

NOTES FROM MANY HANDS AND EYES MEETING  
SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2008

In attendance: Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao, Penelope Luminous-Heart Thompson, Sensei John Daishin Buksbazen, Jessica Dharma-Lotus Armstrong, DeWayne Gojitsu Snodgrass, Ellen Reigen Ledley, John Heart-Mirror Trotter, Deb Faith-Mind Thoreson, Concetta Getsuren Alfano, Lynda Golan, Darla Myoho Fjeld, Margaret Jifu Gower. Not present: Lorraine Gessho Kumpf

**Status of action items from our last meeting:**

- Survivors (and perpetrators) Roshi held a private meeting for those Sangha survivors of sexual abuse who wished to attend on June 28<sup>th</sup>. Following this meeting, the overall feeling was that survivors are in various phases of their own recoveries and that there was no need at this time for direct further action. The question arose as to if it would be supportive/culturally/emotionally appropriate for individual Sangha members reach out to survivors. How would this be received? Would it keep the topic alive for them? How can we refrain from “identifying” people in this way and avoid stereotypes. The perception is that this is where education on the topic can be useful. Discussions regarding boundaries and the broader Sangha will continue. These discussions will include the notions of “safety” and “safe havens”.
- Prison project. The volunteers in the prison project held council, facilitated by Roshi, on July 11th. The prison project has nothing to report back to MHAЕ at this time. Their next step is to begin meeting to restructure the project and will have more to communicate once this process is underway. The prison project will create its own structure, and than MHAЕ will engage with how the prison project can fit in with the Sangha. Faith-Mind will be responsible for transmitting MHAЕ meeting minutes to the prison project volunteers.

Luminous-Heart developed a history of the prison project for informational purposes, including prisons and jails that have been involved, and training of volunteers. The history was reviewed and revised by Koan and was sent to Nagy, who has not commented. The document was circulated to MHAЕ at the meeting. To be added to the history: (i) that Nagy is funded as a chaplain in the system (\$600/month); (ii) that jukai has been given in prisons (and how many); (c) that no rakusus can be made or provided at this time because of concerns over colors (gang affiliation), needles, etc., and (d) that the amount of religious items a prisoner may have depends on the level of security of the prison.

- ZCLA prison program transition statement. With respect to current and on-going requests from ex-prisoners, prior to the meeting Sensei Daishin and Jifu circulated a proposed Center policy statement on responding to contacts from former prisoners, and received comments from various group members. Further comments were made in the meeting.
- Prison projects in other sanghas. Luminous-Heart and Getsuren have done a first round of research on what other sanghas are doing in connection with prison work, and will ask for help from the group as they go along. They report that San Francisco Zen Center has two programs, and a thorough screening process. Gateless Gate Sangha, in Florida, has a mindfulness program, in collaboration with two other (secular) groups. Getsuren has prepared notebooks on various Buddhist prison projects. One was delivered to the prison project group by way of Faith-Mind, and one was given to Roshi. There is a hard-copy of the notebook in the library for reference only, it may not be checked out.
- Life skills training programs for former prisoners. Reigen is doing on-going research on this. The “Friends Outside” program seems to be the largest group in the Los Angeles area. They provide advocacy, employment and re-entry assistance, support, transportation and other services. This group contacted Nagy at one time, asking for volunteers. It was suggested that we add a United Way resource guide to the library.
- Education on sexual violence. Roshi has been added to the group, which also includes Sensei Daishin, Getsuren, Luminous-Heart, Heart-Mirror and Lynda. Patti Muso Giggans or a member of her group, Peace Over Violence, will also be participate. Mary Alvin Nichols, who has over thirty years of experience (and recruited by Lynda Golan) will also be involved. The group was scheduled to meet on July 20<sup>th</sup>. Their aim will be to make a presentation to the entire Sangha and partners of Sangha members, so that we can learn skillful means as a community with respect to the topic of sexual violence and awareness.

### **Summary of discussion**

The discussion at this meeting was taken up by follow-up and reports on the action items addressed above.

**Action Items:**

- Finalize and circulate ZCLA's prison program transition statement—Jifu; transmit statement to prison project volunteers group for consideration and feedback—Faith-Mind
- Learn about about Roshi Daido Looi's prison project--Gojitsu
- Report back on the status of prison project restructuring and anything the prison project volunteers have to communicate to MHAE—Faith-Mind
- Follow up on exploring what other sanghas with prison projects are doing, continue to develop expert resources and do internet research, and get this information back to the prison project group and MHAE; also identify what further steps or assistance from MHAE group members are needed—Luminous Heart, Getsuren, Dharma-Lotus, Gessho, Lynda and Faith-Mind; develop task lists—Faith-Mind, Dharma-Lotus and Gessho
- Prepare an educational presentation to communicate and consider the pervasiveness of sexual violence and abuse in society, what we as a Sangha need to know, what about perpetrators that may be in the Sangha, do we have any shadows; report back to MHAE on the July 20<sup>th</sup> meeting—Sensei Daishin, Getsuren, Luminous-Heart, Heart-Mirror, Lynda
- Continue to explore what life-skills training programs and other resources for prisoners are available in our community; communicate these to prison project—Reigen
- Forward additional agenda items for future meetings to Jifu--all

Our next meetings will be Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-4:00 p.m. and Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 a.m.-12:00 noon.