikawa.

Sangha Rites of Passage

Tokudo

Toby Keido Rider

From Sensei Jitsujo Gauthier

May 18, 2025

Jukai

Hajime Shoetsu Yokomizo

Naoki Genjin Yoshikawa

From Sensei Nem Etsugen Bajra, Preceptor

June 22, 2025

New Members

Eileen Herman, Kelvin Le, Marcos Villatoro

Resident Leave-Taking

Jacque Rabie

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