



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

No Knowing

by Katherine Senshin Griffith



Emperor Bu of Ryō asked Great Master Bodhidharma, "What is the ultimate meaning of the holy truth?" Bodhidharma said, "Vast and void, no holiness." The emperor said, "Who are you facing me?" Bodhidharma said, "I don't know." The emperor did not understand. Finally, Bodhidharma crossed the Yangtze River and came to the Kingdom of Gi.

Later the emperor asked Shikō about it. Shikō said, "Does your Majesty know who that man is?" The emperor said, "I don't know." Shikō said, "He is the Mahasattva Avalokitesvara transmitting the Seal of the Buddha's mind." The emperor regretted what had happened and wanted to send an emissary to invite Bodhidharma back. Shikō said, "Your Majesty, don't say to send an emissary to fetch him back. Even if all the people in the land were to go after him, he would not return."¹

— Blue Cliff Record Case 3

Our Fall Practice theme is the Three Tenets of Not-Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Action that arises out of Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness. I've heard from so many of you, that you are very concerned with what you are witnessing in the world, but you don't know what to do. We spend a lot of our time involved with the workings of our ordinary way of perceiving and thinking. As we take in all that incoming data, it's hard to know what to do.

But working with the Three Tenets, we can approach any situation and even all of life from a different view. Most of us start with seeing and then wanting to jump into solving. But our first Tenet is Not-Knowing, which grounds ourselves in the wholeness of Life, before we gather ingredients and action arises. This Not-Knowing is reflected in Bodhidharma's meeting with Emperor Bu, where we encounter two different kinds of Not-Knowing, Bodhidharma's and the Emperor's. Both kinds are present in each of us.

When asked who he was, Bodhidharma answered "I don't know." This translation of his answer doesn't quite capture it. The phrase in Japanese is *fushiki*. *Fu* meaning no and *shiki* meaning knowing. No Knowing. Other translations might be: Don't Know, No Idea, Can't Be Known or as Mr. Spock might say "Conceptually impossible, Captain." Just MU, (no).

Following Bodhidharma's departure, monk Shikō asked the emperor if he knew who that man was, Bu said, "I don't know." Now this is the "I don't know" we more frequently experience when we don't understand or don't know what to do or what's going to happen next or why things are the way they are.

Like the emperor, we too can be well-meaning, sincere, putting out a lot of effort into our practice, not aware of the subtlety of our expectations. Not knowing what we don't know, unlike wise Socrates who said, "I neither know nor think I know."

Did Emperor Bu have an idea of what the Dharma or holiness might be? He was even known as the "emperor with the Buddha mind." Founder of the Liang dynasty in southern China, he built many temples, translated sutras, gave lectures on Buddhism and did much to spread the dharma throughout China. But Bodhidharma was introducing a new school of Buddhism where there are no teachers. Emperor Bu is in some ways the first major Zen student in China, sincerely asking questions, wanting to go deeper, not pretending to know the answers, not taking things at face value. But he misses the mark when it is right in front of him.

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¹*Hekiganroku*, Yamada Koun translation.

NO KNOWING (Continued from page 1)

The First Tenet tells us to let go of concepts and fixed ideas, but we often give short shrift to this. If you really look closer, do you deep down have an idea of some things being more right than others? Not that there aren't differences, but do you cling to the idea of what that looks like? Do you have subtly rigid ideas of what practice is, what is good, what is kind, what is just, who your enemies or friends are? Can you really even know yourself completely? Is it a done deal? A fixed entity? Are you troubled by the fact that it/you/them can't be grasped? Are you troubled by the fact that the truth or life can't be neatly boxed up? Or do you resonate with the physicist Richard Feynman who reportedly said, "I would rather have questions that can't be answered, than answers that can't be questioned."

When asked, "What is the ultimate meaning of the holy truth?" Bodhidharma said, "Vast and void, no holiness." Other translations are "Emptiness, no holiness," "Empty, not holy," "Vast expanse, no-sage Absence," or "Vast and clear, no holiness."

The Not-Knowing Mind of the First Tenet is aligned with this dimension. It's not just about dropping all fixed preconceptions or promising to be objective on a jury. It's about deeply grounding in the Vast Clear source of all manifestations and seeing all manifestations as the revelations of Not-Knowing.

When Shikô asks, "Does your Majesty know who that man is?" it feels mythic, like "who was that masked man?" The emperor honestly said, "I don't know." Shikô told him Bodhidharma was Mahasattva Avalokitesvara transmitting the Buddha's Mind seal, the Enlightened Mind. Filled with regret, the emperor wanted to call Bodhidharma back. But Shikô told him, "Even if all the people in the land were to go after him, he would not return."

There are several ways of viewing Bodhidharma crossing the river. The actual man, after the encounter with the emperor, perhaps thinking "you don't get it, I'm out of here." The manifestation of Avalokitesvara fully revealing the Dharma. He can also be seen as the boundless true Dharma, our original nature, that can neither come nor go. This is expressed in these lines from the verse from this Case:

*He yearns after him in vain for thousands and tens of thousands of years.
Give up yearning for him!
What limit is there to the pure wind circling the earth?*

Like Bodhidharma, the powerful ninth century Chinese Master Moshan Liaoran, refused to be boxed in when asked who she was. A monk sent by Master Rinzai refused to bow or take off his hat to her. He could only see her as

a woman and challenged her by asking "What is Moshan?"

Moshan replied, "The summit cannot be seen."

He then asked, "Who is the master of Mount Moshan?"

She replied, "Without the form of a man or a woman."

He shouted, "Why doesn't she transform herself?"

She replied, "She is not a wild fox spirit, nor a ghost. What would you have her become?"²

Master Moshan so revealed her Prajanaparamita Wisdom, her clear No Knowing knowledge of her own being of all Dharmas, that the monk bowed and became her monastery's gardener for three years.

If I asked who you are, what would you say? Would you answer with your job, where you live, your family role, heritage, gender, abilities? Are you caught in externals and preconceptions like the monk asking Moshan? Or can you hear the question from the Vast and Clear point of view? As if the Sky were being asked, who are you? Or Life itself was asked what are you? Asking ourselves, "who am I?" or "who is this that is asking?" can be a great unanswered reminder of this No Knowing. Beyond knowing but not beyond being experienced.

When overwhelmed, I get a visceral feeling of the brain being overloaded. When my eyes get tired with worry or excessive mental activity, I just pop my mind like a bubble. Head to the hara. Like an evacuation drill – everything out of the brain. No no, No Know, can't return till it's safe. Empty. In this No Knowing so much is possible. Both pressing tasks and chronic world problems take on a new light.

This is a practice of continual renewal. Each day we can commit ourselves to Not-Knowing, the source of all manifestations, and seeing all manifestations as the teachings of Not-Knowing. We pledge to embody Not-Knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas. We vow to manifest our true selves in every situation and with everything that arises, using the Three Tenets.

There is another relevant story with Emperor Bu involving his encounter with layman Fu-Daishi. Asked by Bu to lecture on the *Diamond Sutra*, Fu ascended the rostrum, hit the pulpit once, WHACK!, and came down. Again, Bu did not understand. Monk Shikô explained, "Fu-Daishi has finished his lecture, your Majesty."

This WHACK! is the perfect expression of the *Diamond Sutra*, whose passages include:

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² *The Hidden Lamp*, p. 231, 65. Moshan's Mountain Summit

Tools For Practicing in “Interesting Times” – Part II

by Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert



In my last article, I raised the question: how do we live in a world that is on fire? Of course, the world is on fire, both literally and figuratively, right now – and since I wrote that a few months ago, it has only gotten worse, both literally and figuratively.

Given the rapidity of the shifts in policy that we’ve seen at the national level, the many acts of

horror both domestic and international that have dominated the news, and the natural disasters close to home as well as far away, it is easy to feel completely overwhelmed. When we are overwhelmed, we shut down and lose our bearings; in particular, we seem suddenly to forget all the tools that we have carefully and steadily developed over time.

As I often remind my students, we are all animals with millennia of genetic encoding that we have to recognize and respect. Our neo-reptilian brains, with their freeze/fight/flight programming, have kept us alive against all sorts of dangers, real or perceived, for hundreds of thousands of years. It is important to begin by acknowledging and respecting the value this deeply embedded reactive system has provided in keeping us alive, to recognize that this reflexive reactive impulse is a part of being human – and to understand that we do not need to be run by our encoded responsive behavior.

It is through recognizing that this initial reflexive reaction is wired into our nervous systems that we can then shift our relationship to it, because then “it” is not “me.” Of course, we need to have a good amount of sitting under our belts to give us the sensitivity to connect with our bodies and to identify when we are getting triggered, and to have the expansiveness to not get totally rocked by it. For me, in 2017 and thereafter, for example, I began to notice how, every time I would see a “Breaking News” alert on my phone, adrenaline would start immediately pumping into my bloodstream. It was only after I noticed this that I could begin to work with it, and the way I could notice it was by developing

sensitivity through sitting. Sitting is the practice of noticing, over and over, exactly where I am and what’s going on. Attention! In zazen, we are never going somewhere else – it is always about connecting with this very moment, in this very body. It is a practice of not escaping.

When we feel our reactions begin to get activated, we have a choice – do we interrupt the arc, or do we just go with it? At some point, hopefully, we see the suffering that just going with the arc of reactivity brings us, and we resolve to try a different path. So, first, let’s just slow down, stop, and take a deep breath – in and out. Wherever you are as you are reading this, feel the earth under you. Notice the air as you inhale. Connect with your body – what Mary Oliver calls the “body-gift,” a phrase I like much more than the old Zen phrase “skin-bag.” Be aware of your surroundings, of the air, the sounds, the temperature on your skin. Let’s return to our bodies. This is a practice of paying attention – so, pay attention!



Now, what is “attention”? It is the practice of Not-Knowing, and of Bearing Witness, the first two of the Three Tenets. Not-Knowing requires us to drop all of our fixed ideas – a scrim that separates us from reality-as-it-is. As long as we are seeing the world through the construct of our ideas, our taxonomic compartmentalization, we really aren’t seeing the world-as-it-is, we are just living in our own world – our own “Matrix.” So the practice of Not-Knowing asks us to let go of our constructed reality so that we can experience actual reality.

The practice of Not-Knowing is a true practice – it is an active engagement, not something passive. Not-Knowing is also a verb. We are all prone to backsliding into our constructed reality. Our constructed world is easy, and comfortable. It is the land of confirmation bias and echo chamber. “Oh, there’s so-and-so. I know all about him. I’ve known him for 20 years. I know what he’s going to say. I know how he is going to react. I know what he likes, so I don’t really need to pay attention.” Falling back on our constructed reality is easy. It is also lazy. Don’t be lazy! Recently, I was listening to a talk by Maezumi Roshi, and

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TOOLS FOR PRACTICING *(Continued from page 3)*

he was imploring his students: “don’t be lazy!” He wasn’t asking for his own sake; neither am I.

Not-Knowing is like shikantaza – it demands an active, constant engagement. Yamada Koun refers to shikantaza as being like a taut bowstring. Not-Knowing is the same. Attention!

Once we have swept away our conceptual scaffolding, then we can Bear Witness. Bear Witness to what? To the joys and suffering of the situation, whether that involves ourself, another person, or something more involved. The practice of Bearing Witness is a practice of radical openness – it is a practice of forgetting the self and being completely one with the situation-as-it-is. Like Not-Knowing, this is an active practice. In being with a situation, we feel our “I” immediately scramble to emerge. It can be very challenging to do nothing but bear witness to another person’s suffering. Our desire to “fix” may get triggered. And, of course, the “fix” will rest on our own “knowing” about how to go about “fixing” – and we have popped right out of that Not-Knowing state. Or our freeze/fight/flight response may get triggered, throwing up a huge screen between us and our Bearing Witness. We may say, “this is too much for me to handle,” and feel an incredible urge to turn away, to look away, to avoid. Now, how do you work with that? Suddenly, there’s a whole new situation to bear witness to! Can we have as much compassion for our own state of reactivity as we can for the suffering of another person, or will we suddenly let our self-critical mind have free rein? Will we even notice what we do? Can we slow down and respond and not react? And if not, and we finally notice, how do we then respond to our reaction? Let’s appreciate how multi-layered this process can be, activate our compassionate mind for ourselves, and set our intention to work diligently to transcend our conditioned reactions.

When we are Bearing Witness, we do so to every facet of a situation – not just the ones “I” want to hear while avoiding the ones that don’t fit “my” narrative. This “I” and “my” are products of my constructed reality. When we see them arise (and they will, I assure you), let’s be grateful for the noticing, and then let them go and return to Not-Knowing. Bearing Witness is a practice of seeing the wholeness of life, being present to the wholeness of life, and life is complex. (Pro tip: If we think the answer is simple, it’s usually a red flag that we are working from an entrenched “knowing.”) So long as we are unwilling to bear witness to the so-called shadows, the so-called yucky stuff, and all the stuff that does not fit neatly into our narrative, we are living and acting in the constructed reality of value

judgments – and any action that I take will be self-centered, because my perspective is fundamentally self-centered.

The Third Tenet is Action – Action that arises from this Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness. While the first two tenets are internal – the practice of paying attention to what is arising – the third calls us to engage the world. This engagement is in service of the wholeness of life. What will that look like? I don’t know! And although my action and your action are not the same, is one right? Is one wrong? (I hope if you’ve read this far, you don’t need an answer from me.)

The only way to say an action is “wrong” is if it does not arise from this place of “not-knowing-bearing-witness,” in other words, if it arises from our constructed reality and our personal narrative. Then, we can say it is “wrong” (a dangerous word, so use with caution) insofar as it is serving our own agenda and does not arise holistically in response to our engagement with true reality.



When we first take up this practice of working with the Three Tenets, we may find ourselves frozen in this place of “not-knowing-bearing-witness.” In seeing the complexity of life, we may freeze; we may resist taking this step into Action, of stepping off the hundred-foot pole. Have confidence in yourself. Don’t be a stone Buddha! Remember, even non-action is Action. That’s how life is. Life is a river, always flowing. In practicing with the Three Tenets, we are serving life. Because it is always flowing, whatever situation we are encountering is always shifting, and so our practice of the Three Tenets is highly dynamic. So while we talk about this as a sort of linear process, in truth it is not linear, it is always happening in real time, all Three Tenets functioning together. As our practice develops, our ability to process in real time also develops. Have confidence in this!

When we falter in stepping forward into action, I encourage you to connect with your vow of service: “Numberless beings/I vow to serve them.” In serving them, we are serving the wholeness of life, we are not only serving ourselves. Connect with this vow of service, and this helps to actualize our ability to set our self-centered perspective aside and allows us to relax into “not-knowing-bearing-witness.” Then, with confidence, step forward and meet this world – it is waiting for you!

Sensei Dharma-Joy is the Abbot and Head Priest at ZCLA.

NO KNOWING (Continued from page 2)

All bodhisattvas should develop a pure, lucid mind that doesn't depend upon sight, sound, touch, flavor, smell, or any thought that arises in it. A bodhisattva should develop a mind that functions freely, without depending on anything whatsoever... Therefore, Subhuti, a bodhisattva, detaching him - or herself from all ideas, should rouse the desire for utmost, supreme, and perfect awakening...

The Tathagata teaches that all ideas are no-ideas and that all beings are no-beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks of things as they are, speaks what is true, and speaks in accordance with reality. He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, in the Dharma attained by the Tathagata there is neither truth nor falsehood.³

When Emperor Bu asked Bodhidharma, "What is the ultimate meaning of the holy truth?" Bodhidharma didn't cater to this powerful devoted patron of Buddhism before him. I doubt he could have spoken otherwise, so deep was his grounding. We are still feeling the effects of Bodhidharma today. He's considered the father of the Zen we continue to practice. Why did he come from the West? This moment, this life, this No Knowing.

From No Knowing, we can then bear witness, by encountering all creations with respect and dignity and by allowing ourselves to be touched by the joys and pain of the universe. We can discover healing actions by inviting all hungry spirits into the mandala of our practice and using our energy and love for healing ourselves, the earth, humanity, and all creations. But we do so, heeding these words of the *Diamond Sutra*:

Subhuti, if a bodhisattva should practice generosity while still depending on form, he or she is like someone walking in the dark. He or she will not see anything. But when a bodhisattva practices generosity without depending on form, he or she is like someone with good eyesight walking in the bright sunshine - he or she can see all shapes and colors...

This is the reason why the Buddha teaches that a bodhisattva should practice generosity without dwelling on form. Subhuti, the reason he practices generosity is to benefit all beings.

When ZCLA's founder Taizan Maezumi Roshi first came to the U.S. in 1956, he had no way of knowing that his planting of the Dharma seed would lead to naming twelve dharma successors, ordaining sixty-eight priests, and administering the Buddhist precepts to over five hundred individuals. ZCLA is close to its 60th anniversary (in 2027) and Maezumi Roshi's lineage now spans continents, decades, and generations.

When the recently departed Robert Redford co-founded the Sundance Institute, it was going to be just a small

venue for independent filmmakers. He had *no idea* of what it would grow into. Now it provides creative and financial support to emerging and aspiring filmmakers, directors, producers, film composers, screenwriters, playwrights and theatre artists through a series of Labs and fellowships and includes the critically acclaimed Sundance Film Festival. In 2018, the private Redford reflected to "CBS Sunday Morning" on a favorite saying by T.S. Eliot: "'There's only the trying. The rest is not our business.' It's one of my favorite phrases. Because you can't guarantee where the trying is going to get you. So, you can't guarantee the result. The only thing there is in its place is the trying. That's where the action is."

From No Knowing, we witness the world as the true nature of things. We are then perfectly free to act in accordance with what is needed. As it says in the instruction to this Case:

When she has cut off the myriad streams, she appears in the east and disappears in the west, opposes or complies in all directions, gives or takes away with perfect freedom.

For what limit is there to the pure wind circling the earth?

Sensei Senshin is the ZCLA Head Teacher.

Corner of Disorder

"Hey Chat-GPT, what's the first of the three tenets again?"



by Mats Borges

Not Knowing?

³The *Diamond Sutra*, Mu Soeng translation.

Sharing Our Wisdom

How to Practice in Daily Life

Students often say things like "I had a wonderful time in sesshin (or in the zendo), but how can I keep that going in daily life?" The Water Wheel asked some seasoned practitioners how they keep inspired, practice when busy or challenged, and apply Zen protocols to home practice. Here are their thoughts on continuous practice.

Dylan Banto Neal



I have to ask myself what is most important to me, and why I am here. What are my vows and intentions? If I were to be on my deathbed tomorrow, would I be ready?

Sesshin is most helpful and keeps me inspired. Also, I find reading about Zen to be galvanizing. It keeps my curiosity going.

I just have to be careful not to create expectations (looking at you, *Three Pillars of Zen*).

I've done zazen in airplanes, car rides, long waits in drab waiting rooms waiting to get blood drawn. I also set "alerts" in my brain - for example, anytime I use stairs (which I do every day), I do kinhin.

I find panic to be the most challenging thing to practice with. In situations where the waves look too big to surf, I'll allow myself to do a shorter zazen sit or even change to a Metta-type practice for a while.

Transporting some of the zendo/sesshin rituals into a home practice helps me from keeping things too "casual." Forms can really help create the space, even if it's just bowing, lighting incense or chanting a gatha.

One time in early practice I came home from sesshin very refreshed. My girlfriend at the time was telling me about how she'd been struggling with depression and I gave her some "Zen sage wisdom." She then called me an asshole. She was right. Nothing stinks worse than Zen! And finally always remember: One day, you are going to die.

Kathy Myoan Solomon



Read *The Book of Householder Koans*. My life and my practice are one. I meditate in bed now when I wake up due to severe sciatica. I do affirmations when I swim. When I walk on the beach, I do Zen walking.

Marley Jakuan Klaus Dowling



When I am breathing my life, (when I remember to do that), I do the next indicated action and then show up with simple curiosity. Sometimes it shows up as having conscious gratitude that I have plates to wash and places to put them as I take them out of the dishwasher.

My political activism is a direct result of my practice. In fact, I doubt I would have allowed this action to become my life because, before coming to ZCLA, I was busy manhandling my life, deciding what I "had" to do to get the result I "knew" I had to have.

In 2011, I went on the Auschwitz Bearing Witness Retreat. I vowed if I ever saw anything like that even starting, I would choose never to be silent no matter how uncomfortable it made me and take actions to at least try to reduce its harm. I did normal protesting and fundraising and canvassing after 2016 and my practice allowed me to do that without focus beyond the next indicated action. No outcome, curiosity. It was life expanding. Then out of the blue, (at 65!), I was asked to start a business doing work that related to my past training and now I actually do sometimes very hard things to counter the political harm I see going on around me. Some is paid work, some is volunteer, but all of it is practice, the most unexpected practice. I was NEVER involved in politics before practice. This was never my vision for my life but why live within such limits?

I have no idea if it will do any good at all but taking the next action and saying yes most of the time when asked to take the next right action (and no when the request seems out of alignment for my practice) IS my practice. I am still curious about it all. When I stop to breathe and be present to what is, I actually think any work, action, interaction, even conversation, can be this kind of practice when I'm awake to it. There is nothing but practice even when I don't remember that.

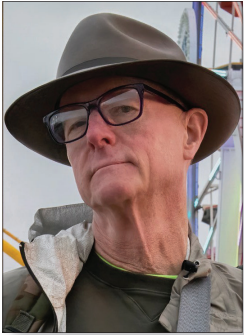
I have an altar. I bow before I sit just as in the zendo. I bow after I sit. I say the chants we say before and after. I sometimes light a candle and do it with ceremony: bowing with the lighter, lighting it in gassho, bowing and then putting it away.

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SHARING OUR WISDOM *(Continued from page 6)*

And here's a tiny thing I've taken from a sesshin at another zendo: I make a ceremony of carefully folding my towel after my shower and putting it on the rack. (I was a throw the towel on the rack in a lump kind of girl most of my life so it's a moment of quiet clarity I've come to enjoy.)

I also like the concept of samu: a specific cleanup period that starts and ends and is thought of as practice.

Craig Daigetsu Brandau

What I have successfully applied in my daily life is whenever tension arises, I try to slowly breathe in and out through my nose.

Peggy Faith-Moon Gallaher

Don't strive for wonderful or deep. Remember that the radical aspect of Zen is non-striving. When life is wonderful, return to the breath. When life is shitty, return to the breath. Keep returning. Commit to returning, over and over. Commit to being kind. Don't do this alone: connect with others on the Path. Zen Centers can teach you techniques and provide a place to practice so that you can gradually make what you learn there a way of fully appreciating your whole life.

Chris Genzan Hackman

Everyone is so utterly individual when it comes to their practice and path. So, I would start by asking yourself that exact question: "I had such a wonderful or deep time in sesshin: how can I keep that going in my regular life?" Trust that your inner wisdom will have answers to this question that no teacher can give you.

Zazen is a cognitive modality that is very different from the one we're used to using in daily life. It's a skill, and you need to give yourself repetitions in order to strengthen it. So, choose an activity that happens every day, and commit to bringing presence to that activity. Start with walking? Then maybe add driving? Then whenever you find yourself walking, pause and take a deep breath, count down from 10, and drop into your body. Touch on

the nerve of zazen, wherever that is inside you in this moment. Keep coming back whenever you notice you're lost in thought! Same especially whenever you reach for your phone. Before you open the locked screen: deep breath, count down from 10, drop into your body and touch the nerve of zazen. Then open your phone.

I think there's also a huge mindset re-frame that can be helpful. Ask yourself questions that inspire and strengthen you. I do this all the time: Why do I sit zazen? Who do I want to be in my daily life? Is there anything stopping me from being present right now?

Cliff Shishin Collins

Set a regular sitting schedule and treat it as sacred. It's ok to miss a day, but be fully aware as to why.

I continually remind myself to watch my moods and mood changes, thoughts, and recurring stories going through my head. (I have this taped to my computer when I'm working.)

Pay particular attention to any thought or external event that triggers discomfort or pain. Life gives us 10,000 opportunities a day to practice with this, just like being in sesshin.

You can't wake up with willpower, just like you can't think yourself into being smarter. Fully accept the present moment as it is.

Daily zazen practice strikes me as being like a kettle of water on the stove, kept at a low heat. Sesshin is turning up the heat to a full boil. Every now and then, it's good to turn up the heat all the way, but whatever you do, don't let the water get cold.

Sacha Joshin Greenfield

For me, the practice of sesshin is centered less on the quantity of zazen so much as the mindset of "perfect mistakes" and "every moment invites me to awaken." Likewise, the Great Silence of sesshin is less about literal silence (though I admit to being a stickler for silence), so much as it is about being silent on the matter of who I am and what should or should not be. Zazen and silence are supports to this perfect view and to this Great Silence.

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SHARING OUR WISDOM *(Continued from page 7)*

Even without being in retreat or doing many hours of zazen, it is possible to practice these views and this silence throughout the day.

For me, the most important thing in practicing these views in my daily life has been creating space throughout the day to slow down and recenter. I take time to notice my aversion to what is happening, or my clinging to keeping something present that wants to move on. I take time to delight in small details, like the way the light comes through the trees, and to appreciate the struggles and joys of other people. And I take time to connect with the mindset that "amidst my many mistakes and what is wrong in the world, this is what we need to awaken."

April True-Flower Ford



Sit regularly - the samadhi is always there!

When you get up from sitting, make sure to move slowly and deliberately, so you will stay present and not switch to automatic mode.

When going about your daily life, remind yourself frequently (when you remember): "NON-VERBAL." Cut off the

remnants of the past moment and be with the now, INCLUDING boredom, agitation, fatigue, frustration, and especially, sadness. Let the moment be what it is, it doesn't need to be transcendent.

Memorize a chant. The *Heart Sutra* is great. Start from the last line, working back to the first. Chant it while walking, biking, taking a bus, or driving. If a particular chant or reading grabs hold of you, work with that one.

We read Torei-Zenji's "Bodhisattva Vow" at one of our sesshins, and now I have been working with it for several years both as a chant that I say while walking or watering, and as a koan. The important thing is to make a commitment to an aspect of practice and keep plugging away at it. All these things reverberate in mysterious ways!

Jessica Oetsu Page



My practice makes me want to say a little prayer before I eat a meal. For me it is a way to recognize all that has supported the food I eat: the soil that provides nutrients to the plants. The people or machinery that bring the plants out of the ground. The effort to create the machines, engineers

making the design and factories producing the materials to make the machines, the factory workers who help with the production of the machines. The long hours of the people who bring the plants out of the ground; the food they ate, the community that supported their growth as children. Once pulled from the ground, the transporting of the food, the stores and farmer markets where the produce is sold. The makers of recipes, the person who cooked the meal. Honoring the plate and utensils and how they were made. My practice informs me not to miss how everything is connected, so I can take a moment to acknowledge this before starting a meal.

My practice sustains me even when there is a season when I am not following through with regular sitting. I know practice/realization is there - something I can always return to. In my daily life, there is a peace with this knowledge.

The precepts are close to me always. I know I do not want to take that which is not given. I want to not be deluded: through ingesting mind-altering substances or going off in tangents that take me away. This is by no means happening perfectly but the intention to not be deluded, knowing delusion is not what I want, inspires me to go forward with principles that I can own without the rub of ambivalence.

I am inspired by recalling experiences in sesshin that never leave me. Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the vows, the rakusu, the small altar, I love these. They are right there in plain sight.

Diane True-Joy Fazio



Participating at the Zen Center goes a long way to renewing my commitment. If I attend on Sunday, I carry that enthusiasm through the early part of the week to see it lag a bit toward the latter part, and be renewed again the next Sunday. This ebb and flow at a larger scale extends to Ango.

I use the "Insight Timer" app for home zazen. It keeps track of how many days in a row you sit which is an encouragement to keep the streak going. I zero it out prior to Ango as a way to emphasize that period and also not get too crazed about counting the days.

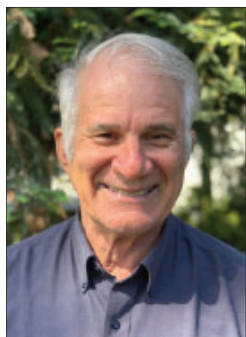
One of the main protocols I've brought "home" from sesshin is samu. I now almost always use a timer and samu

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SHARING OUR WISDOM (Continued from page 8)

mind for tasks that tend to get put off: packing, taxes, housework of any kind, cleaning, etc. The emphasis, as in sesshin, is on spending the time mindfully doing the task, rather than rushing to complete it. It helps turn what I feared as drudgery into a kind of practice. As a bonus, the thing actually gets done.

Jack Kuykendall



I have made attending ZCLA on either Saturday or Sunday morning a priority. I also find time during the day to simply stop and center myself by practicing shikantaza or “just sitting” without focusing on any particular object or train of thought.

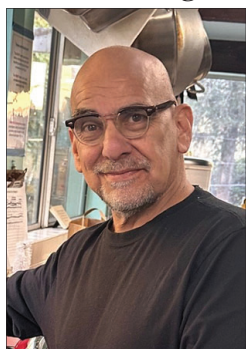
Maintaining a regular practice helps keep me calm and centered.

It helps me maintain balance and equanimity as I go about my various roles: husband, brother, uncle, friend, schoolteacher etc. and as I experience the inevitable ups and downs of life. I had a Zen teacher with whom I worked with commit suicide about twenty years ago. This turned me off of Zen for several years until I realized that doing zazen helped me understand what had happened and find closure.

No-Mind is a state of mind that is actually always there to be entered. In a sense, the zendo and sesshin are just training wheels. I’ve done standing zazen while commuting on trains in Tokyo as crowded as a sardine can, with white-gloved train attendants gently pushing more people into the overcrowded cars.

When I practice zazen at home, I sit in a chair in the corner of the bedroom and maintain silence as if I am in the zendo. My wife and even my dog respects this use of the space as such. My sense is that if I stick to the protocols of this 2500-year-old practice, things will tend to work out okay. But I will still leave this Earth one day—and not in a space ship.

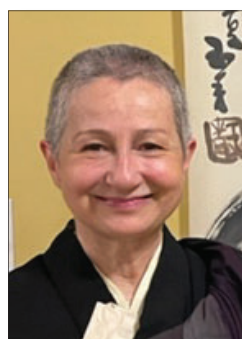
Conrad Butsugen Romo



A few good books I suggest for inspiration are: *Nine-Headed Dragon River: Zen Journals* by Peter Matthiessen, *Everyday Wonder* by Charlotte Joko Beck, *Passing Through the Gateless Barrier* by Guo Gu. I do samu at home with measured time for focused cleaning and home work.

I find it helpful to adjust how I physically sit, experimenting with how I physically sit, using various chairs, and postures so that I can settle without undue attention on my body. Make a service commitment or take on a position. Practice as if your hair is on fire. It’s all practice and everybody is Buddha. When I’m driving rather than react, I can notice “others” as: talking on phone while driving Buddha, eating while driving Buddha, applying makeup Buddha, driving slowly as if the grand marshal of a parade Buddha.

Christina Tchören Carvalho



What has often helped me in keeping my zazen fresh is a mixture of ZCLA’s saying about “Zazen zazen zazen” and Joanna Macy’s saying that “We are the Earth becoming conscious of itself.” Then, stepping out of the zendo, I bring in the classic teaching that both sentient and insentient beings are constantly preaching the Dharma. Who cares if this “I” hears it or not? A humble aspiration to hear it is practice that keeps unfolding gentle benefits in my daily life.

ble aspiration to hear it is practice that keeps unfolding gentle benefits in my daily life.

Betty Jiei Cole



I tend to be a person who perennially overcommits, so most of my forty plus years as a Zen person has prompted the question, how does my sesshin experience connect with this filled to overflowing life I keep creating? Most acutely, for several years, my very sensitive husband suffered with Parkinson’s Disease and was at home needing extra care and caregivers. I was still teaching full time, leading the Monday Night Meditation group, rehearsing and singing in a church choir twice weekly and trying to fit ZCLA into this overtaxed schedule. Patience is not one of my strong suits, but his vulnerability and anxiety demanded it. His gentle and steadfast love over many years called for it. Truth is, the time I like best to sit – early morning – was the least likely: I had to get ready for school, connect with my husband and his caregivers and be out the door well before 8 a.m.

I discovered that my years at ZCLA practicing zazen gave me the lived experience I needed: what I had practiced every sitting period, over and over and over. Breathe, notice the thought, set it aside, come back to this breath,

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Waters of Gratitude

by Emily Mary Myoshin Carvalho Walsh



Joyful silence comes up as I sit and look within. How can an I, this I, be so many and at the same time, none? One little thing this I does know: spaciousness is much more abundant than it was just a few months ago.

2025 has been full of sound and fury and it can certainly feel that it does signify nothing – what, for a Zen Buddhist, might actually not sound that uneasy. My country, Brazil, your country, the United States – at least half a billion human jugglers navigating as steadily as these shaky waters allow us to. And what to say of the magnificent biological diversity that we somehow share? The flock of birds I see right now in my waterfront flew in from your land – and so have I.

Last May, upon concluding a long process that culminated in a collective Dharma Combat, at which four women practitioners held the sword, faced the unknown and further committed to serving, my pilgrimage started. I sat Zazen with several North American Sanghas in Boulder Colorado, New Mexico and ZCLA. Three different Zendos, absolute generosity and human strength flowing from all of them.

ZCLA, in particular, is a jewel box where contentment pulses in the midst of so much sound and fury, literally surrounding the Zen Center. It was exactly due to that

atmosphere that, at ZCLA, I could experience tiny glimpses of what Dharmakaya truly is. Not to mention a very, very rare phenomenon: knowing that every time I stepped out of my room, I would bump into someone with whom I could gladly share significant and profoundly meaningful conversations!

And so, here we are one continent, bathed by two oceans. We go through the same suffering, and we are capable of equal levels of generosity in response to such suffering. In our own lands we all sit, look deeper and perceive that that actually means stepping up to contribute and serve. As it was once wisely said: “Happiness should arise as a side effect of personal dedication to a greater cause.” And it actually does.

I can’t help but wonder how many Buddhist Sanghas there are in between Porto Alegre - where my Via Zen is – and ZCLA. Mãos Vazias, Sensei Tchoren’s Sangha, is a pearl along this continental path from the south of Brazil up to the U.S.! What to say of nature itself? There must be billions and billions of trees in between us – literally all of them graciously contributing, not only to their “tree” Sanghas, but to all beings.

In that spirit and with my heart filled with gratitude I aspire that ZCLA becomes an even brighter center for Zen practice and training – being a wonderful Ponderosa tree spreading its scents all over our beloved shared continent. Deep bows.

Myoshin was in residence at ZCLA for a month this summer.

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this awareness. In time, this memory from my childhood, drawing on a magic slate, came to me. You could draw or write on the plastic sheet on top and then pull up the sheet and the image would disappear, ready for the next creation. For me it became an image accompanying Dogen Zenji’s injunction, “Take the backward step.” Or as Roshi Egyoku often said, “make the shift.” Out of the story and conditioned reactivities and into that still spacious clear mind. Even for a few moments. I learned from experience that a still mind can see. A still mind can listen and hear. A still mind can intuit what might be beneath the blame, self-justification, the over-anxious controlling. I could see and catch the moments when my habits of arguing, blaming, and avoiding were in motion and take a backward step.

Notice, and back up. Breathe. Relax. Smile a little. Shift. This then more and more became the practice of zazen in activity: practicing focus, opening, paying attention, listening, seeing. This was and is always available to me. Walking to school as in walking Zen, awake to the trees, the dogs, the people, the flying birds overhead so that joy fed my heart in those especially difficult years. Noticing how my pit in the stomach fear leapt into anger over a student’s remarks, or a teacher’s. Taking the backward step into still spaciousness. Breathing before reacting, smiling, shifting course. Apologizing if needed. Starting fresh. I learned that life punctuated this way is far less ragged and exhausting, not being chased around all the time by conditioned reflexes.

Feeling the Fresh Wind from the West

by Eva Jiun Neumann



At 4:50 a.m., my alarm clock wakes me up. Ten minutes to go before the official wake-up call. So, why do I need to use my personal alarm clock to prepare myself for the official alarm? To be prepared ... for what?

It is one of the many questions rising up, questioning myself, finding out about myself, concepts, some outdated, crazy stuff, flashes of compassionate wonder, dipping into emptiness. There it is: the wake-up call to action. In 30 minutes, we will come together in the Zendo for the first Zazen round on another day of our 6-day Just Summer Sesshin. Every morning, I step outside to look toward the east. Through the gate, huge palm trees stretch dark against the grayish sky. Dawn.

I came all the way from Germany to live, learn and be in this community on Great Dragon Mountain, not in the least to better serve my home sangha Zhulinci Bambushain Zen Center in Achen, Germany. ZCLA is a lively Zen community, deeply rooted in Buddhist traditions, while embracing the everyday joys and challenges of life in Los Angeles.

Besides the 6-day-sesshin, I witnessed the wholehearted submission into priesthood by a radiant woman (Jusen Bright), and the deeply rooted dedication of a wise woman stepping into the lineage of a Buddhist Sensei (Gessho Kumpf). In those moments time seemed to stop – and in a way it does.

I deeply cherished the experiences to talk and learn and share and laugh with so many different practitioners: beginners, advanced, priests, teachers, united in some spiritual foundation, yet expressing in all variations and stages. Stages of what?

My face-to-face interviews with many different teachers challenged my own individual expression of becoming. To experience my Not-Knowing. I mean really just not knowing what to say, how to act, feeling stupid and insecure. And under the compassionate and yet sometimes amused eyes of others, learning to accept those feelings: whether that is when learning new rituals or just how to make the appropriate knot on top of my oryoki set (that was a BIG one). And I learned to cherish the chance to serve others – if only through preparing a stunning (I hope) table of snacks for after samu work.

I also appreciated the openness of ZCLA members, the spacing of the houses of practice on the grounds, the times by myself with the beautiful wooden Kanzeon statue in the garden, and being in the midst of service in the Buddha Hall with others. My stay was an experience not only of many styles of spoken and demonstrated teachings, but also of true embodiment of the Dharma. You cannot prepare for the intimate experience with what is.

I am very grateful to everyone for all the loving support and caring acceptance I experienced during my stay. And in a way, I never left – I still feel the fresh wind coming from the West, and I see the huge palm trees bathing their tips in the red-golden light of eternal sun, on top of Great Dragon Mountain. I never left and I sure hope I will be back.

Jiun was in residence at ZCLA for a month this summer.



Jiun and Myoshin practicing with the Sangha this summer.



A Heartfelt “Thank You!”

To our Intro to Zen Meditation instructors: **Chris Daian Fields, Sacha Joshin Greenfield, Frank Genku Martinez, Dylan Banto Neal, Diane True-Joy Fazio, Cliff Shishin Collins, Roberta Myodo Brehm, Diane Enju Katz, Sensei George Mukei Horner, Sandra Seiju Goodenough, and Jenny Jusen Bright;**

To **Senseis Darla Myoho Fjeld, George Mukei Horner, Jitsujo Gauthier, Katherine Senshin Griffith, Lorraine Gessho Kumpf, Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert; Dharma-Holder Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran, and Preceptor Peggy Faith-Moon Gallaher** for their Dharma talks;

To our Sesshin, lunch, snack and breakfast tenzos and assistants: **Chris Carrowiano, Dylan Lake, Hilda Bolden, Jim De Santis, Josh Cretella, Jeanne Nakano, Joshin, Julian Kijun Hixson, Kathy Myoan Solomon, Mats Borges, Mike Radice, Karina Myoki Beltran Hernandez, Reeb Kaizen Venners, Myodo, Rey Barcelo, and Ryan Rockmore;**

To our leaders **Geri Meiho Bryan, Betty Jiei Cole, and Anna Josenhans** for Zen Teachings in Challenging Times;

To our Day of Reflection leaders: **Eva Jiun Neumann, Joshin, and Ben Genkai Ehrlich;**

To our Day Managers: **Kaizen** (Zendo Co-Steward), **Jusen** (Zendo Co-Steward), **Joshin, Banto, John Kyogen Rosania, Bill Tetsui Press, Brian Sotetsu Huff, Sensei Gessho, Toby Keido Rider, and Sensei Mukei;**

To our 3Q Jikidos: **Tom Yudo Burger, Genkai, Craig Genji Miller, Toby Keido Rider, Kyogen, Myoki, Mike Radice, Japhy Grant, Conrad Butsugen Romo, Ryan Rockmore, Chris Genzan Hackman;**

To our Sesshin and Zazenkai leaders: **Senseis Senshin, Dharma-Joy and Gessho;**

To **Jiun** for her Qigong class in the garden;

To **Keido** and **Richard Taishin Schulhof** for their Personal Practice talks; and to **Jack Kuykendall** for leading the Dharma Chat;

To **Myoki** for leading the Entering and Leave-taking Ceremony and the Hiroshima Chant Circle with **Kyogen;**

To **Sensei Senshin** for leading the Three Poisons class series, the Fall Practice Period opening circle and the Hidden Lamp Study with **Sensei Dharma-Joy;**

To **Sensei Gessho** for leading Tangaryo;

To **Senseis Myoho and Mukei** for leading the Ceremony of Atonement;

To our Bodhisattvas who attended Fushinzamu: **Sensei Myoho, Sensei Dharma-Joy, Sensei Gessho, Genkai, Myoki, Butsugen, Mike Salerno, Jiun, Emily Myoshin Walsh, JL Hokyu Aronson, and Tetsui;**

To the Priest Circle participants who cleaned all the Buddha Hall ceremonial items during their recent retreat: **Sensei Dharma-Joy, Sensei Myoho, Kyogen, Jusen, Myoki, and Keido;**

To **Sensei Myoho** for leading the Public-Face-to-Face;

To **Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao** for her tireless work on the ZCLA archives ■



Sangha Rites of Passage

Steward Leave-Taking

*Temple Development Steward (12 years of service)
Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld*

New Residents

*Ryan Rockmore
Aaron Mason
Julian Kijun Hixson
Daniel Liu*

New Members

*Carrie Helgeson
Basak "Shark" Comert Khounja
Jeanne Nakano
Chen Wang*

Resident Leave-Taking

*Craig Genji Miller
Sensei Jitsujo Gauthier*

Tokudo

*Jenny Jusen Bright
by Preceptor Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld
July 13, 2025*

(Denbo) Dharma Transmission

*Sensei Lorraine Gessho Kumpf
by Roshi Kipp Ryodo Hawley
July 27, 2025*

*The Water Wheel is published quarterly by the Zen Center of Los Angeles,
Buddha Essence Temple • Great Dragon Mountain*



*923 S. Normandie Ave., L.A., CA 90006
info@zcla.org • www.zcla.org • 213-387-2351*



*Editor: Sensei Katherine Senshin Griffith; Associate Editor:
Sensei Darla Myoho Fjeld; Production Artist: Tom Yudo Burger;
Proofreader: DH Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran.*