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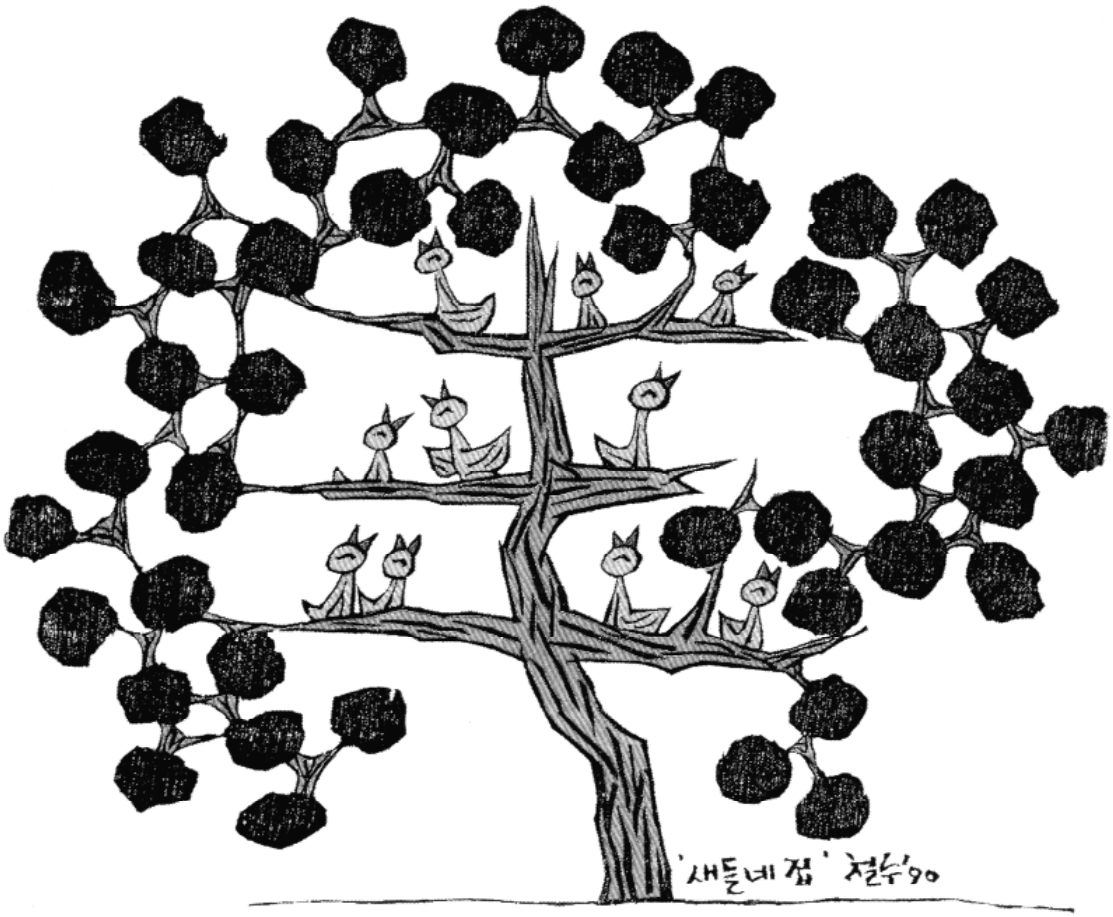

Lee Chulsoo

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Buddhism and Diversity

Buddhist Tales From the Land of Morning Calm

Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom

Everyday Buddhism

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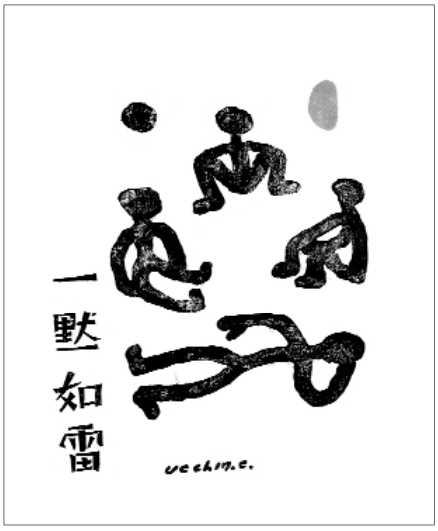
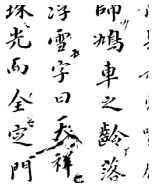


On the Cover

Thunderous Silence, woodblock print by Ucchin Chang
Source: *Ucchin Chang and Soho Kim. Zen: Wisdom of Asia.* Seoul: Chang Ucchin Foundation, 1995.
Ucchin Chang (1918–1990) is renowned as one of the greatest painters in modern Korean art history. He was a devout Buddhist. His Buddhist name, Pigong, means "no emptiness."

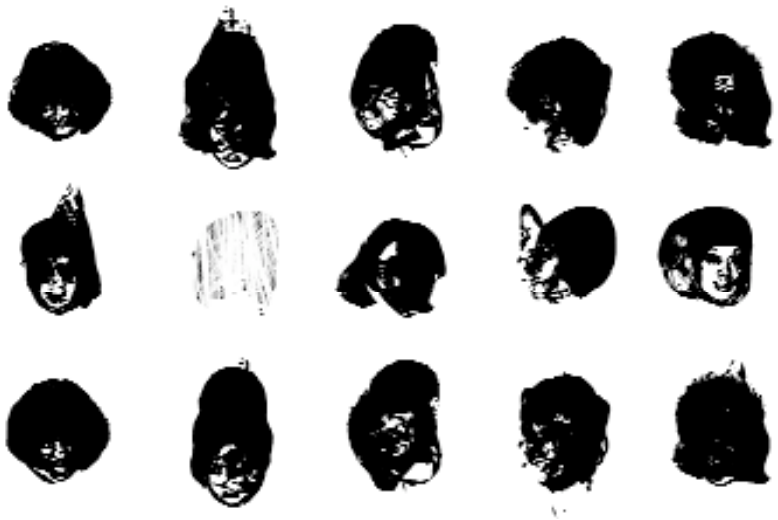












Racial Diversity in Buddhist Communities

Stephen Selka

As a sociocultural anthropologist, I can't help but think about my Buddhist practice from the perspective of sociocultural analysis. And because my anthropological research in Latin America has focused on the connections between religion and ethnoracial identity, the study of Buddhism in America is especially alluring to me. My dissertation research focused on the black consciousness movement in Brazil, where I examined the ways that religious and ethnoracial identities reinforce—and sometimes undermine—each other. I think that this issue of the relationship between religion and ethnoracial identity is particularly relevant to discussions of racial diversity in Buddhist communities.

The paradox that draws me to the study of religion and ethnoracial identity is that while many religions make universal spiritual claims (e.g., that all human beings have equal access to salvation or awakening), all religions are grounded in particular cultural origins. The Catholic Church in Brazil provides an excellent example. Despite its claims to universality, Brazilians of African descent recognize the Church as steeped in European culture, and many Afro-Brazilians I met referred to Catholicism as "the religion of the white elite."

In a similar way, many people understand Buddhism to embody truths about the human condition that transcend culture. Buddhism has long been a "transnational religion," and today its globalization has intensified with Buddhism's increasing visibility in Europe and the Americas. In many ways, however, the Buddha Dharma that has reached the West retains a close association with its Asian origins.

I want to be clear that I'm not arguing that Buddhism is a primordially Asian religion. Rather, I am suggesting that ideas about what Buddhism "is" are inevitably entangled with the ethnic and cultural struggles that characterize the world(s) in which Buddhism exists. In fact, it might be better to speak of "Buddhisms" instead of "Buddhism."

When Buddhism reached the United States, for example, it gained converts mainly among prosperous whites. Today in the United States, then, we have at least two somewhat separate Buddhist communities—or "two Buddhisms"—one predominately white and the other predominantly Asian.[1] Thus, since its arrival in North America, Buddhism has in some ways retained its connections to Asia and Asian identity but has also become closely associated with a very specific non-Asian socioeconomic group.

This raises two important questions that I will address here. First, why is American Buddhism often represented as something white when most Buddhists in America are Asian immigrants or of Asian descent? In 1991 Helen Tworkov wrote in *Tricycle* that Asian Americans have not "figured prominently into the development" of American Buddhism. This assertion provoked vigorous protests from the Asian-American Buddhist community. Are Buddhists of Asian descent not really Buddhist, not really American, or not really either?

Second, why are Blacks and Latinos underrepresented in Buddhist sanghas in the United States? Certainly there are many historical and sociological reasons for the segregation we see in Buddhist communities. Yet among the factors that are often overlooked are the ways that predominantly white sanghas are complicit—often unwittingly—with racist practices.

Many have pointed out that white middle-class liberals tend to see racism as something that happens elsewhere and do not usually reflect on how they reinforce white supremacy in their daily lives. Understandably, most people do not want to see themselves as racist, and no one wants to see Buddhism as a vehicle for racism. But these desires to see things in a favorable light can blind us to seeing things as they really are.

As people living in a society where racist practice is common, we cannot help but be entangled in the web of racism. As Buddhism takes shape in America, then, it inevitably reflects American racism. Anthropologists and others have shown that Buddhism takes the shape of its surroundings and adjusts itself to the society in which it is practiced. For example, two recent books by Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* and *Zen War Stories,* document the links between Buddhism and Japanese militarism during WWII. Victoria writes:[2]

In late 1997 I published a book, Zen at War, *that sent shock waves throughout Zen communities in the West, for it demonstrated that wartime Japanese Zen masters … had been fervent supporters of Japanese militarism. Moreover, these masters claimed the Buddha Dharma was itself synonymous with militarism. What was especially disconcerting to some readers was the fact that many of those Japanese masters who first introduced Zen to the West, especially in the postwar era, turned out to have been some of the strongest proponents of Japanese militarism, cloaking their support in the guise of such phrases as "the unity of Zen and the sword."*

In addition, Sri Lanka, an ostensibly Buddhist nation, has been embroiled in violent ethnic conflict between Sinhalese Buddhists and Hindu Tamils over the past several decades. Who would have thought that Buddhists and Hindus would be fighting one another?

Many of us in the West have a romanticized view of Buddhism. Americans are often shocked to hear that Buddhist communities in Asia have reflected the jingoism, racism and sexism of the societies in which they are found. If we continue to believe that Buddhism is the exception among religions, then by extension we may see ourselves as exceptional as Buddhists. Unfortunately, this may blind us to our complicity in the maintenance of white supremacy.

Elite and Ethnic Buddhists

So far I have referred to some key distinctions, including that between Asian immigrants or people of Asian descent who were raised as Buddhists on the one hand and convert Buddhists on the other. Although the landscape of American Buddhism is too complex to be adequately represented by such either/or categories, most people who study Buddhism in America agree that some kind of distinction between "ethnic" and "convert" Buddhists is useful.

Jan Nattier's distinction between Elite, Evangelical and Ethnic Buddhists[3] is particularly helpful. In Nattier's dassification, Elite Buddhists are generally prosperous white converts whose primary practice is meditation. The second type that Nattier discusses, Evangelical Buddhists, are perhaps best represented by the members of Soka Gakkai International, a proselytizing lay Buddhist organization that draws more Black and Latino converts than any other kind of Buddhism in North America. Derived from the teachings of Nichiren, Soka Gakkai practice is focused on chanting, not meditation. Finally, Ethnic Buddhists are Asians or people of Asian descent who were raised as Buddhists. Ethnic Buddhists are engaged in a wide variety of practices, but meditation is often not important for laypeople who grew up Buddhist.

It may come as a surprise to many to learn that in Chicago, as in the United States in general, most Buddhists are "ethnic." Numrich[4] estimates that about half of the sixty-four sanghas in metropolitan Chicago are convert sanghas. The other half, which are ethnic, have significantly larger memberships than convert sanghas, so that Buddhists of Asian descent in the Chicago area outnumber white converts.

One of the most striking things about the Buddhist landscape in the U.S. is the lack of interaction between convert and ethnic Buddhist communities. Even ethnic temples with convert members have what Numrich calls "parallel congregations." That is, ethnic Asian and non-Asian converts attend separate services and have different notions about what Buddhism is.

One might conclude that it is simply cultural and linguistic barriers that keep convert and ethnic Buddhist communities separate. Without a doubt, these factors are important. In addition, however, Kenneth Tanaka found that more than half of the Asian Buddhists he surveyed believed that "racist attitudes" play a role in keeping the two communities apart.[5]

What kinds of racist attitudes? We are more accustomed to hearing about racist attitudes towards Blacks and Latinos than towards Asians, but Asians are commonly stereotyped as well:[6]

In discussing Buddhism … we might talk about distinctions between "East" and "West," topics that appear to be as neutral as compass directions. Yet when we look at the history of these categories and the ways they allow us to talk about race indirectly, we find that they are not so innocent.

As part of the European and U.S. expansionism in Asia around the turn of the twentieth century, Europeans, European Americans, and Asians developed conceptions of "East" and "West" that explicitly and implicitly supported the West's claims of superiority in political, military, scientific, educational, and other institutions. Asian intellectuals lauded aspects of "Eastern" civilization linked with spirituality or mysticism, in contrast with the material preoccupation of the

If we continue to believe that Buddhism is the exception among religions, then by extension we may see ourselves as exceptional as Buddhists.

"developed" West.

Buddhism remains entangled in these conceptions, and cultural differences can be used to support both Eurocentrism and racial discrimination. (e.g., convert Buddhists have turned away from Asian and Asian-American teachers in the U.S.)

Considering the ways that Americans think about "the East" helps to shed light on why Buddhist converts in the United States overwhelmingly prefer forms of Buddhism associated with industrialized East Asia (Japan, Korea) and with a nation besieged by communist imperialism (Tibet) over the practices of poor immigrant and refugee communities.

The attitudes of convert Buddhists towards the practices of ethnic Buddhists provide an example of this kind of Eurocentrism. American Buddhists are often surprised to learn that most lay Buddhists in the world do not meditate and that many monks do not meditate as their main practice. And when American convert Buddhists learn about the elaborate pantheons, devotional rituals, and magical practices that many Buddhists around the world and here in America are engaged in, they often categorize those beliefs and practices as "traditional" as opposed to "modern" and as "cultural accretions" as opposed to "the true Buddha Dharma." They judge them as irrelevant at best, and inauthentic or degenerate at worst.

But Buddhists around the world might ask: what gives white converts the right to make these judgments? Although it is true that many beliefs and practices associated with Buddhism have no textual basis, Buddhism is not a "religion of the book" in the same way as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. That is not to deny that the sutras play a central role in Buddhism, but the direct, face to face transmission of esoteric practices—ones that are not described in texts—is very important in many Buddhist traditions.

In response to this point, many people object that the Asian teachers who came to the U.S. to teach Buddhism stress that Buddhism is fundamentally a "rational" religion (a view expressed in the puzzling cliché that "Buddhism is a philosophy, not a religion") and that ritual and practices are of secondary importance. Scholars such as Richard Gombrich and Ganath Obeysekere, however, have shown that many of the forms of Buddhism that came to America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from Asia were already reformed in the image of the rationalistic Protestantism it had encountered through the West's imperialist ventures in Asia.[7]

Thus, what most Americans encounter is Buddhism interpreted through a Western philosophical lens—even Buddhism that is imported by Asian teachers. So, American Buddhist converts tend to think of Buddhist practice in terms of reading texts and meditating, and we are suspicious of practices that seem to lack textual basis (this is perhaps an echo of the Lutheran Reformation), or, in the case of Pure Land Buddhism, do not stress meditation. When I first came to Chicago, I attended a Jodo Shinshu temple for more than a year. During this time, my "Zen friends" stopped asking about my practice; it was as if I'd strayed off the Buddhist map.

This is not to say that converts are Eurocentric just because they meditate. But as people towards the top of the hierarchy, they have to be careful about the ways they represent and draw on the traditions of other groups. They can affirm their own practice without disparaging that of others, and in the process we can develop a wider appreciation

Satya Hugh McBride

for the richness of Buddhist traditions inside and outside of our sanghas.

People of Color and Buddhism

Why are Black and Latinos underrepresented in Buddhist communities? How does this happen? Some Buddhist groups have been successful in attracting people of color. But the fact that Soka Gakkai and Nichiren-shu temples are somewhat of an exception only serves to prove the rule that people of color are underrepresented.

There are many reasons for this under-representation, many of which we have little control over. What we can focus on are things that people of color have brought to our attention: practices that tend to exclude people of color. Although there are probably some Buddhists who are bone-fide racists, most of the problem stems from "liberal white racism." As Robert Horton points out:[8]

Buddhism in America has not turned the focus of awareness on race. This says more about the subtle oppressiveness of our white conditioning in general than it does about Buddhism. Things are left out, not noticed, avoided, ignored, not mentioned, not spoken of, not seen. Differences are smoothed over. These are the forms of white liberal racism.

Liberal white racism refers to the often unconscious assumptions, attitudes and practices that stem from white privilege and a lack of awareness of race and racism. A major expression of liberal white racism is the tendency to dismiss sensitivity to racial and ethnic issues as "political correctness." Liberal whites generally believe they are free from racism because they believe they do not actively participate in it, and they can become resentful when told that they have not done nearly enough—that the struggle against racism involves active work every day in themselves and in their society.

At this point I think it would be helpful to include the voices of nonwhites who have commented on the problem of liberal white racism. One major theme that continually emerges in such discussions is that of exclusion:[9]

[People] need to begin to understand the difference between inclusion and exclusion in terms of the environments they create, the books they write, the language they use, and the presentation of the structure that houses the Dharma. At the centers, they need to look at who is in charge, who greets at the door, what the Buddha statues look like, and what resources are offered for African Americans to find their own inherent connectedness to the Dharma. Finally, there needs to be an admission of the fact that African Americans have not always been welcomed into the inner sanctum of Buddhist activity.

The first step towards inclusion, of course, is welcoming:[10]

For years, I walked into the sangha where I sit, and was extremely uncomfortable; no one said hello; no one said anything to me, except to ask for dana; and no one expressed the hope that I would return.…The idea of "invitation" is so crucial when approaching communities outside of the perceived mainstream. "Invitation" has very important cultural meaning and significance. Often, people who have been marginalized (whether due to race, orientation, class or other disenfranchisement) experience rejection, at best, and often abuse when walking into a space uninvited. Many of us have learned and been conditioned not to go where the invitation is not explicitly given. Even when there is consent for indusion, if it is silent, the consent is not experienced by those who need to be included.

Those who have not been ignored, however, have often felt like objects to be scrutinized:[11]

To many of my white comrades who accepted their interest in Buddhism as 'natural,' my engagement always made me suspect, the object of spectacle, someone to be interrogated. "And why are you

Liberal whites generally believe they are free from racism because they believe they do not actively participate in it, and they can become resentful when told that they have not done nearly enough.

interested in Zen? And where did you first become interested? And who do you follow?" These questions are usually asked of anyone new to Buddhism, but what a person of color hears, whether it's intended or not, is that we are being singled out. These interrogations presuppose that I—and not they—am the other, that there is no ancestral connection between me or other people of color and the cultures in which they search to find Buddhist truth. This is the cultural arrogance that white supremacy allows.

As these quotes suggest, liberal white racism is more passive than active, more unintentional than intentional. Thus, liberal white racism is elusive and often difficult to recognize. The first challenge, then, is recognizing racist practices—whether we encounter them in the workplace or in our own sanghas—and then responding to them in active and intentional ways.

Questionnaire Data

As an anthropologist, I believe that first-hand observation provides an important path to knowledge. While I was teaching Social Science at the City Colleges of Chicago, I asked students to make anthropological observations at various religious centers around the city. Many of them attended Buddhist temples on the north side of the city, including the Zen Buddhist Temple.

I "debriefed" the students using questionnaires after they conducted their observations, and their responses are directly relevant to this discussion of Buddhism and racial diversity. I asked my students, most of whom were Black or Latino, to list three words that come to mind when they think of non-Asian Buddhists. Here are the results:

- Upper class, liberal, nonconformist
- White, hippie, Woodstock
- White, yuppie, liberal
- Educated, upper-middle class, in transition
- Open-minded, hippies, confused
- Patient, different, lost
- White, young, patient
- Weird, uncommon, strange
- Modern, rich
- Rich, smart, yuppie
- Secularized, individualist, seeker
- Confused, bored, unstable
- Quiet, respectful, white
- Eccentric, mysterious, perplexing

Note the repeated use of the word "white" and words like "upper class," "yuppie," and "rich."

I also asked students to comment on their experiences and to consider how people in their own ethnic/racial group would feel about visiting a Buddhist temple. First, I asked them to finish the following sentence: "I think that people in my ethnic/racial group would feel uncomfortable or out of place in a Buddhist temple because:"

A (B)lack student: It is not what they are used to, and they would feel out of place.
A (L)atino student: That is not how their [Catholic/Baptist] churches are [so they would experience] culture shock.
(B): They would think the Buddhists are

worshipping and bowing to idols.
(L): [They would encounter] unknown teachings of strange people and [in strange] terms.
(L): … we would be the oddballs ….
(B): We are Black, not to sound closed-minded or anything.
(B): There are no Blacks.
(B): There is not enough personal involvement and not enough people within our culture that participate.

Next, I asked students to complete this sentence: "I feel that the temple I visited discouraged ethnic diversity by:"

• Not explaining or using language or abstract terms that I could not understand all the time so I had to take extra time out to try to interpret what they said.
• Only thing I could think of is I saw only two Black people there but I don't think or know that the participation was discouraged.

I also encouraged students to comment on their positive experiences. Below are some examples of how students completed this sentence: "I feel that the temple I visited encouraged ethnic diversity by:"

• Having some things be in English, and they welcomed everyone.
• Being receptive to visitors of all ethnic groups.
• The warm, energetic spirits they welcomed me with.
• Being located in a diverse neighborhood and not singling out non-Asian visitors but accepting them.
• Selecting [people of] different ethnicities and genders to perform leadership roles. For example, the person sounding the gong was African American and also female.
• All people seemed to be treated equal.

Practical Suggestions from People of Color

Many of my students had thoughtful suggestions for how the temples they visited could encourage ethnic/racial diversity. I asked them to complete the sentence: "I think that the temple I visited could encourage more ethnic diversity by:"

• Having members go out into the different ethnic neighborhoods of Chicago and try to lure [sic] them into the temple.
• Communicating on a common level that is understood by all.
• Waiving some of the fees required for the conferences. Buddhism is not an inexpensive religion to practice. It takes time and money.
• What may possibly help is reaching out and educating people more on the practices, such as clasped hands and bowing being a sign of respect. Many misinterpret that as praying or worship I would think.

A more general source of practical suggestions for dealing with these issues is the document *Making the Invisible Visible: Healing Racism in Our Buddhist Communities*[12] that was first used at the Western Teacher's Conference at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California in June 2000. The authors' recommendations include:

• Holding Healing Racism Workshops
• Acknowledging the existence of racism and include examples of racism in Dharma talks
• Identifying individuals who have progressed on the path of unlearning racism as possible allies to people of color who come to your sangha
• Developing a diversity strategy for your sangha
• Facilitating people of color to take on teaching, administrative, board and staff positions
• Exhibiting a willingness to accommodate different needs and cultural sensibilities
• Holding retreats and events for people of color
• Being explicit about welcoming people of color in your outreach material, including newsletters

• Considering having some kind of system for welcoming and orienting new members
• Creating a forum in your sangha where practitioners can express their views and feelings on what it is like to be part of your sangha
• Doing everything you can to make the practices of your sangha accessible

Again, the first step is recognizing that a problem exists. This can be difficult for those of us who cling to our identities as "liberals" pursuing enlightenment. As I have tried to show here, Buddhism takes the form of the society in which it is practiced. We live in a society where racism is not uncommon, and so our sanghas cannot help but be influenced by racism. Only by listening to others and by looking deeply into our own practices can we begin to develop active and intentional responses to this deeply pervasive form of social injustice.

Stephen Selka is a sociocultural anthropologist interested in the relationship between religion and ethnoracial identity. He has conducted fieldwork in northeastern Brazil on the role of religion in the black consciousness movement. He is currently a visiting assistant professor of anthropology at Tulane University in New Orleans.

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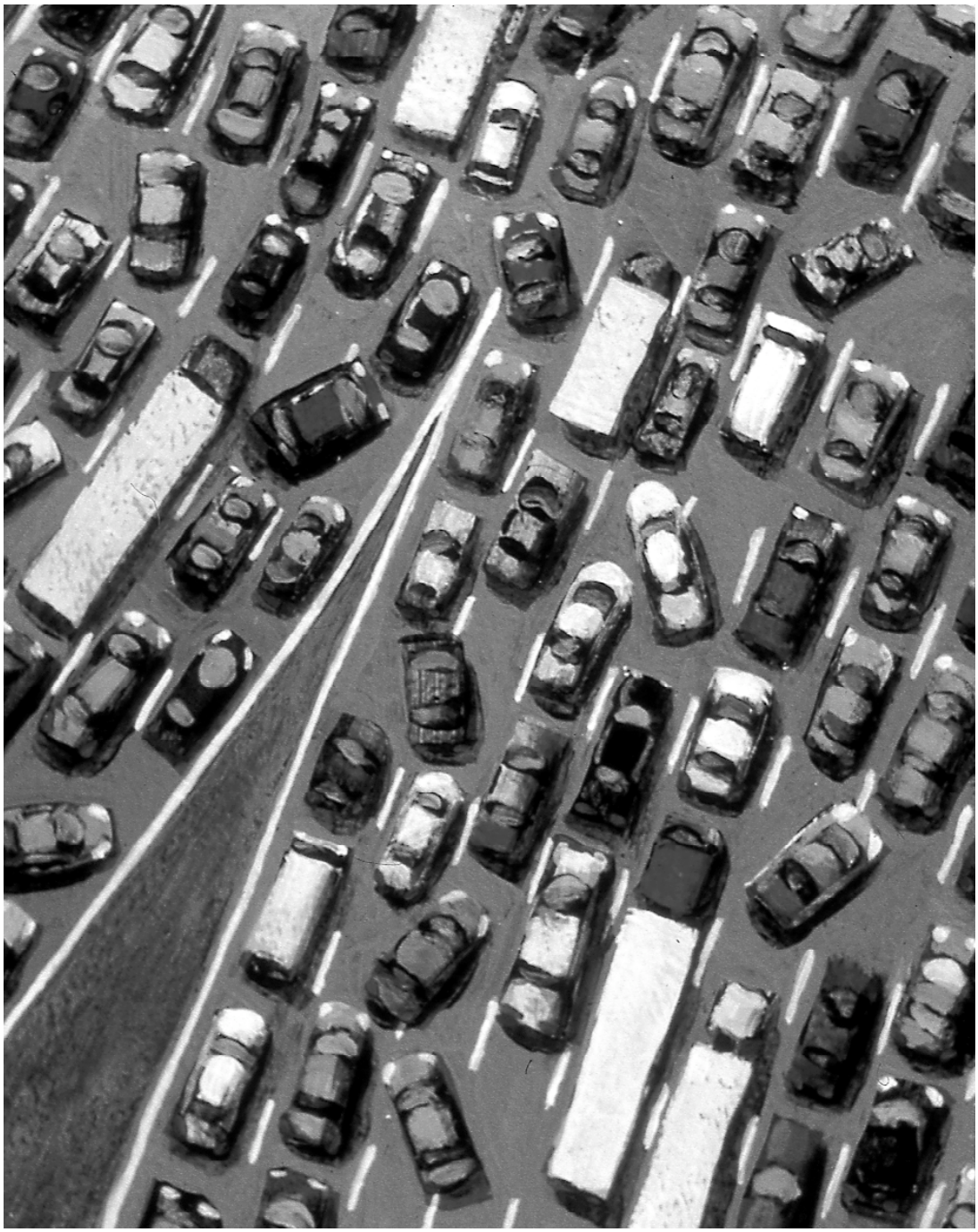


David A. Boehm

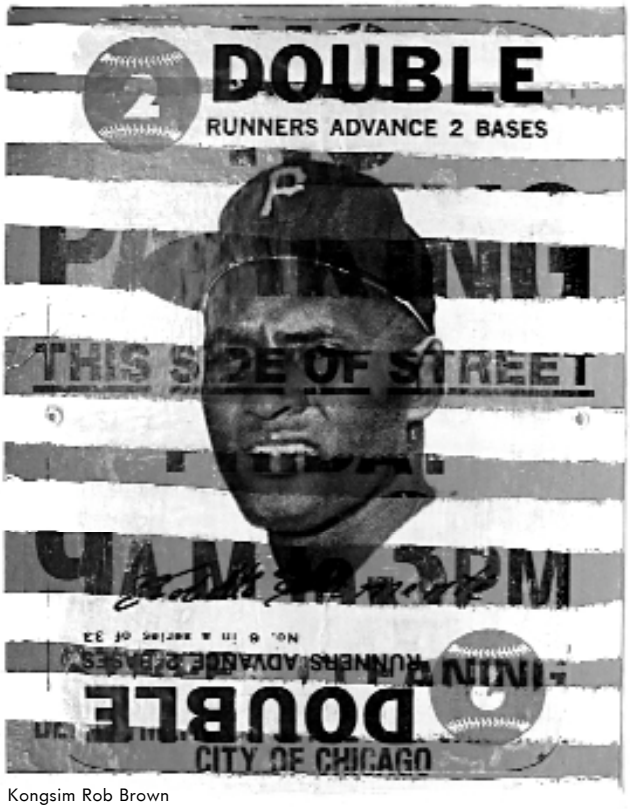
what am i?

Konghwa Elizabeth Enciso

When I first started attending services at the Zen Buddhist Temple in Chicago, I performed amazing feats of willpower to get myself out of my apartment, into the car, and to the temple. Even after I had arrived at the temple and found a parking space, I'd sit in the car and wait, fussing with items in my purse, balancing my checkbook, checking my cell phone—looking for anything that could possibly require even the slightest attention. When I had finally exhausted all possible distractions, I'd get out of the car and walk through the temple doors.

Once inside, my body heaved a sigh of relief. Stillness and calm dissolved my anxieties, and I could begin to let go and attend to the more important matters of just breathing and being. Nevertheless, despite the good the temple did me, the very next Sunday I again was faced with the same nagging resistance. As much as I had tried to deny it, the truth was quite simple: I felt guilty about becoming a Buddhist. More significantly, facing that guilt seemed to mean acknowledging deeply entrenched patterns I'd developed in my life.

I come from a long line of devout Mexican Catholics. Our family tree includes probably more than its fair share of religious vocations: My great aunt was a nun for over twenty years, my mom's sister was a cloistered Carmelite nun, my great-grandfather became a Benedictine monk after his divorce, and, although he did not complete the seminary, my uncle probably knows more about the Church and its liturgy than many priests. Then, of course, there was my own sense of religious calling. For a period of about five years, joining a convent was all I could think



Kongsim Rob Brown

about. As a teenager—an admittedly unusual one—I sent away for brochures from dozens of religious orders. Much to my parents' distress, I even concocted a plan that would entail forgoing my college education for convent life. In the end, none of these plans materialized. A mixture of pubertal hormones and the forceful pull of practical matters prevailed. Instead, I went to college 2,000 miles away from home. This road eventually led to my discovery of Buddhism—although ten years were necessary for me to get there.

Leaving home for college ushered in a period that I can only describe as a chronic identity crisis. Aside from what I had read in classroom textbooks, I had apparently grown up largely clueless about the nature of ethnic politics in the U.S. I had grown up in Nogales, Arizona, a small town on the U.S.–Mexico border, where over ninety percent of the population is Mexican or Mexican American. In many ways, my childhood on the border had shielded me from identifying myself as a minority in the U.S. Back home, I was like many of the other people in town. No one ever asked me what I was because it was safe to assume that the vast majority of people were Mexican in some way or another.

I was seventeen years old and anxious to transcend my small-town origins when I set out for college life in Chicago. I imagined a whirlwind college experience in which I would naturally fold into sophisticated social circles and transcend my provincial, bordertown ways. Instead, college proved to be a rude awakening: I was a fish out of water. I sensed an intangible disconnect, a different way of being and interacting that separated me from many of my college peers.

In meditation, there are many moments when I am struck by the awesome knowing that all my possible identities are irrelevant.

I was especially perplexed on my first day of college when a bubbly classmate came up to me and directly asked, "What are you?" I was puzzled by her question. What was I? What did that mean?

She clarified, "You know, what culture are you?"

I gave her a thorough response. "My family's Mexican, but I was born in the U.S., and I also grew up right on the Mexican border." I felt this answer covered the most important bases.

She looked at me and chuckled, "That means you're Mexican. You just have to say you're Mexican."

That encounter was the beginning of my confusion. I would soon realize that my friendly classmate was wrong. I could not just say I was Mexican. Indeed, Mexicans born in Mexico did not think I was Mexican. Moreover, other Americans of Mexican ancestry told me I was Chicana. Still others informed me I was Latina, and I was instructed by some to never say I was Hispanic. I honestly didn't know what I was or how to identify myself.

Compounding these labeling issues was my growing realization that how I identified myself significantly influenced people's perceptions of me. There were those professors who expressed thinly veiled shock when they discovered I was Mexican American and could write and perform well on tests. There was the boyfriend who got sick to his stomach over the terror of having to tell his parents that he was dating a Mexican girl—and a Catholic one at that.

These experiences all contributed to the creation of a yo-yo identity. Throughout the rest of college and my subsequent years in graduate school, I spun between wanting to avoid identity issues altogether and immersing myself fully in the thick of identity politics. Trying on different labels, issues, and ways of speaking and acting, I reconfigured myself more times than I care to count. My early-to-mid twenties became a prolonged game of dress-up, except that at heart I was desperate to finally discover that elusive identity that would give me a sense of feeling at home and at ease with who I was.

While I struggled with these issues, I turned to my Catholic faith for some sense of comfort. But the more I sat, stood, knelt, recited, and listened in church, the more isolated I felt. I felt as if the Church was just one more piece of my life that I had to construct to others' interpretations of how my life needed to be. I felt stifled by all the ways and things I should be. My terrifying realization was that beneath this layer of expectations I really had no sense of what I was or what I wanted.

It was then that I stumbled onto meditation practice. My first experience was through a Centering Prayer group in a Catholic church in Ann Arbor. The practice centers on repeating a mantra. There is no overt dialogue with God, no elaborate praise, no petitioning. It is just a simple gathering of people sitting together in silence, reciting one word in their minds. This practice was unlike anything I had ever experienced. The vastness and fullness of this communal silence was so beautiful.

Something inside me clicked. I began practicing meditation twice a day on my own and once a week with a group, and when I moved from Ann Arbor to Chicago, I looked for another centering

or meditative prayer group. However, I never found one that placed the same emphasis on silence. After reading the writings of Thomas Merton and other Christian contemplatives, I started looking into Buddhism. I read about Buddhism and practiced meditation on my own for two years before I ever worked up the nerve to set foot in Zen Buddhist Temple for meditation classes. When I finally did, I felt a comforting sense of homecoming. Everything was wonderful—except for the overwhelming anxiety and restlessness I'd feel every Sunday on my way to members' meditation sittings.

Buddhist practice may have been what I was looking for, but a large part of me recoiled in worry. My preoccupation with identities, labels, and the expectations that came with them, was still my faithful companion. My worry manifested itself as an outraged inner voice that regularly protested, "You are a Mexican Catholic! What business do you have becoming a Buddhist?" I feared that I was somehow disrespecting my elders and ancestors by choosing to go about my spiritual practice in a different way. My parents supported my decision, but I still wondered if I was giving up a key part of who I was.

Fittingly, the only thing that has helped dissolve my fears has been my practice. All my worry is an opportunity for practice. I can't forcibly eradicate my fears, so I sit with them. In meditation, there are many moments when I am struck by the awesome knowing that all my possible identities are irrelevant. As I sit on the mat and cushion, to call myself a Catholic-raised Latina feminist from the Mexican border means nothing. In that moment there is just sitting, just breathing.

Through my practice I have begun to appreciate our impermanence. We are fluid, changing, and impossible to pin down in one absolute form. Which labels I choose to apply to my life do not matter—they are all imperfect. In fact, that I tried so hard to perform such persistent acts of contortion to fit more snugly into a prescribed identity seems so absurd now. This task turned out to have been an impossible one, a futile attempt to make myself more static and secure.

Of course, this realization doesn't mean I can simply declare these labels nonexistent. They are vigorously defended in the larger society. I am still asked what I am, and I still have an answer... or two…or three. But, as assuredly as I may present my responses, the irony is that when I turn to my meditation practice, I am faced with having to ask myself, "What am I?" Then, however, the answers are less forthcoming.

I certainly still have plenty of issues to work through in this life. (I haven't even touched on my perfectionism or my masochistic need for lots of schooling.) Yet, at least I feel I can now inhabit my cultural and spiritual heritage more freely. I no longer feel as neurotically tied to cultural expectations of what I should and should not be. After all, my identity is ever changing, like everything, and I may as well have more fun with its various manifestations instead of trying to forestall change or complications. Most importantly, I no longer have to struggle to get myself to the temple door. In fact, most days I can run toward it.

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Walking Into Discomfort

Bopmun Alex Alviar

I was born, not white, but in whiteness. I grew up in Farmington Hills, an affluent white suburban enclave just outside of Detroit in the eighties and early nineties. My less fortunate cousins grew up in blue-collar neighborhoods and had to learn quickly how to fight. We, on the other hand, were the American dream. My father pulled himself up out of the barrios of the Philippines by his bootstraps, putting himself through medical school by raising ducks and selling eggplant. My mother came from extremely rural backcountry to study as a nurse. They met while working at the same hospital in Dearborn, got married, bought a big house in a "safe" neighborhood, had kids, put them all through private Catholic school and through college. We were the token ethnic family in a white, right wing, conservative neighborhood.

We went to a white church. We went to a white school. All my friends were white. Every girl I had a crush on was white. My parents refused to teach us Tagalog, the Filipino language. They feared that we wouldn't fit in with the other kids, and they didn't want us to have accents. Even the way we were supposed to speak English was white. No one ever had to say it to me. By the time I was six, it became very clear that I had no choice in this matter. To have a place in America and survive beyond the confines of our house, I would have to become white.

But, here is the essential difficulty about growing up Asian in an America that has either been at war with Asia or has felt economically threatened by Asia. I grew up never feeling certain about how white people perceive me.

Detroit is the Motor City, and much of the populace works for the automotive industry. Whenever the gears of the Detroit economy began to slow down, people became afraid. They feared that America was losing its number one spot in the automotive industry to Japan. Plant closings and layoffs were blamed, not on the ailing American automotive industry, but on Japan. Outbreaks of anti-Japanese sentiments were common, and it didn't matter whether you were Japanese or not. If you were Asian or even close to looking Asian, you were seen as a "Jap."

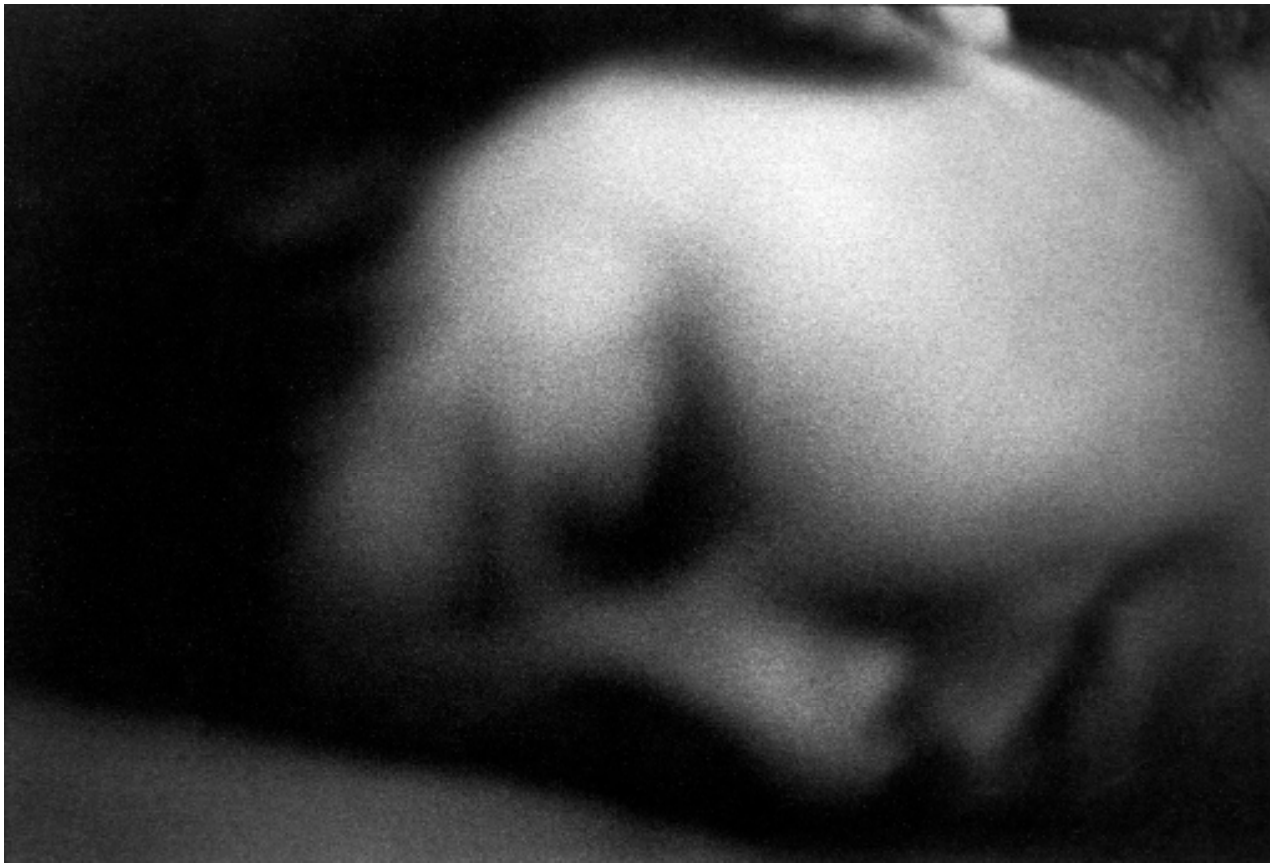
Even though we were a Filipino family, our house in Livonia was graffitied with racial slurs. I was in first grade when Vincent Chin was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat by two laid off Detroit auto workers on June 19, 1982. He was Chinese, not Japanese, and the two auto workers never spent a single day in jail for the murder. Anti-Asian sentiments were so strong in Detroit that the judge and jury let them go with barely a slap on the wrist. The Anti-Asian frenzies started again in the recession leading up to 1992 with Lee Iacocca, former CEO of Chrysler, giving

inflammatory speeches against the Japanese and their trade policies. I watched as he dressed his company up in red, white, and blue. It was the first time I had ever witnessed the use of patriotism and racism to mobilize the public. People began protesting and waving flags in front of Japanese auto dealerships. They put red, white, and blue bumper stickers on their cars that said "Buy American" even though the majority of the parts in American engines were made in Japan. Everywhere there was mention of Japan buying up and taking over everything in America, yet Great Britain had more corporate ownership and investment in America than any other country at that time. It was okay with the American public for a white country like England to own sixty percent of American business, yet all the fear and frustration was directed toward an Asian country and Asian people that owned even less than that. This was not just an economic trade issue. Lee Iacocca and the UAW turned it into a racist issue.

I was a sophomore in high school when I realized what an incredibly manipulative power patriotism could be. The flag took on a menacing sense of hatred and aggression. To me, it sent a clear message: American patriotism is for angry white people who do not like brown people. When they wave the flag and stick it all over their cars and hats and jackets, they're not just proud; they're angry, hateful, and scared. I also learned to fear the demographic of people most passionately waving and wearing those flags: white, heterosexual, working class males. The majority of blatant racism I have experienced in my lifetime came directly from them. I sat in a movie theater surrounded by blue collar white guys screaming "kill those fucking gooks" and "fucking Japs" while the movie played stereotypes of Asians eating dogs for dinner. I was tailed by a construction worker and followed into the parking lot so he could tell me, "When you come to this country, learn how to drive or next time I'll run your Jap piece of shit over." Even to this day I have very little fear going into Black and Latino neighborhoods or Indian Reservations. But, I am never sure, whether I'm in Metro Detroit or in the rural small towns that dot Montana and the so-called heartland of America, if I am stepping into hostile territory when the local demographics are blue-collar, white, and conservative.

In college, I became very active in the Asian Pacific American Student Organization, which helped organize student protests in response to the beating of Vincent Chin. In college, I hung out primarily with Asians, Blacks, and a few white kids deemed "with enough soul" to hang with us. Before that, I had lived my life trying to fit in and be white within my circle of white friends in a white suburb in a rich white school. Now, I was an activist. Now, I was part of a larger movement for social justice and real racial equality. In truth, I was just pissed off about all the mistreatment I had grown up with, and now I had found a social political counter culture into which I could channel my pent up outrage. At the time, it felt amazing to learn that my experience growing up was shared by many other Asian kids. I developed the language to articulate how racism had affected me. I studied the social-political and economic legacies of European imperialism and colonialism and how they psychologically affected not only how I perceived myself, but also how others perceive me, and why. It all suddenly made sense at the time, and I am grateful for the social awareness and understanding it gave me. And yet, I was still unhappy.

Banding together in a common cause got old. Even hearing people bitch about how hard it is to be a person of color in a white dominated world started to get old. As a minority or person of color, I was stuck with even more rules. I felt more oppression. No one ever said it, but it was understood that you had to like hip-hop, not rock or any of that other white bourgeois stuff. You had to study engineering or pre-med or business (as if those weren't Asian stereotypes!) because you had to break through the glass ceiling and show the white-collar world that you could be a



Sandam Tammy Nakashima

professional too. English literature, the humanities, studio art—those are just hobbies; they're useless and have no real power to make social change. They're wimpy, and that is what all the privileged white kids do. Most importantly, you cannot date outside. You cannot date white girls or white guys. That is an affront to the cause. That means you're an Asian who has been so "white-washed" by the dominant culture that you can't see that "brown is beautiful." You're not attracted to Asian guys or girls because the mainstream culture tells you that Asians are ugly, and you believe it. You're a sellout. You're a coconut—brown on the outside, white on the inside. You're this. You're that. You can do this. You cannot do that. I wanted freedom. I wanted no prescribed limits on what I should or shouldn't do.

I was so angry at white America that I tried to leave America three times. It didn't work. No matter what, I still ended up back in Michigan. I hated Michigan. I wanted to get out and go to Asia. I wanted to go to Tibet or Japan to learn how to meditate "authentically" and find some peace of mind. However, the universe had other plans. I got as far as Ann Arbor, Michigan, which was just a forty-five minute drive from where I was born. My primary Buddhist teacher, Haju Sunim, was a white lady with two daughters. I trained with her and I am still in training with her.

I would love to think that since the time I began meditating on a regular basis and committed myself to uprooting anger, greed, and delusion that I've transcended twenty-four years of fear, anger, and resentment. I would love to think that

I'm spiritually above that and better than that. But I'm not. When the right conditions present themselves, all sorts of latent crap arises and comes into the foreground. However, I rarely think about being an ethnic minority these days. Of course there are the odd moments in public when a stranger or a group of strangers are eyeing me and my wife, who is white. My brain flickers slightly with this voice that says, "Why are you staring, brother?" I still get that discomfort, especially when we have stopped for gas in a small town in the middle of nowhere and there are really odd vibes between us and the locals. In these situations my speech becomes excruciatingly articulate and polite so that when I open my mouth the most perfect sounding, accent-free English flows out of it. This is my unconscious way of saying: I'm not a foreigner. I was born here. I'm American. I am one of you.

I know there is nothing I can do about how people are going to react. All I can do when people are staring is simply smile back and say hello. And I have to trust that when they say hello back to me, they really mean it. Even if they don't, and they're possibly harboring all sorts of unspoken judgments about me, I can do nothing at all about that, except be as sincere and kind as possible. That might change perceptions, or it might not. But when these situations present themselves, I try to remember that ultimately I have nothing to guard, nothing to protect, and nothing to worry about. When I'm afraid, it is impossible to be completely nonviolent in body, speech, and mind. When I'm feeling defensive, it is impossible to be wholly non-aggressive. When I'm protecting myself, it is impossible to clearly see and relate to whatever seems to be threatening me. Just walk right into the discomfort, smile, and say hello.

In a weird twist of karma, I have ended up teaching English classes at a vocational college. My students are predominately blue-collar white males. They are diesel mechanics, building maintenance, electricians, and welders. They are from small towns all over Montana. Their families are ranchers, miners, and construction workers. They love hunting and fishing and hate writing and English classes. Every day I walk into classrooms full of guys whom ten years ago I would have definitely feared and wondered if they were racist. I walk in and have to teach them the class that most of them feared and hated in high school, and they don't feel that they should have to waste time and money on an English class. They project hating reading and writing onto me, and sometimes I project my lifetime of racial oppression onto them. We are working on it together. Just yesterday, one of my students stormed out of class outraged about my attendance policy and slammed the door behind him. My first thought was whether or not he would put sugar packets in my gas tank or vandalize my car in some other way or come back with his hunting rifle. Of course, none of that happened.

I have learned somewhat to understand their mindsets—what their unspoken anxieties are and how that manifests in how they act in class, how they learn and don't learn, how they've developed bad habits and addictions, how they've been laid off, how they've made mistakes and have regrets, and how they've come back to school to try to make it right. Even though I get frustrated at times, I am very aware that I can certainly harm or help that process. Regardless of what has happened to me in the past, I have to drop all that, walk into a classroom full of people who do not want to be there, be uncomfortable, then try to relax, smile, say hello, connect as best as I can with them, and teach.

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Sandong Kurt Iselt

A Spiritual Outsider's Education in Diversity

Kongsa Adam Lowis

The narrow-minded man thinks and says,
"This man is one of us;
this one is not, he is a stranger."
To the man of noble soul,
the whole of mankind is but one family.

The Hitopadesa

I was in the eighth grade. As our first assignment in my Life Science class, our teacher, Dr. Stone, had us all write an essay in answer to the question: What is your presupposition? My immediate response to this was: Why presuppose anything? This is a science class for Christ's sake! Doesn't a "presupposition" go against objectivity?

Stone's argument was that everyone operates from a basic presupposition. Either you believe in God or you don't. Either you accept the literal Biblical account of the seven-day creation, or you are an unbeliever. I still remember him writing on the chalkboard that there are only three types of people: the Christian believer, the agnostic

who can't make up his mind, and the unbelieving infidel. Diversity was definitely not his bag.

My essay in response to Dr. Stone explained that I did indeed believe in God, but I thought it foolish to reject outright the overwhelming evidence for evolution. I asserted that none of us know how God works, or could even begin to understand a supreme being's relationship to time.

When I got the paper back Dr. Stone could not come to grips with my presupposition being that I would rather not presuppose anything. Stone could only see dualism and polarization where I saw no conflict whatsoever. I remember the comment in red ink on the paper word for word: "Does this indicate a lack of belief or faith in God?"

Our science curriculum was not so much a survey of life science as an ongoing apologetic treatise on the undisputable truth of the literal Biblical account of creation. It was the same the previous year in the seventh grade. I couldn't resist challenging their tautological reasoning on an almost daily basis. It put me in danger of failing the class at times, because I would give "unacceptable" answers. Despite the fact that I had many friends among fellow students, I was labeled "atheist" by many of them. A week could never go by without hearing the word at least a couple of times in reference to myself.

A week arrives when my English and homeroom teacher, Mr. Burr, preaches an angry sermon in one of our twice-weekly chapel services where he rants, "I'm tired of this Madeleine Murray O'Hare crowd around here!"

Never in my life have I likened myself to Madeleine Murray O'Hare. Upon leaving the chapel service, my friend Ken says to me, "I'm sorry, dude. I know that was mostly directed at you."

"I know," I sigh struggling to regain my composure. I'm shaking with anxiety and nearly in tears. I felt alone. I retreated deep inside myself when faced with all this. I stayed locked up in there for a very long time, not wanting to connect with anyone, trusting virtually no one. I was heart-broken.

One year later Mr. Burr visits me at my house with Bible in hand. I have since moved on to public school. My mom makes me sit in the living room and listen to his talk. I don't say much. Mr. Burr asks me, "Are you still as anti-God as you were before?"

I respond by saying absolutely nothing though inside I'm screaming and burning up. My life is a scream. I retreat further and further inside myself. This would be a hellish year. It was that year, at fourteen years of age, that I was hospitalized for the first time for being suicidal. Not honoring diversity (or at the very least tolerating it) can and does cause pain, bitterness and resentment. I'd be lying if I said I was totally over mine.

Throughout my high-school career and my brief stint in college, I was being groomed toward becoming a professional actor. It seems apparent to everyone that this is my destiny. After seeing one of my plays, my pastor, from the new church youth group I've discovered, tells me how he can't wait to include me in the church's drama troupe. When the time comes though, his wife—the director—absolutely forbids me to participate. The fact that I had accepted a leading role in a stage production of *Dracula* is completely unacceptable to her, and represents my "lack of commitment to God" and "lack of faith."

Then and there I decide that I've had my fill of this shit. It's painfully obvious to me that, no matter how much I try to open up to the religious tradition I was raised in, the message I keep getting is: "You're not welcome here. You don't think like we do." The resentment tightens in my jaw. The psychic stress sits in my shoulders. It's back to the jail between my ears. The loneliness sits like lead in my gut. I'm ostracized again, yet never in doubt of my spiritual orientation. Where do I go from here? What's next? This is the beginning of my rebellion—the journey of a spiritual outsider.

Café Costaricense

I'm fifteen years old. For two solid weeks four of my friends and I are staying in the suburb of Alto de Guadalupe, just outside the vast expanse of San José, Costa Rica. We are doing volunteer work for a missionary organization. Our intent is not to proselytize. We are helping a Wesleyan seminary with the construction of a new communications building, which will include classrooms, a radio station, and a recording studio.

A workday arrives where I'm feeling a bit sluggish, not having slept well. We come to our lunch break and I'm really craving coffee. While my crew goes off to eat, I ask one of the Nicaraguan dudes if he knows where I can get a really good cup of Joe.

"Sí, sí!" he replies excitedly and motions for me to follow him. He leads me across the street to a "Ma 'n' Pa" store where he purchases a small burlap bag of whole beans.

"Lo siento, señor," I say. "Quisiera una taza caliente. Ya hecha."

"Sí," he replies smiling and nodding. "Ven conmigo señor. Vámonos!" I follow him back to the seminary grounds and into the little shed that serves as the paint crew's break shack. The other guys, who are lounging around eating, greet me warmly. The dude with the coffee invites me to have a seat as he pours the beans into a small electric grinder and starts heating a teapot on a little single electric burner. As the beans are grinding, he produces a small 2x4 piece of wood into which is mounted a wire coat-hanger, bent at a nearly right-angle with the opposite end twisted into a loop from which hangs a grungy looking brown stained sweat-sock. I'm thinking, No way! The man takes the fresh grounds and pours them into the dangling sock. He then places a saucepan underneath the sock apparatus and pours the boiling water into the sock. The aroma fills the little space in no time at all as the pan catches the fresh brew. Never before have I seen coffee made this way. I'm thinking, how wonderful! And we in the Disneyland god-realm of the U.S. of Empire are still stupid enough to think we need to go out and buy hi-tech coffee makers! The guy pours me a rich steaming mug-full from the pan and I sit and chat and savor my first ever cup of Café Costaricense made from a sweat sock.

South Dakota

My trip westward in 2001 was one of a few mixed-mania, nearly psychotic flying attempts in my life. I discovered the rich diversity of the American landscape from the plains of Wyoming to the Colorado Rockies, to the deserts of Utah and Nevada.

Coming into South Dakota I'm curious about the Sioux Nation Headquarters. Much of my ancestry on my father's side can be traced to these people. I drive up only to discover that visiting hours are over, and I'm thoroughly disappointed to see a plethora of Catholic icons scattered everywhere.

Late at night I come into the famous tourist trap of Wall Drug, South Dakota. After booking a hotel room I wander into a local yokel bar and have a seat at the rail, just watching people. As I begin to nurse my second draft, the man to my right introduces himself. I bum a cigarette from him, not having smoked in months. When I ask the man what he does for a living, he tells me that he manages a slaughterhouse. Before I rush to judgment I remind myself that I'm in a state where the whole economy is mainly driven by meat production. The more we talk, and the more I listen to him, the more this man reveals. He has a lot of pain. He tells me about his ex-wife, a two-year-old daughter who is severely disabled and living on life-support, and the enormous hospital expenses he has to pay while living a simple life.

Two a.m. comes around. The bar doses. The man to my right informs me that a few locals usually hang out after hours and shoot dice for nickels, dimes, and quarters. He invites me to stay awhile if I wish.

Nabi Anita Evans

"Don't you worry about cops?" I inquire.

"Nah," he says. "They leave us alone. Besides, we're technically closed anyway."

I wonder sometimes if I should pursue becoming an anthropologist. Here I am in a place not even two hours and already I have assimilated myself this far into the local culture.

Upon leaving I reflect on the evening's lesson. It would have been very easy to get all Buddhist on this stranger's ass and lecture him on the "bad karma" consequences of doing harm to animals and whatnot. In refraining from my judgment and accepting the man just as he is, I learned that here was just another person whose *dukkha* was not so different from the rest of us and who was growing through great suffering. It's hard to bear in mind sometimes that people we come up against, however different they may be from us, whatever trappings of delusion and karma they may be caught up in, are just people trying to work out a way to happiness and freedom. There is a danger in becoming so inflexibly "Buddhist" that the brothers and sisters of our human family only wind up smelling the stink of it!

Santa Monica

December 2001 finds me on the west coast. I'm homeless not even two days before this wonderful girl I meet in the Santa Monica promenade takes me home to meet her Egyptian parents. They take me in right away and let me stay with them for a time while I'm finding work. Arguing in loud Arabic seems to be her parents' favorite pastime. I've never met people of more generous hearts. Everything you've heard about Middle-Eastern hospitality is true, if not grossly understated.

I get a temporary job during the holiday rush at Toys 'R' Us in SantaMonica. I'm bagging in the checkout line when up walks none other than

Michelle Pfeifer. I don't recognize her at first. She is dressed in very simple and unassuming attire: well-worn jeans and a modest blue sweater. She acts so shy and demure behind her blue-tinted sunglasses. When the cashier tells her, "I love your movies! My dad really does too," the actress just shrugs bashfully and humbly whispers, "Thank you." Michelle Pfeifer is buying about a half-dozen rolls of our drastically reduced-price wrapping paper during our after Christmas sale. I find this to be extraordinary!

Culver City

My stint with Toys 'R' Us and the Egyptians ends at the turning of the year. I'm homeless again for quite a few months. One of the places I'm able to find food is the Hare Krishna Temple in Culver City. I love these people! They are so much more than just weirdos who hang around airports. Several times a week I'm able to collect leftovers from their kitchen at night. Occasionally I would volunteer in their kitchen in exchange for a delicious lunch of the Maha Prasadam. I also attend their weekly services that are always followed by a "Love Feast."

Participating in this Vaishnavist form of Hindu kirtan (chanting as a group) is truly a powerful experience. Watching the Pujaris make their wave of offerings at the deity altars is truly captivating and enchanting. Having the privilege to participate in this is a peak experience for me. I think we Buddhists are lacking this kind of fire puja at times. Austerity is great and everything, and, yes, we chant, but I think we should have full-blown drum circle "chant-ins" that rock the house. It would be a great way of processing a lot of pent-up emotional garbage.

LA South-Central

Towards the early spring of 2002 I have a little help with getting an emergency housing voucher for a hotel room in Los Angeles, located on the other side of the block from 98th Street and Figueroa. This is South-Central—the Crips' and Bloods' "gang-land."

The first night I spend in there, I buy a pack of smokes at a gas station after not having smoked at all in nearly a year. In this neighborhood I represent the minority and also the enemy to many people. I see it in the hard angry stares I get from a lot of black and Hispanic people. So it's only smart to have a peace offering. And, in that neighborhood, the only thing a ghost or desperate spirit wants most of the time is the momentary satisfaction of a square. I'll never forget standing outside a laundromat one day when a guy comes up to me, "Hey man, you got a cigarette?"

"Sure," I hand him one.

"Thanks bro. Hey you're not really white, are you? You're like Sicilian or something."

I laugh. "As long as I'm not the enemy, you can call me a purple fucking goblin for all I care."

"Right on," he says lighting his smoke.

One night around midnight I'm walking south on Figueroa. Between the 70th and 90th Street blocks this stretch of pavement is known as "hooker alley." At night, hanging out on the sidewalk, are any number of various prostitutes, desperate "crack whores," or under-cover cops—who look like prostitutes—on a sting.

It's a chilly night. I walk by a woman sitting nearly doubled-over on a concrete ledge up against a chain-link fence. "Are you a white boy?" she squawks.

"Yeah, I guess so."

"Damn!" she howls. "You're cute. We don't get a lotta white down here. Y'all must be lookin' for something."

I know this is a hint.

Another woman walks by. The two ladies know each other. They exchange words inaudibly. All I hear is the one asking the other, "Do you need to use my place for a minute?"

The one sitting looks up at me a moment, then says, "Nah, it's cool."

The lady who walked up just keeps walking. "Alright," she says.

"So what you doin' here?" says the woman on the ledge.

"I'm stayin' up the street a little ways…for now. How 'bout you?"

"I'm livin' on the street," she confesses. "You got a smoke on you?"

I hand her one. "I ain't doin' much better myself," I tell her. "I just have a free room for the moment."

"You know you could almost pass for a Mexican," she says. "Your hair's dark enough. You gotta deep enough tan."

"I'm just what I am, sister. Ever think about headin' west?" I suggest. "It helps being around people who got money when you're homeless."

"Yeah, but they don't like black people out there."

"Aah," I grumble. "That doesn't matter. There's all kinds in the streets out there."

"Really?"

"Yeah. No lie."

"My people are here though," she explains. "'Sides, I got problems. Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but I smoke rock."

What do I say? I don't have a clue.

"You gonna preach to me?" she harps.

"No," I reply. "I'd be lyin' if I told you I didn't do anything that's bad for me. I'm sure you know how dangerous that can be, though. I'm not gonna tell you what you already know. Just don't wind up dead."

"You're not like other white people," she says.

"Take care," I say. I bum her another square, then walk on.

"You're beautiful!" She calls after me. "You know that!"

I just keep walking.

One Sunday morning, I'm waiting for the bus on a bench at the corner of 98th Street and Fig. The corpse of a dead dog lies bloated right at the corner on the pavement, up against the curb. I'm sitting next to a big African American woman probably old enough to be my grandmother. Across the street is a church. Three ushers in silk Sunday best are helping heft an over 300 pound woman out of a big black Cadillac. When the woman next to me can't take it anymore, she stands up—fed up—and starts shouting across the street, "How come it takes three men to get that lazy corn-fed woman outta her car and y'all can't even clean up your own block?" She points to the dog. "Look at this poor thing! That dog deserves better than you people! You don't even care!"

She's like a prophet speaking truth to hypocrisy in religious guise; like Jesus castigating the Pharisees for "making wide their phylacteries." She's a voice crying out in the wilderness.

The Zen Center of Los Angeles becomes my center of practice during my South-Central stay. Maezumi Roshi established this community in the Japanese Soto tradition. It's located in the heart of "Korea Town," which is actually a full-fledged densely populated Mexican barrio. (L.A. doesn't make a lick of sense sometimes!) One breezy afternoon I'm sitting outside picnicking with a friend I made there.

"So, where did you begin your Buddhist practice?" he asks.

"Ann Arbor," I reply. "Zen of the Korean lineage, Son. Not much different really," I declare.

"Right," he says playfully. "Except that we do it right and they do it all wrong."

I chuckle. "Exactly!"

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Rev. Toan José Castelao

Layman Pusol

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Ven. Samu Sunim

Kwangse was the son of Mr. Chin. He was born in 647 in the village of Hyanga, which was located south of the capital of Silla (Kyongju). He was different from other children. He would often be found gazing at the western sky for hours, oblivious that the sun was setting, or deep in the bushes, sitting quietly. It hurt him deeply to see any animal killed or slaughtered but it made him happy to see Buddhist monks. He would follow them around. At the age of five when all his friends were playing with toys, Kwangse entered Pulguk-sa temple and shaved his head under Priest Wonjong (Wonderful Stillness). At seven when children of his age were playing "bamboo horse," he set to studying Buddhist scriptures.

His Dharma name was Pusol (Floating Snow). His resolve to follow the Way of Buddha was as penetrating as the cold frost and as noble as the lofty pine. His morality, pure and untainted, shone like a clear lake in moonlight, and his mind was quiet and unperturbed. As he became refined in his training and his Buddhist knowledge increased, all expected a great spiritual career of him.

However, he felt like a gourd vine or a cucumber plant that is expected to bear many fruits but is fixed where it grows. He disliked ties and attachments. So he cut himself free from his promised spiritual career and expectations and set out on a journey with two companions, Yongjo and Yonghi. They had few desires and only wished to lead simple and unencumbered lives. The three of them were all mature in spiritual practice and good Dharma friends to one

another. Their single purpose was to cultivate the Way of Buddha.

Their journey took them to the Crown-of-Heaven Mountain. There they built a hut and lived on pine pollen and water. After three years of joy in samadhi and meditation they moved to Chiri Mountain. They selected a suitable place below the King-of-Dharma peak and named it Wonderful Stillness to indicate their wish to enter the peaceful realm of meditation. They lived together there in complete silence.

For ten years they lived thus. One day they each composed a poem in which they expressed the joy of their spiritual practice and lifestyle free from illusion.

Yongjo first recited his poem:

The quiet place we occupied
Was but a hut in the tree-lined mountain pass.

Oneness cultivated through meditation
The ultimate Way attained, rejoicing followed.

Who will recognize the unearthed jade?
The bird who picked a flower sings merrily by itself.

Desolate and deserted, no affairs to attend to;
The single taste of Dharma penetrates my whole being.

Next Yonghi recited his:

On the meditation hut of old pine trees, the moon shines
As clouds disperse on the peak of joy.

How often have I sharpened my wisdom sword?
More than twice the origin of mind revealed itself.

Though spring is yet early and desolate,
Mountain birds twitter from early morning.

All partake in the joy of the Unborn.
No need to break through the gate of the Patriarchs.

Finally Pusol responded with the following poem:

Practicing Dharma that transcended both stillness and emptiness,
We lived together in a hut where clouds and cranes became our friends.

Having realized the non-dual is no other than absolute liberation,
*Whom shall I ask the "Forward Three Three, Backward Three Three."**

Leisurely I look at the lovely flowers blooming in the garden,
Unmindfully I listen to the birds singing by the window.

Enter the state of a Tathagata directly,
Why trouble yourself piling up practice?

(*hwadu (koan). It appears in the thirty-fifth case of *The Blue Cliff Record*. "Three Three" means immeasurable and infinite.)

With that they left Chiri Mountain. They remembered that Mt. Odae was the sacred ground for Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Great Wisdom, and they decided to make a pilgrimage there. On their journey northward they stayed overnight at the house of Mr. No Foes and Resentment who lived near White Lotus Pond in the district of Tunung (present day Kimje, North Cholla Province). Mr. No Resentment was a spiritual person who led a simple and clear life. He was a devoted follower of the Way of Buddha, and so very glad to receive the three monks. He served them with care and respect and invited them to give him teachings on the Buddhadharma. They stayed up late enjoying conversation.

It started to rain the following morning as the three monks were preparing to continue on their journey. Mr. No Resentment and his wife urged

"Bodhisattva vows, Bodhisattva path," he murmured to himself. He suddenly became very happy. With a huge smile on his face he threw his arms in the air and began to dance round and round.

them to postpone their departure until the rain stopped. It continued to rain for the rest of that day and the next. When it finally stopped the road was very wet and muddy, and impossible to travel, so they had to stay on. However, the postponement of the journey for the three monks provided an excellent opportunity for Mr. No Resentment, who was most eager to learn as much as possible from them. He took full advantage of their stay and attended upon them. The three monks were all very moved at the sincerity of Mr. No Resentment and felt much obliged to give spiritual instruction to the best of their ability.

Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment had a daughter. Her name was Wonderful Flower. She was eighteen years old and beautiful but she was mute. When she first heard Pusol speak about Dharma, she started to cry uncontrollably. When she finally stopped, she suddenly began to speak. Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment were amazed. They burst into tears, and their joy was without bounds. She was their only child and they were very much concerned about her future as she approached adulthood. Now she could speak! What a mirade! But another strange thing happened to the surprise of all. Wonderful Flower said aloud, "I must marry Pusol, I must marry Pusol. We must become husband and wife. I will serve him forever in this life and after." Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment were extremely embarrassed at their daughter's behavior. They apologized to the venerable monks and took their daughter to her room. They scolded her saying, "The venerable monks are holy disciples of Lord Buddha, who have renounced the world in order to devote their lives to spiritual awakening. How dare you utter such nonsense before them." However, Wonderful Flower repeated her demand dauntlessly. Moreover, she threatened to kill herself if her demand was not immediately met. Nothing could change her mind.

The monks were about to leave. Wonderful Flower became frantic. She ran to Pusol, threw herself on the ground and held him tightly by his leg. When her parents saw this, they went down on their knees before Pusol and entreated him to save their daughter. Pusol who had remained unmoved up to this point, now realized that if he left he would be hurting not one person but three, for Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment would not live long if anything disastrous happened to their daughter. He thought about his cultivation of the Way. All along his spiritual practice had been to free himself from all attachments in order to reveal original mind. Now suddenly he was faced with creating a bond that would chain him to the world. He closed his eyes. No doubt, it was an obstruction to prevent him from advancing in his Dharma studies. Therefore, he determined to leave with his Dharma friends. But when he opened his eyes, he saw the three innocent faces of those kneeling in *hapchang* before him, looking up at him intently as if he held the key to their future. He became confused again. He thought about helping them without interrupting his spiritual training but the only way to accomplish that was to combine a lay life with monastic training. Suddenly it dawned on him that that was exactly what a great many Bodhisattvas before him had done in order to help all beings.

Didn't followers of the Way seek enlightenment for the sake of all beings? Wasn't compassion for all beings an integral part of the Way of wisdom and enlightenment that they were pursuing? Moreover, didn't followers of the Way take Bodhisattva vows in order to commit themselves firmly to the realization of the spiritual path in which all beings are one body, and helping others selflessly is no other than helping oneself for the attainment of Buddhahood?

"Bodhisattva vows, Bodhisattva path," he murmured to himself. He suddenly became very happy. With a huge smile on his face he threw his arms in the air and began to dance round and round. Sensing things would turn out well for them, Wonderful Flower and her parents relaxed slightly but still followed Pusol's every movement anxiously. Finally Pusol turned to his friends who were becoming impatient with him and said, "Well, my good old Dharma friends, I bid you farewell. Have a good journey to Mt. Odae. I will stay and marry Wonderful Flower. Please, don't forget your friend in the world." When Wonderful Flower and her parents heard this, they were overjoyed. Wonderful Flower thanked Pusol by holding his hand to her bosom and repeating, "Oh, my beloved Pusol Sunim, Oh my beloved Pusol Sunim." Pusol gave her a light hug. They already looked like a married couple. However, Pusol's two monk friends were greatly dismayed at the turnabout. Pusol had always been their model in spiritual training and a continual inspiration to them. Upset and disappointed, they tried to change his mind but without success. So on the day of their parting, they expressed their feelings in the following poems:

Wisdom without morality resulted in an empty view,
Incomplete compassion snared you in lustful desire.

Practice true wisdom and compassion in harmony,
A way will eventually open up.

The running clouds help the moon move;
The wind will help you recognize the banners that hang high.

If you so understand the Way,
Unhindered you will remain.

This was Yongjo's poem to Pusol. Yonghi too conveyed his mind with this poem to his friend Pusol:

The basket of earth that helped build a high terrace is enough to bury a deep pond.

One's practice should be as straight as splitting bamboo,
Without whipping, it is difficult to attain the Way.

Unable to escape the karmic bonds of three lifetimes
You entered the house of Mr. No Resentment.

When someday you wish to pour your spilled water back
We will be together again.

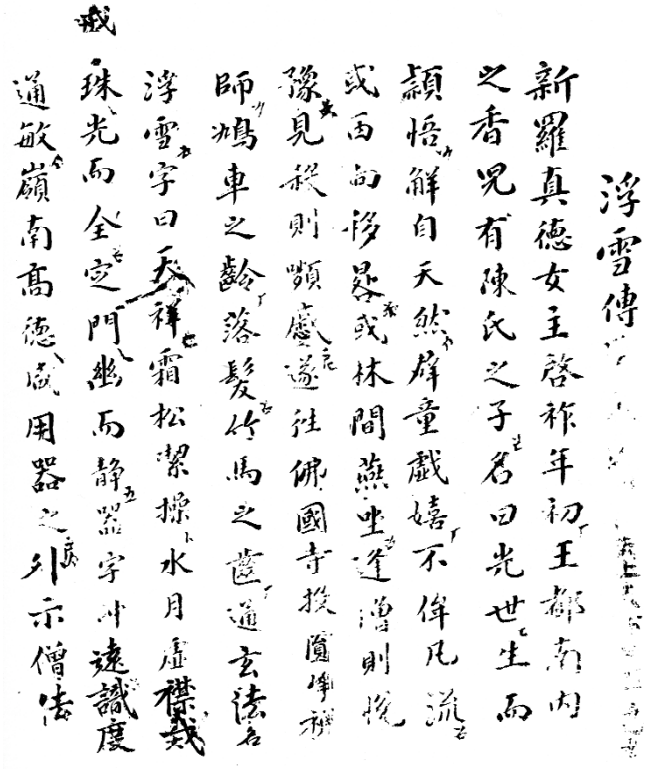
Pusol thanked his friends and responded:

One's enlightenment performs the unequalled according to equality;
One's awakening helps those with affinity in accord with non-affinity.

Leave the conduct of one's life to truthfulness, one's mind expanded.
The Way of Buddha attained through lay life sustains one's body.

A crystal in one's hand can separate red and blue;
The ignorant and the wise appear undisguised before the bright mirror.

If one realizes there's no hindrance in form or sound,
No need, then, to sit long in the mountain valleys.



First page of handwritten copy of *Pusol-chon* (The Story of Pusol), preserved in Bright Moon Temple, North Cholla Province, Korea.

Upon this they shared a pot of pine tea together. Their feelings were heavy, for they were very close Dharma friends who had spent more than fifteen years training together! Yongjo and Yonghi were still very much disappointed and did not approve of Pusol's decision. So Pusol said warmly to his friends, "The Way of Buddha is confined neither to the monks and nuns nor to the laity. Nor is it confined to the quiet countryside or to the noisy marketplace. The intention of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is to aid and benefit all beings in their pursuit of peace and happiness. Dear friends in the Dharma, go now. Travel widely, train under different masters, and return to awaken your old friend without fail." Thus they parted.

Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment consulted with a local shaman and picked a propitious day for Pusol and Wonderful Flower to marry. On the wedding day, villagers gathered to see the ex-Buddhist monk marry the girl who started to speak after having been mute for eighteen years. Pusol disrobed and donned secular dress proper for the occasion. Wonderful Flower was dressed in traditional wedding clothes, and looked as beautiful and happy as she could be, though she did not show her feelings outwardly according to decorum. Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment greeted guests happily and received their gifts.

After the marriage Pusol treated Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment as though they were his own parents and looked after them with great care and respect. Gardening and farming were new to him, but he worked hard. Every day was a full day for Pusol. Still, he had to find time for his daily devotions. Just as when he was with his two monk friends Yongjo and Yonghi, he got up at three in the morning. It was still very dark when there was no moonlight and he had to be very careful not to wake up his new wife. When he came back after washing up at the well outside, he realized that there was no Buddha statue toward which he

The Way of Buddha is confined neither to the monks and nuns nor to the laity. Nor is it confined to the quiet countryside or to the noisy marketplace.

could direct his devotions. So he went out and found two big stones, one almost five times bigger than the other. When his wife woke up at daybreak, Pusol spoke to her and got her permission to enshrine the two big stones in the corner of their room. He cleaned and washed the stones carefully and brought them inside. When he placed one on top of the other they roughly resembled a stone Buddha, and he was very glad.

Every morning he would offer a bowl of water before the stone Buddha and perform prostrations. Then he would sit in meditation till daybreak. He was very careful and very quiet during all this. But one morning when his wife reached over to hug him in her sleep, she found no one there. Alarmed, she woke up. Then she saw something bobbing up and down in the dark. It was no other than her husband doing prostrations before the two big stones. When she saw this she was seized with anger. She threw her quilt over him with a shout. "Stop this nonsense. Don't pretend you are a monk now!" When it became light, Wonderful Flower got up and threw out the water bowl and the two big stones.

Now Pusol had lost both Buddha and altar. Then it occurred to him that Wonderful Flower was a Buddha, a living one. "Why did I not think about it before," he scolded himself. "Of course, better to do prostrations before a living Buddha than a stone Buddha." So when he got up the following morning he went outside and picked up the broken bowl. He brought spring water in the broken bowl and carefully placed it in front of the sleeping Buddha and started doing prostrations. One morning when Wonderful Flower woke up early she found Pusol sitting motionless right in front of her nose. Afraid that he had gone out of his mind completely or was dead, she started crying. Pusol came out of his samadhi and tried to console her. She began to cry more loudly, and between sobs she reproached him saying, "You're no good, you're no good." Pusol felt terrible, so he started apologizing. He began bowing before her in accordance with the Korean custom for forgiveness. This, however, upset her more because men and husbands traditionally do not bow before women. So she flew into a rage and screamed at him, "Get out of here. Get out."

Completely perplexed, Pusol appealed to her and said, "But I am your husband. I am married to you."

"No, you're just a monk. You don't know how to love a woman," shot back Wonderful Flower.

"That's not true. I love all beings," protested Pusol, still perplexed.

"Oh, you're dumb. I said you don't know how to love women."

"I love women too."

"Oh, you're dumb. I used to think I was dumb. Now you're dumber than I am. Get out of here. Do your Buddha thing somewhere else."

"Can I perform my morning devotions somewhere else in the house?"

"Yes, but just don't scare me in the morning."

"Where can I do my morning devotions?"

"Oh, you dumb monk. I don't care. Why don't you go build your precious Buddha altar in the stinky cowshed."

"Can I do that, really?"

"Yes, you can. Now get out of my sight."

Pusol was most happy. He had obtained from his wife permission to build a Buddha altar in the cowshed. Immediately he got to work cleaning a corner of it. Then he realized that he was disturbing the cow who was looking at him with her big innocent eyes, perhaps wondering what Pusol was doing in her house. So Pusol bowed to her and apologized. Pusol then brought the two big stones and set them up one on top of the other and placed the broken bowl before it. The altar looked fine to him and he was very happy. He turned to the cow and bowed to her in deep gratitude. Every morning before he performed his devotional practice he bowed to the cow and thanked her. The Dharma room in the cowshed served Pusol very well for his spiritual training. For years the cow and Pusol shared the shed together in the morning and they became very good friends. The cow always seemed to be awake chewing cud. Pusol envied the cow and wished that he too could always be awake. Eventually Pusol built a meditation hut next to the cowshed and moved his Dharma room there.

Wonderful Flower did not at all like Pusol slipping out of the room in the middle of the night, leaving her cold and alone in bed, but she did not know what to do with the dumb monk. She would put up with him for a while, then she would scold him with a barrage of insulting words. Her favorite insult was, "You're neither monk nor layman. You are just no good and nothing through and through. Good for Nothing!" But Pusol liked that. He thought his wife was describing the wonderful unobstructed stage of a Bodhisattva rather well. So he would always bow and thank her without words. Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment deeply regretted their daughter's behavior. But Pusol did not mind and always worked hard in order to support the family.

In the years that followed, Wonderful Flower and Pusol had two children, a boy and a girl. The boy's name was Riding Cloud and the girl's name Bright Moon. Mr. and Mrs. No Resentment spent most of their time looking after their grandchildren. They doted on them. But they were getting old, and one cold winter Mrs. No Resentment fell ill. She ran a high fever and died five days later. Pusol dug the frozen ground and buried her. Mr. No Resentment wept bitterly and did not eat for ten days. He looked like a man who had been swept away in a flood and driven ashore on an island. He rarely spoke afterwards, and a year later he died without illness. Pusol dug the frozen ground and buried him next to his wife. A few days before he died, Mr. No Resentment called Wonderful Flower. He told her that her husband was a Bodhisattva and asked her to treat him with the reverence and respect due to a Bodhisattva. Wonderful Flower retorted, "What's that, this Bodhisattva? Is it something like the Buddha, which he has been trying to invoke? Whatever it is, it must be something really bad. I can assure you I have been treating him as well as his dumbness deserves." Mr. No Resentment said no more and died three days later.

Fifteen years had passed since Pusol married Wonderful Flower. Pusol knew his karmic tie with the No Resentment family was drawing to an end. After he turned fifty-six years old, Pusol spent more and more time in his Dharma room next to the cowshed. Sometimes he was not seen outside for days. Finally he told Wonderful Flower, Riding Cloud and Bright Moon that he had an attack of paralysis and so had to stay in his Dharma room all the time. So saying, Pusol shut himself off from the outside. Two years later he came out of his Dharma room. He looked fine and healthy. There was no sign of his having suffered a stroke or illness. He went around doing the necessary things in his usual ordinary way. As they grew up, Riding Cloud and Bright Moon learned from Pusol the Way of Buddha and Dharma.

Twenty years had gone by since Yongjo and Yonghi parted with Pusol. Having visited different places and trained under different teachers in

the north, Yongjo and Yonghi were passing through Tu nung again on their way back to Chiri Mountain. They were curious about their Dharma friend Pusol. In the village they inquired about Mr. No Resentment and learned he and his wife had died several years ago. When they arrived at the old house of Mr. No Resentment they saw two children playing outside. Yongjo and Yonghi looked at each other and smiled. The children closely resembled Pusol so the monks called out and asked them where their father was. The children said cheerfully to the strangers that their father was in the Dharma room "doing the Buddha thing," for that was what their mother used to say whenever they asked her about what their father was doing. The children then took the strangers to the cowshed. The two monks were surprised and puzzled. The children giggled to each other and ran out.

Soon Pusol came out of his Dharma room and greeted his old friends. Pusol's happiness knew no bounds. He called Wonderful Flower and the two children to greet his old friends and serve them with refreshments. Wonderful Flower knew well that though Pusol was dumb and good for nothing, the two monks were different. At least, she knew that they were good for something. So she served them with due attention and respect. Pusol himself attended upon his two friends and made them feel at home. After they had relaxed, they asked each other about their training. Pusol said he had been busy working in the field and looking after his family and had hardly had time for spiritual training. It was then that Yonghi said in a friendly way, "It's been twenty years since you started leading a secular, married life. Now you have two children and they are big enough to run errands and help their mother. Your wife appears strong and capable of handling the household by herself, so join us now in leading a homeless life for the rest of your life." Yonghi then reminded Pusol of the broken bottle and spilled water, an allusion he made in his poem on the occasion of their leave-taking twenty years before when Pusol decided to marry Wonderful Flower. Yongjo and Yonghi urged Pusol to resume spiritual training and pour back in a new bottle the water he had spilled.

Pusol thanked his two old friends sincerely for their encouragement but said quietly, "It's been a long time since I made distinctions like homeless life and household life. I have seen that our Buddha nature does not change in spite of what we do and where we are. So I have done what I could and have no regrets. I follow the natural course of events but do not seek anything in particular." Thereupon Pusol had his two children bring their three play bottles and fill them with spring water. Then he had the water bottles tied to the beam below the eaves. Pusol turned to his two friends and said, "Like our Buddha nature, water does not have a fixed form of its own, so water can be contained in many different shapes of vessels but it remains the same in its nature and essence." With that, Pusol asked his friends to strike their water bottles with a stick and break them. Their bottles broke and water spilled on the ground. Then Pusol picked up a stick and struck his water bottle. The bottle broke but the water remained in the air, floating where the bottle had been. The two monks were amazed.

Pusol apologized for surprising them this way. He said, "I just wanted to show you that the bottles can be broken like our physical body but water remains free from destruction. It is the same with our Buddha mind. Our Buddha mind is free and not subject to the cycle of birth-and-death because it is our unborn mind." Pusol turned to his two monk friends and asked them to help his two children enter the Way of Buddha. Then he turned to his children and said, "After I am gone, follow the two venerable monks. They are your father's old friends and will look after you hereafter. Study and train in the tradition of Buddhas and all great Bodhisattvas. Attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Do not grieve. I will always be with you in the Dharma. I will be at your side in difficult times

and guide and protect you. Remember what I have said." After that Pusol turned to Wonderful Flower and said, "I have been happy being with you all this while. But like all things in life we must part now. Please take care of yourself." Pusol held Wonderful Flower's hands for a short while. Finally Pusol turned to his friends again and thanked them for coming to see him. He recited the following verse:

Eyes see no sight, no discrimination remains;
Ears hear no sound, no dispute remains;
Discrimination and dispute all extinguished:
Mind-Buddha appears of itself for one's refuge.

After reciting the verse Pusol quietly passed away. His body was cremated according to Buddhist custom. Yonghi and Yongjo took Pusol's ashes to Chiri Mountain, and burned them in an urn in front of Wonderful Stillness where they had trained together for ten years, and erected a stupa in his memory on the southern hill near the burial ground.

After his death some of the Dharma songs that Pusol composed for people at work were brought to the attention of the Buddhist clergy and circulated. Unfortunately, most have been lost except for two that were written down in Chinese.

Four Fleeting Songs

Countless as bamboo shoots one's family may number;
High as a mountain one's hoard of treasure may be;
But alone and empty-handed one departs at death.
Think of it: how empty and futile!

Daily one travels the dusty road of ambition
The higher one climbs, the closer the end.
Death cares not for status and achievement.
Think of it: how empty and futile!

One's speech may be sweet, one's eloquence thunderous;
One's prose may be lofty, one's verses superb;
Yet these only strengthen one's illusion of selfhood.
Think of it: how empty and futile!

Refreshing as a downpour one's Dharma talk may be,
Causing heavenly flowers to fall and stone heads to nod.
Yet knowledge alone cannot save one from birth and death.
Think of it: how empty and futile!

Eight Lines of Suchness

This way or that way, let it be;
As the wind blows, as the waves rise, let it be.

Treat your guest according to your means;
Buy and sell as the market bids.

Whether porridge or rice, help yourself;
Whether right or wrong, let it be.

Though things may not suit you well;
Leave them alone, and let them be.

After the cremation service of their father, Riding Cloud and Bright Moon followed Yongjo and Yonghi, shaved their heads and joined the monastic sangha for training. After five years of formal training in the monastery as novice monks, Riding Cloud and Bright Moon met again and went to Puan in Cholla Province and built a temple there to train together. They hired a man to help out in the temple while they were in training. However, the handyman had a lustful desire for Bright Moon. He approached her and made an earnest plea for making love with him. Bright Moon talked the matter over with Riding Cloud and asked him if she should refuse or accept such a request. Riding Cloud said, "If he wants it so badly, it may not hurt to allow him to do that." So Bright Moon allowed the man to make love to her.

Afterwards Riding Cloud asked Bright Moon what it was like. "It felt like someone brandishing his pole in the empty sky," said Bright Moon. Not long after that, the man approached Bright Moon again for sex. Bright Moon sought Riding Cloud again and asked his opinion on the matter. Riding Cloud said, "It would not hurt to allow him to do that again." So Bright Moon allowed the man to have sex with her for the second time. Afterwards Riding Cloud asked Bright Moon about her experience. "It felt like someone brandishing his pole in muddy water," said Bright Moon. Sometime after that the man asked for sex for the third time. Bright Moon sought Riding Cloud again and asked for his opinion. Riding Cloud said, "It would not hurt to allow him once more." Afterwards Riding Cloud asked Bright Moon about her experience. "It felt like someone making solid contact with his pole," she said. The moment Riding Cloud heard that, he was alarmed. He warned Bright Moon, "You must get enlightened or die." Then he said the way to get enlightened was to kill the man. They made a big fire in the kitchen. When the firewood was all aglow, Bright Moon called the man and asked him to select charcoal for ironing. As he bent over in the fireplace, Bright Moon pushed him in with all her force. The man made a desperate attempt to escape, but RidingCloud, who was standing nearby, kicked him into the fire and the man was burned to death.

Riding Cloud said to Bright Moon, "We murdered a man. Murderers are destined for the lowest of hells where pain and punishment continue without intermission. The only way out of that is to be enlightened. Unless we get enlightened immediately we are doomed." Fully aware of the grave consequences of their action they began *yongmaeng chongjin* then and there. In the meantime, the spirit of the man who met the tragic death appeared before the King of the Underworld and complained vigorously about the murderous acts committed by Riding Cloud and Bright Moon and demanded swift punishment. When the King heard the story he was enraged, and immediately sent his policemen to arrest Riding Cloud and Bright Moon. However, every time they came, they found Riding Cloud and Bright Moon deep in meditation. They waited for them to rise to go to the bathroom or to eat or sleep, but they neither fell asleep nor rose. They were always alert and awake in meditation. So the policemen of the King of the Underworld failed to arrest Riding Cloud and Bright Moon. Riding Cloud and Bright Moon attained enlightenment after one week.

After enlightenment, Riding Cloud wrote a letter to the King of the Underworld explaining their situation. When the King read the letter, he had sympathy for the situation they were in and therefore forgave them on the strength of their spiritual attainment. This story is part of oral tradition and has been circulated among the Korean Zen monks in Cholla Province in order to inspire them for yongmaeng chongjin.

It was said that Riding Cloud did farming while Bright Moon worked at a loom weaving. They lived apart from each other. After they died the places where they lived were turned into temples and called "Riding Cloud" and "Bright Moon" respectively. Bright Moon Temple still remains in the district of Sannae, Puan, North Cholla Province, and is noted for its scenic beauty. In this temple is preserved a handwritten copy of *Pusol-chon* (the story of Pusol).

After the children were gone, Wonderful Flower became a very hard working woman. Like a strong man she did everything by herself. She maintained her vitality until late in her life, staying active even in her nineties. As she grew old she studied chanting from a devotee in the village in order to keep her mind calm. She learned that there were many names of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for chanting, so she asked the devotee which name she should chant. "Chant the name of the one with whom you feel the most affinity," said the devotee. Wonderful Flower then recalled what her father told her a few days before

View from Bright Moon Temple, North Cholla Province, Korea. Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom archives.

he died. He had said, "Pusol is a Bodhisattva." "If Pusol is a Bodhisattva, I might as well chant his name because I have most affinity with him no matter what happened," she thought. Thus Wonderful Flower began to chant "Pusol Posal (Bodhisattva), Pusol Posal, Pusol Posal…" She chanted ceaselessly with devotion for more than twenty years. It was said one could always hear "Pusol Posal, Pusol Posal..." from her house any time of the day and late at night. People in the village seldom saw her outside her house after she started chanting. When they did see her, she would recognize them with a quiet smile and nod. She was a different person. She lived to be one hundred and ten years old. People in the village said that Wonderful Flower lived four or five different lives in her lifetime. After she died, her house was turned into a Buddhist temple according to her wish, and the temple was called Pusol Bodhisattva Temple. The Dharma room where Pusol trained in meditation and attained enlightenment and the cowshed were made into a Buddha hall where Pusol's stone Buddha and broken water bowl were duly enshrined along with the beads that Wonderful Flower had used for chanting. For a long time after, Pusol Bodhisattva Temple remained a place of spiritual devotion for people in the village.







EXPENDIO SUR




CASA MUSEO
CARLOS PELLICER

Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom

Zen Buddhist Temple, Mexico City

On December 16th, 2004 Ven. Samu Sunim came for his annual teaching trip to Mexico. Trying this street and that, we found our way through heavy traffic to our temple in Colonia Roma. That evening Sunim gave a talk at "Yug," a vegetarian restaurant in the heart of Mexico City, that was well attended. The next day we took a "micro" to an interview at Radio Educación. A micro is a kind of small bus well known for the barbaric driving of their young drivers. Sunim sat cross-legged next to the driver's seat, "at home in the universe," as comfortable as a child on an adventure.

Sunim gave a second talk at Alma-Zen bookstore in Coyoacán, a colorful, colonial-style area in the south of the city. The next day we held a meditation workshop at Creser Center and Sunim gave a talk at Aiki-Calli, a respected Aikido school.

On Sunday we returned to Coyoacán. Sunim gave a talk in Leon Trotsky's House & Museum. Leon Trotsky lived in Mexico as a political refugee until his assassination. That afternoon, Sunim performed a beautiful Flower Wedding Ceremony for Mangong Gabriel Ortega and Agong Mónica Martínez at the Centro Budista de la Ciudad de México.

The following day we left for Acapulco Bay for a much-needed rest, accompanied by two Korean nuns, Kyonghun Sunim and her visiting friend. Kyonghun Sunim directs Kwanum-sa, a temple serving the fast-growing Korean community. We stayed for four days. Every day for lunch the nuns cooked rice for us in their tiny crockpot, accompanied by kimchi and Korean pickles.

The Yongmaeng Chongjin took place once again in Tapalehui, a beautiful complex in the town of Xoxocotla in Morelos. It is built on uneven terrain, with rich vegetation and a stream that flowed along with our meditation. We had a strong retreat with about forty participants. Afterwards eleven people took part in the Precept-Taking Ceremony, receiving Dharma names with the common root "Ma."

Sunim and I drove southeast to the Yucatán Peninsula, hoping to find a secluded spot for rest, reading, and practice. We stayed two days—and two sleepless nights—at the Sian Kan Biosphere Reserve. There they offer accommodations in tents that stand atop wooden platforms just meters from the seashore. The wind was so strong that at night every inch of the tent—and the wooden structure as well—was vibrating. It was wonderful to sit amid the roar of the vibrations and the constant beating of the waves. Quite a Dharma talk!

In Mérida, the character of our trip changed. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the first wave of Korean immigrants, who settled in the Yucatán Peninsula. Inquiries took us to the tiny town of Lepan, where one hundred years earlier the henequén plant was cultivated for its fiber. Enormous labor was required to cut the spring leaves and many young Koreans responded to the recruitment campaign, full of hope for a better life. Sunim interviewed second and third generation members of the Song family. We were touched by the sincerity, humbleness and endurance of these people, whose ancestors endured near slave-labor conditions.

Upon our return on January 16th, we celebrated Sunim's twentieth anniversary of teaching in Mexico. It was a joyous occasion with our temple filled beyond capacity. Sunim shared some Dharma words, then members and friends from past and present expressed their experiences of practice with us through these twenty years.

Sunim left Mexico the next day, following a breakfast with the Korean community. Hasta luego, Sunim!

日日是好日

Each Day, Good Day, Ucchin Chang

Being with Baby

Bobhyang Maureen Sharp

The seven-week old baby I spoke about at our temple's biannual membership meeting doesn't exist anymore. Now I spend my days and nights with a ten-week old baby who listens and watches and drinks me up with his eyes. He too is disappearing. So in the three weeks since my teacher Sunim asked me to write down some of the observations I had made about new motherhood, our world has changed again. Mothering is impermanence in fast forward.

Birth

My son came into the world, as all babies do, complete and perfect. He knew how to suckle and sleep and was at peace with the world and everyone who inhabited it. He accepted us all with equanimity: his frantic grandmother (his was a rushed and induced birth brought on by an umbilical cord looped twice around his neck), the efficient nurses, and me, his gently tearful milk-bar and hormone-saturated admirer. He knew neither past nor future, and required only that I stay in each moment with him. So for weeks that's what I did. I tried to be in each moment with him, as he nursed (my practice keeping him company, swelling up from my abdomen and pulsing out with my milk, constant and primal and wise), as he cried with gas pain (Kwanseum Posal, my sweet love). And most especially in those few moments when he seemed alert and quiet, I tried to find out who he is.

When the Buddha was born, the legend goes, he immediately stood up and shouted, "I am the Buddha, and no one is greater than me!" The joke is that every baby's cry at birth is saying just that: "I am the Buddha, and no one is greater than me!" I like that story. Certainly, the cry of a

newborn child says "Pay attention! This is important!" My husband and I had shouted as much ourselves on many a cold predawn morning in successive candle-lit Toronto temples. Shapeless forms rise and fall twenty-five times in a grim rhythm, and then all stop and shout "Great is the matter of birth and death!" before moving on to the next twenty-five prostrations. I think now that I never understood this as more than a slogan—and a useful milestone on the way to breakfast. Neither birth nor death had yet wrapped itself around the marrow in my bones and squeezed until I gasped, like it did when my son slid in one instant from me and into this lifetime. One instant vanquished my outward-looking life, and I left the vast child's world of self-love and became an adult in a very small world. My son's need did this to me. His need for me to be present and aware and focused on him was the first of his many gifts.

Those of us who are lucky enough to be witness to someone else's birth know that the encounter is full and true and vital to every living thing. Sunim is always urging us toward authentic experiences, which he describes as "intimate, immediate, spontaneous and obvious." Birth ticks off all four! I want to remember the feelings attached to the most authentic experience of my life forever, but already I am beginning to intellectualize it, and the constructed memory is replacing the spontaneous experience. People know what I mean. Something similar happens after a moment of sudden clarity while sitting on your cushion. In my mind I replay those moments in a hospital bed, watching the predawn glow of the coming day spread itself over the majestic form of Lake Ontario outside the window. How can I tell you what happened to me when I gave birth to a child? Great is the matter of birth and death! My obstetrician tells me that no matter how many babies he delivers (and he is of an age to have delivered generations), every single one is a thrill and creates a rush for all those present. The nurse who watched over us all night in the delivery ward would not go home when her shift ended, but, notwithstanding that she must see at least a couple of births every working day of her life and despite having two children of her own to go home to, she happily stayed to see our son safely into the world. "I wouldn't miss it!" she told us. And I stayed awake that night while my baby and my husband slept, staring transfixed and thinking over and over: "I'm so happy, I'm so happy, I'm so happy...."

Growth

Muhan, our temple priest and resident saint, admires the baby: "He is a Buddha. Soon he will be a human being, but for now he is still a Buddha." I know what he means. It's the same as a story my mother heard on CBC radio (and therefore believes to be true). In this story, a young girl keeps nagging her parents to be allowed to be left alone with her newborn sister. The parents resist, because they cannot understand her motives and do not trust her. The child persists, and, finally, they allow the girl to be alone with the baby while they secretly listen in over the baby monitor. "Tell me about God," the eavesdropping parents hear the child say to the baby, "I'm beginning to forget." I cannot prevent my son from acquiring human-ness any more than I will be able to give him back his Buddhahood once it becomes buried. I cannot remember much of what God is like, but I can show my son through example the Eightfold Path, and in doing so, safeguard my own happiness.

Every day my son reminds me of the preciousness and brevity of life. Every moment in his presence is a lesson in impermanence. Every step he takes toward personhood and independence (his first smile!) is a little bit more of the newborn baby lost to me forever, which simultaneously thrills and terrifies me. There's a line in the Joni Mitchell song *Both Sides Now* that goes "But something's lost, and something's gained, in living every day." With a baby, that loss and gain

visibly plays out before your eyes.

Being with my son is also an insight into my own mother's struggle to raise me and then let me go, and a reminder that my generation too must cede our place to the ones we have loved. Oddly, in this way he connects me to both my roots and my mortality, and I begin to see the history of civilization as a stream of parents raising their successors rather than as a march of individuals. Society has been made by parents, and the vast body of human experience has been concerned with the rearing and care of children. Parents themselves never seem to articulate this, other than with the knowing "You'll see..." that pervades a first-time pregnancy (and drives the expectant mother nuts with its vague foreboding). Becoming a parent is like joining a club that has no posted rules, but whose members are linked by common experience and sympathy. "Do you have children yourself?" someone might ask in the middle of a seemingly unrelated discussion. To those who say yes, it's then a simple, "Ah, then you know."

I am constantly aware that our son has come to live with us for only a short while. His need for us will diminish until he leaves us altogether. This knowledge motivates me to create the most nurturing environment we can for him, while we can. I do not want my son to witness the many things his father and I do that hurt ourselves and each other. My son's helplessness inspires me to do better.

Family

Sunim conducted an exquisite blessing ceremony for our child when he was six weeks old, witnessed by our families. For most of our guests, it was the first time they had been to the temple, the first time they had met any Buddhists besides us, and of course their first experience of a Buddhist ceremony. Being part of the spread of Buddhism in the West means building hybrid extended families.

The ability of our families' rituals to stretch and absorb the challenges of pluralism have made us closer and our children wiser. Christmas dinner is now vegetarian-friendly, my nephews brought their hushed church manners to the Buddha hall, and my ex-nun mother dedicated a lantern to my unborn son at a Buddhist temple during her recent trip to Korea. Likewise, our son will benefit from participating in the Christian rituals my family uses to mark its members' milestones. The way we mark these milestones naturally opens a dialogue I might otherwise never have had with my siblings and parents: Are you going to baptize your son? (My priest uncle suggests we should, as it would give him something to rebel against!) Will you celebrate Christmas? What will you tell him about death and reincarnation or the afterlife? Will he eat meat? Do you say grace before dinner? Recently, I overheard my mother explaining Buddhist philosophy to my single-minded Catholic grandmother.

I asked my nieces and nephews to bring a small offering for the altar. My phone buzzed in the days leading up to the ceremony with questions on protocol. What kind of offering? What would the ceremony involve? (I told them I had no idea, having never before attended a blessing for a baby.) What should they wear? (Something warm!) Could they take pictures? What should my sister-in-law write on the cake she had made for the occasion? (We settled on my son's name, a lotus flower, and the words "Buddha Dharma Sangha").

The flurry of concerns amused and flattered me. They were showing their support and respect, and I know how lucky we are to be part of such an open and loving family. I also recognized their eagerness to behave appropriately as a sign of the "beginner's mind" we all bring to our first trips to the temple. Regulars soon learn to stop asking questions in favor of trying to respond spontaneously to whatever happens.

But when the phone rang again the day before the ceremony, the tables were turned. It was Sunim, saying "It would be good if...." My ears

pricked up and I got ready to be challenged. It is a phrase always used by the temple priests to precede a request for help or a suggestion on how to deepen a practice that had quite comfortably stalled. Now here was Sunim gently suggesting that it would be good if I asked Ashoka what he would like to bring as an offering to the Buddha.

Ashoka is the admittedly grandiose middle name we had chosen for our son. Translated from the Sanskrit to mean "without sorrow," Ashoka the Great unified and ruled over a vast territory exceeding the borders of present day India during the third century BCE. But his horror over the brutality of his conquests led him to adopt Buddhism, and he became a powerful propagator of the new religion and a compassionate emperor under whose example the overwhelming majority of Indians voluntarily became vegetarians. My husband and I had benefited from Ashoka's efforts to mark and preserve significant places in the Buddha's life while visiting India. In Bodh Gaya, a stone wall engraved with lotus flowers still encircles the descendant of the bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, and at Sarnath, where the Buddha set in motion the Wheel of Dharma, Ashoka's pillar topped with three majestic lions is preserved. Although Buddhist practice itself has almost entirely vanished from present-day India, this unmistakable symbol graces the country's currency.

"Okay," I said doubtfully. Sunim was unperturbed and very clear: Ashoka should choose his own offering to reflect his own personality. He made reference to Ashoka's possible interests as if he were as fully developed an individual as you or I.

I hung up the phone. "I have to ask Ashoka what offering he would like to bring for the Buddha tomorrow," I told my mother-in-law, who was visiting from England and treating the blessing preparations like an amusing anthropological excursion. She thought I was joking.

I propped Ashoka up on my lap and looked him in the eye. "Ashoka," I said seriously. "What do you want to take to your blessing ceremony tomorrow as an offering to the Buddha?" He gazed serenely at the blank wall over my head and wriggled his feet. I watched him a moment and then repeated "Ashoka. Sunim says you need to tell us what you want to bring the Buddha." An arm shot out. How to interpret that?

My husband took up the effort when he got home. Neither of us was able to penetrate his Buddha mind. We rephrased the question to accommodate a yes or no response and watched for a sign. "Would you like to take the Buddha a bouquet of autumn leaves?" Ashoka blinked. "Or perhaps a bowl of nuts and berries?" A yawn was followed by a languid stretch.

It was a typical Sunim moment. A koan we failed to solve. In the end we opted for a bundle of white candles reflecting his fascination with light and shadow.

The ceremony was exquisite. Holding Ashoka, my husband and I took our places on ceremonial cushions before Sunim and let the sound of Muhan striking the big bell ring in waves through our body-minds. I remembered how Muhan drummed at Reverend Toan Sunim's Dharma transmission ceremony this past summer, and how Ashoka had drummed back enthusiastically from inside my womb, kicking and pounding a response to the call to wake up.

Afterwards, my siblings thank us for inviting them into this part of our lives. They tell me they recognize the qualities of wisdom and serenity in Sunim's presence, and that they are happy for us, having something so meaningful in our lives. My mother-in-law said she wouldn't have missed it for the world. This sharing is another gift from Ashoka.

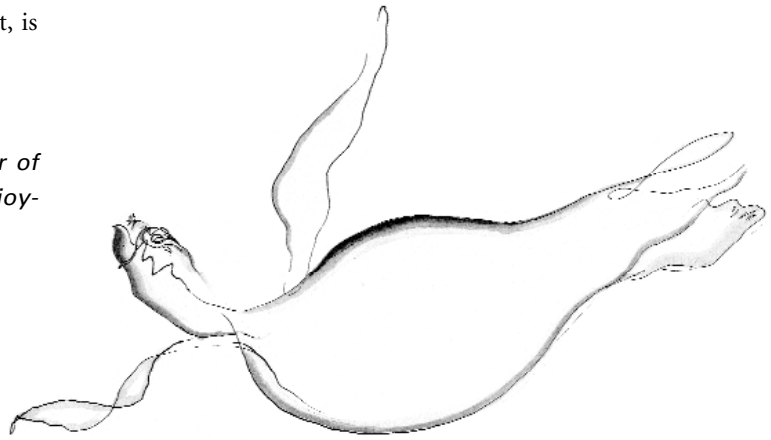
Practice

When I was pregnant, Sunim modified my practice to better suit my condition and to help me with the pain of childbirth. Still, during the day, when my practice comes back to me unbidden, it

is my older practice. This year, for the first time in my Buddhist life, I did not do an annual five-day intensive retreat, thinking that it would be too physically hard with my massive belly and all that it entailed. During the reception I was helping host for the retreat participants that summer, I spoke to Haju Sunim about pregnancy and practice, and learned that one year she had unexpectedly given birth early while on retreat—the day after completing 108 prostrations! Perhaps I had underestimated my body.

Regretfully, awe and wonder are slowly losing the battle against familiarity. The same, I am ashamed to say, is true for gratitude. I have tried to be vigilant, but like all the everyday miracles, awe and gratitude so often get lost in the monotony of the small tasks that fill our days. So I fall back on the discipline of the Dharma for what came naturally two short months ago: three deep bows for every miraculous breath he takes, every perfect gesture, every sob, coo and smile. My practice comes back to me again and again. Maum chanting is a lullaby. Changing each diaper is an opportunity for mindfulness practice. These are the things that make me a good mother to my son: That I try to learn patience from him. That I try to be awake and present for him. That we are intimate, immediate, spontaneous and obvious. He is here with me now. And I can't believe this love is impermanent. Surely this love, at least, is constant?

Bobhyang Maureen Sharp is a member of Zen Buddhist Temple in Toronto and is enjoying Canada's year-long parental leave.



Rev. Toan José Castelao

My Unfolding Life

Konggi Rick Burns

Some time ago, I read an article by a psychologist who wrote that children who grow up without love do not develop properly.

As I look back on my life, I can see the truth of this statement. My earliest memory is a very traumatic one. I was about four years old and playing in my back yard when some older kids came down the alley. They led me down the alley, away from my home, and stood me up against a garage. They then started to throw rocks at me. The stones made loud noises as they hit the side of the wood garage around me. I was so terrified that I could not move. Eventually one of the stones hit me in the face. That was the first time I remember feeling pain. I remember screaming and a lot of blood on my face and hands. The older kids just ran away laughing, leaving me there crying and bleeding.

My mother was only sixteen years old when I was born, and she was unable to care for me. So I was put up for adoption. I was soon adopted by my mother's sister and her husband. I don't know if they really wanted me or if they just adopted me as a favor to my mother.

Growing up was not pleasant. There was not much love in our home. My father was an alcoholic and what was then called a "strict disciplinarian." My mother became addicted to prescription drugs after she had some surgery when I was about six.

My parents and my older sister were always arguing and fighting. There was a lot of screaming, violence, and family fights. I remember hiding a

Nabi Anita Evans

I could immediately tell this was a man different from those that I had previously known. He seemed to be at peace, serene, and steeped in wisdom.

lot and being very scared of my parents. But at that time the anger seemed to be focused on my sister.

My sister got married after she graduated from high school and moved to Germany with her husband, who was in the Army. I was eight then, and with my sister gone, my parents' attention turned to me.

As most kids do, I got into mischief and may have been a little hyperactive, but at that time little was known about hyperactivity. To my parents, I didn't have a problem; they said I was just acting out and being a bad kid.

My father regularly beat me after my sister left home. I remember being scared to death of him. I feared the time when he came home at the end of the day. After he left work, my father would go to the bar and drink until about seven p.m. Then he would come home for dinner. He was looking for trouble, and more often than not he took his anger out on me. This was the routine for most of my childhood.

School was almost as bad. I was a frightened child and feared others. Kids picked up on my fear, and I was bullied and beaten even more than at home. The town I grew up in was not big, so I went to school with these kids from grade school to high school. Each year the bullying got worse, and the beatings became more severe.

This was the 1960's, and drugs and alcohol were easily attainable. In them I found an escape and a place to hide. They made me feel good when life did not. They made the pain and fear a little more bearable. All I wanted to do was to escape, to get away from this terrible place. So, I stuck out high school and graduated mid-term when I was seventeen. My best chance for escape seemed to be the military, so I joined the branch of the service that would get me the farthest away—the U.S. Navy.

I was about to embark on a ten-year journey. This journey, however, was to be one of death, destruction, and sheer terror. This journey was also one void of love, compassion, or mercy. I arrived for basic training in San Diego, California, in the spring of 1972, not quite knowing what to expect. What I found was something that I did not expect—acceptance.

All of us recruits seemed to get along well, and we all became friends. We learned to depend on one another and to function as one unit. I was finally accepted for what I was, and no one harassed me or beat me anymore.

I was asked during basic training if I would like to volunteer for BUD/S training (Basic Underwater Demolitions School), a prerequisite for the Navy's elite SEAL teams. When I was asked, I thought my superiors were crazy. I told them about being bullied all my life and that I could not even defend myself and had a fear of people and of fighting. My superiors told me that fear could be overcome. They would take my fear away and build confidence in me. I should not have to fear anyone; no matter how big or tough a man is, he is still just a man, and men can be killed.

The next twenty-seven weeks of training were designed to break a man both physically and mentally. Many men quit or washed out in the

first three weeks. We were taught many skills, such as scuba diving, weapons and explosives handling, and land and sea navigations, to name a few. Our confidence grew tremendously. We learned to overcome fear and to control pain. We learned to function as a team and to trust each other with our very lives.

I also learned that almost all of the other men had backgrounds similar to mine. We were full of anger, fear, and hate, and the Navy exploited these emotions to make us—there are no better words—killing machines.

After graduating from BUD/S, we were assigned for on-the-job training to a SEAL team operating in the field. The time was late 1972, and almost all combat forces—U.S. Marines and U.S. Army ground forces—had been or were being withdrawn from Vietnam. However, there were still advisors operating with the South Vietnamese forces, known as ARVNs (Army of the Republic of Vietnam). I volunteered for one such unit, SOG (Studies and Observations Group), NAD (Naval Advisory Detachment), operating out of CCN (Command Control North) in Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam.

I spent the next twelve months advising the Vietnamese Sea Commandos and conducting Black Ops (clandestine operations) into North Vietnam. I also cross-trained with SOG's 5th Special Forces Group in conducting Prairie Fire Operations into Laos. I soon became aware of the lies the government told the American people and the troops about Vietnam. The whole damned war was just one big lie, period! Like many of the other guys in Vietnam who became disillusioned with the war, I fell victim to drugs, which were everywhere in Vietnam and cheap. Almost everyone drank heavily and often when we were in rear areas. I saw what war did to me and to other GIs who served in Vietnam.

We became cold and insensitive to death, which was everywhere, but we were better off than the 59,000-plus men who died there. And we were better off than the many men who were seriously wounded and paralyzed and the men who had lost limbs. There was no love, compassion, mercy, or wisdom to be found anywhere, only the horrors of war.

On returning home from Vietnam, I came to realize that there had never been any love in my life or any happiness, so I set out to find love and happiness. None of the girls in my town wanted anything to do with me or with any of the other veterans. We came home and were met with much animosity. The American people seemed to blame the war and its atrocities on the vets, and they took out their anger on us. I began to despise the American people, and soon I began to hate all of humankind.

In 1976, I joined the Indiana Army National Guard to find some comfort with the other vets who made up most of the National Guard. We all seemed to have issues to deal with and to be searching for a little happiness, but we were looking in all of the wrong places. The drugs and alcohol provided a temporary relief from the pain and suffering but, when we sobered up, the pain came back. With me, so did the hatred and with it the anger.

I was desperate to find someone to love and to love me, someone to hold me and comfort me. But I felt like an outcast from society, so I sought love from women who were on the outer fringes of society, mostly strippers and prostitutes or girls I met in bars. I was now about twenty-six years old and had never loved anyone or had anyone to love me. So I naturally had no idea how to have a normal relationship with women. All of the women I had been with were just out for a good time, or for money; they were not out to find love or a relationship. I felt lost and thought that I would never be happy or find love.

I met my first wife in 1982. I got married and moved to Chicago but, as I said, I had no idea how to have a normal relationship. The marriage was rocky. We had many arguments, and I didn't know how to handle them. By now I had become an alcoholic and an addict. What used to be an

escape from reality and freedom from suffering had now become a full-time job. I was using heavily every day. My wife and I were into the club scene in Chicago, and some of the girls there came on to me. Naturally, I craved the attention I was now getting, so it was no surprise that my first marriage ended in a divorce, due mostly to my affairs, drugs, and alcohol use.

I had a serious problem with depression and anger, but while going through college, I met Sally, my second wife, at the hospital where we both worked. We dated for a couple of years and decided to get married. I was determined to make this marriage work. I was finally finished with parties and the club scene and just wanted to settle down. I stayed loyal and faithful to my wife, but I still had no idea how to have a normal relationship. But, for the first time, I believed I actually loved someone.

I didn't know what love was. I thought I was experiencing it, but I didn't know for sure. Was love something that you feel with your body? Some type of physical sensation? I didn't know. I had no physical sensation, but, in my mind, I do love my wife. So I have tried to make our marriage work.

I didn't know what wives really expected of husbands. This experience was new to me and I didn't know what to do or how to act. I still didn't understand relationships, but I was trying, although I still suffered from depression, addiction, and alcoholism.

I tried to better our situation by finishing college. I graduated from mortuary college in 1992. I had been seeing a psychiatrist and was now on medication for depression. However, my problem with drugs and alcohol was still present, as was the hate and the anger, all of which were causing a serious problem in our relationship. I knew I had to get help. The drugs and alcohol were now a nightmare, and I was bordering on insanity. I went to my doctor for help, and he referred me to a psychiatrist who specialized in addiction. The psychiatrist in turn referred me to an institution that specialized in drug and alcohol rehabilitation. I stopped using drugs in April of 2002 and have not used since.

The nightmare that drugs and alcohol had helped suppress soon reappeared. I was still full of hate and anger. I was still angry at the whole of humankind. I was content with people trying to exterminate one another, but they seemed to be determined not just to exterminate each other but to exterminate other species as well. The one thing that I have always truly loved is animals and nature, and people were destroying not only wildlife but also the earth itself. Everywhere I looked I saw death and destruction in the world. I had come to the conclusion that all people were evil. I saw their handiwork first hand in war, in the hospital emergency room where I worked, and in my job as an embalmer and mortician.

I wanted peace of mind. This madness was driving me crazy. In June of 2002, after starting a kung fu class, I wanted to know more about the Shaolin, spirituality, and Buddhism. So, in October of the same year, I came to the temple to learn more.

The first person I saw at the temple was Sunim, at the Sunday Dharma service. I could immediately tell this was a man different from those that I had previously known. He seemed to be at peace, serene, and steeped in wisdom. I soon began to admire and respect Sunim more than anyone I had ever known. Sunim talked of love and compassion. This was all new to me, since all I had ever known was anger and hate. From Sunim I learned that all beings had Buddha-nature and therefore were not completely bad.

Slowly, I began to develop compassion for people. I still was not all that fond of people, but I was making progress. I do not say that I had no compassion; I just reserved it for those whom I thought deserved it, mainly animals and nature, children, and people with disabilities.

In January of 2003, I took the meditation course. I really enjoyed it and found meditation to be what I really needed. It is nice to completely

Toan José Castelao

clear the mind of negative thoughts. Meditation has been a great tool in my recovery, and it has given me peace of mind.

I now have other people in my life, and I am starting to make more friends at the temple and in my kung fu class. Here, I have discovered that there are different kinds of love. There is the kind of love I have for my wife, and there is the kind of love I have for some of my best friends. There is also the kind of love I have for people for whom I have a great amount of respect. I now have a lot of people whom I care for, such as the people who make up my Dharma family and my Sangha.

Things are not always good. I still have good days and bad days, but I now have the tools, such as meditation, the eight precepts, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path, as well as the Six Paramitas, to make life a little better and more bearable.

I took precepts in May of 2003, when I officially became a Buddhist, and I try to follow the precepts every day in my life. Some precepts, such as the first (do not harm but cherish all life), are easier for me than others. Others, such as the seventh (do not harbor enmity against the wrongs of others), are more difficult. And the one I follow exactly to the letter is the fifth (the one about guns, poisons, drugs, and alcohol).

I do not claim to be perfect or even cured of hate or anger, but I am getting better. I still may not be fond of all of humankind, but I don't hate everyone anymore. And for the most part I have developed compassion for all beings.

The future looks better and better every day. And I have my teacher and the Sangha to thank for that. So every day I continue to take refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma, and especially the Sangha.

Mark Caffray

Other Worlds, pen and ink on Bristol board, 9" x 12"

www.gallerycaffray.com

homemade

Spring Wind *invites readers to share the joy of creativity and a non-consumer lifestyle in this special section.*

Bopmi Jacki Dilley

When I was nine, long before I'd ever heard of meditation, my sister-in-law taught me to knit. I doubt she realized she was giving me a mindfulness practice. In my family, knitting was just something we did. Few things in my life, however, have taught me so much about dwelling in the present moment. I loved a sweater she had knitted for me and could hardly believe she'd made it. I continue to find that people treasure knitted gifts. When a birthday or holiday comes up and someone asks me to knit them something, I think I receive more than they do. First, I get the pleasure of knitting. Second, I have the pleasure of giving. Third, their reactions make me feel wonderful.

Here are three things to remember if you want to learn to knit:
1. Mistakes and mysterious holes are part of knitting, at least with the first few projects.
2. Just as prostrations are good for your body, knitting is good for your hands.
3. Knitting can support simple living: recycle yarn from thrift-shop sweaters.

"Outlaw Josie Wales" poncho for Bopryok

I had a large quantity of gray yarn and several balls of leftover yarn in assorted colors. I used two strands throughout this poncho, one gray strand and one colored strand. I changed colors at random.

I used size 11 circular needles, 31" in length. I cast on 106 stitches, which gave the poncho a width of 33 inches. I knit it all in garter stitch (all knitting with no purling), which got a little boring. The advantages: the poncho is very thick and warm, and it's a good project to work on if you're watching a movie or gabbing and you don't need to concentrate very hard on your knitting.

The poncho is knit in one piece. When I reached 24" in length, I knit 41 stitches, bound off the next 28 stitches for the neck opening, and knit the remaining 28 stitches onto my same circular needle. The next row, I knit 41 stitches, cast on 28 stitches, and knit the remaining 41 stitches. I then knitted the remaining 24 inches, bound off, and there you have it. When I was all done, I crocheted a border around the neck opening.

Bopryok no longer freezes when he practices at the crack of dawn in winter. In fact, he is able to dial the thermostat down to sixty degrees when he's wearing the poncho.

a drop in the river

Bopch'i Eduardo López
Translated from the Spanish by San'ga Monica Weinheimer

The ocean has no beginning
it begins where you find it for the first time
and it will come to meet you everywhere.

"Eternal Sea"
José Emilio Pacheco

This morning I hear the warbling of birds outside the window. The wind blows in a cold October. I look out the window and hardly a ray of light cuts the night over this city that's more violent than most. I see the rosy sky and above, a little cloud becoming golden, and I smile. Calm, I breathe and smile again. I feel an intense, intimate peace, a peace that connects me with one I felt years ago.

My father took me fishing and I relaxed beside the mountain river. Lying in the grass, I contemplated the dew and the drops of water splashing the rocks and shining in the light that filtered through the trees. These drops, suspended in the air for a moment, made a fleeting rainbow and the world's smile sprang from my heart and bubbled up through my eyes in my happiness.

Later I proceeded through life and lost this secret silence. I became more complicated, and threw myself into passion and vanity. I was a rebel, an egotistical leader of disillusioned youth. I married and had a child; I lived in neurosis and was an abusive husband and father. I transported myself to the sorry heights of smallmindedness and ignorance. Ultimately I betrayed and was betrayed. I was painfully divorced and let myself be carried

Nabi Anita Evans

away by depression. Six times I lost my job. It was a period without light or direction, hungry for death, surrounded by a great blackness.

In that hopeless time I found, without looking for it, *The Three Pillars of Zen* by Phillip Kapleau Roshi in a used bookstore. Upon seeing it, I remembered that when I was thirteen my Chinese friend and math tutor sometimes read me Zen maxims, so I asked the salespeople to hold the book until I could buy it. When I at last had the book in my hands I felt ambivalent about it. On one hand I hoped it would entertain me and provide me with "easy wisdom" that I could show off to friends, but the more I read it, nothing like that appeared. However, I was discovering something that gave me hope of escaping the prison of frightening thoughts that plagued me every moment.

Such was my affliction that, from sheer anxiety and depression, I ended up unable to go out to work. At every step thousands of thoughts told me that with the next breath, in the next moment, I would die and my son and family wouldn't know where my corpse was—how I ruminated on pain in those days! A few times I ended up at the hospital and was even put on medication.

That book, however, told me things that touched me and broke these feelings and phantoms. As I read and began to practice sitting meditation, something within stopped speaking and threatening me, and something undefined emerged

that gave me hope. Thus I began to practice with determination with nothing more than a folded blanket, a cushion under my buttocks and the wall of the humble room where I lived, yet "with great faith, great doubt, and great effort."

With solitary practice, I began to worry and fall back into anxiety. I needed a teacher, but for all my searching in Mexico City, I could find only a few rather snobbish practitioners and others in such an economic position that I could neither participate in their group nor their classes. I found pseudo teachers that didn't clarify anything for me and gave teachings mixed with ideas like angels, transmigration, regressions and various other philosophies. I made an attempt with the Japanese community; however, I either didn't have good contacts or didn't know how to express what I was looking for, and no one was able to orient me.

A cook in a sushi restaurant I frequented approached me one time while I was talking about my interest in finding a teacher. He asked me why I was interested in Zen, and by the end of the night I was having my first meditation lesson sitting in the kitchen of the restaurant.

He was a practitioner but not a teacher, but nonetheless he generously shared what he knew. He could only give me instruction for a few months. He had to return to Los Angeles and I haven't heard of him since. His good will and companionship led me to seek a bit further. My therapist of several years helped me advance with meditation. I think he was more convinced than I that this path would help me. Thus I continued practicing.

In December of that year I saw a newspaper ad for a retreat with a Korean Zen master. Since I didn't have any money I didn't even call. For months I carried the ad in my wallet.

By that time I had set up a small altar and meditated with a lighted candle after offering incense, water and flowers or fruit. I bought a few more books and tried to follow the guidelines given by my cook friend and by Kapleau Roshi. I practiced in the subway, in cars, during breaks at work. I practiced obsessively and couldn't even finish a complete count without getting distracted. Nevertheless, something left me feeling calm each time I did it. So I would try again—find a seat in the subway car, lower my gaze, put my hands together and meditate during the trip to and from work, over and over.

For a long time I looked for a Buddha statue other than the fat Chinese Buddha that's commonly used in Mexico as a popular amulet for good luck and attracting wealth. I sought something more Indian but didn't find one. Finally I gave up and decided I wouldn't have one. Upon arriving home the next night I found a small bronze Buddha on my altar. I was dumbstruck: it was a figure from Nepal in the peace-giving posture. "Stop the wild horse of your mind!" it said to me from the silence. I prostrated for the first time and for the first time took refuge in the Buddha. Later I found out that, by chance, my mother managed to buy it, the last one in the store.

One week later I made my decision. I took the newspaper clipping from my wallet and called the temple. I was warmly invited to practice with them on Mérida Street.

Upon arrival I found an old, run-down building. The sangha's little apartment was on the second floor. The neighbors, poor and with unfriendly faces, eyed me with hostile curiosity. I knocked at the door and Kasan received me. He signaled me to be silent and to take off my shoes. Behind a cloth screen I entered the *sonbang* and thought, "This is like in the books, these are zen practitioners, this is a teacher, this is for real." I felt happy for the first time in many years, like the happiness I felt by the river. I was home.

Many Saturdays passed in an agreeable routine. I didn't understand much but I joined the routine and the silence of the sangha. Whenever I asked about something they sent me with a smile to continue counting on my cushion, and I imitated them as much as I could. One day Toan Sunim arrived and they told me he was the one in

charge. I waited several weekends to be able to speak with him, and finally he gave me an interview. He asked me to show him my practice and he gave me some recommendations. Each time, despite my circumstances, I felt tranquility and the certainty that here was a safe place where I had nothing to fear. Thus I took refuge in the sangha for the first time.

Suddenly love overtook me and life gave me, in the devotion of a beautiful woman, the opportunity to love with sweet calm. This time companionship was tranquil security and devotion without frenzy, like never before. Constructing a love amidst two histories fraught with memories and pain became the work of balancing the echo of my past and this unique moment. If it hadn't been for the teachings, I wouldn't have been able to practice the tolerance and gratitude that allows for the harmony of two who love each other in their human condition, and the compassionate tenderness that permits the making of a home.

Later I met the teacher Samu Sunim, the master from the ad, and my need to learn grew after hearing him. His strength, energy, and clarity of expression at the conferences impressed me, and I decided to become his student. I sought his approval and prepared myself to take precepts. In 2001, I went to the Chicago temple and participated in the summer *yongmaeng chongjin* retreat and took the precepts, taking refuge in the Dharma for the first time.

However, daily samsara still sticks to me. Not long ago some armed men assaulted me and stole my truck. A little later I crashed my new car. The creditors came after me. My job, like that of thousands of people here, is threatened by the recession. At home there are two adolescents, one in the most critical phase of the hormonal battle and the other trying to figure out how to enter it as soon as possible. My diabetes gives me scares every now and then. I still get trapped in anger, shame, and fear—more easily than I'd like. I don't own much, don't have an academic title or riches.

However, I'm not the same as I was during my dark period. Now I smile when I see the magical simplicity of things. I take refuge in the fact that there's nothing to win and everything passes. The Dharma, like the eternal sea, flows through me at every step. A drop in the Dharma river splashes the stone of the moment and illuminates space with brilliant colors, leaving me this safe and sheltering silence in the midst of so much hurry. The drop flows to the banks and shines on the grass and fertile forest earth. I become a drop in the river—anonymous and vital, returning to the sea.

Bopch'i Eduardo López is a first year student in Maitreya Buddhist Seminary and lives in Mexico City.

Rev. Toan José Castelao

Interior Lessons from Dad

Kobul Marie Kuykendall

As a child, I used to watch my father read his missionary magazines and then leave them on the city bus for others to peruse as we traveled from home to his workshop in downtown Detroit. Workshop? Yes, he had a lathe, several grinding and polishing wheels, and rows and rows of boxes lined up on the shelf with pipe stems ready and waiting to replace the broken, stained, chewed-through stems on pipes brought in by customers. Dad was a repairman: he fixed smoking pipes and cigarette lighters, sharpened scissors and knives, and did soldering. That was his litany. From about the age of five, I was allowed to help him. He taught me to "pull cotton" out of the beautiful, table cigarette lighters, so he could replace it with new cotton batting ready to absorb the acrid lighter fluid that one squirted into the bottom of the lighter.

Dad taught me to carefully polish the smoking pipes he had just repaired. Using carnauba wax on the buffing wheel, I had to hold the pipes with full attention so they wouldn't fly out of my hands and break or crack all over again. He taught me to clean around the lathe and to always return the small boxes of raw stems back in the same place, numbered in Dad's very own smart but formally uneducated way. The lathe smelled of denatured alcohol and carried the incredible purplish stains used for the various shades of briar. The musty odor of layers of dust and shavings mixed with sweat and summer heat and only intensified as the months and years wore on.

Dad taught me so much more. I learned to interpret Detroit city maps so I could deliver his handiwork to tobacconists and department stores, finding my way through the maze of crowded streets, garbage-laden back alleys, and stately, shadowy buildings. He encouraged a confidence in me that enabled me to approach a police officer or even a stranger if I were lost.

A positive respect and cheerful, honest demeanor were modeled as he attended the variety of customers who found him working there in room 306 on the third floor of the Broadway Market Building. What smells wafted up from the market, intriguing, distracting and startling the curious mind and twitching nose of this girl child helping her father! Aromas of foods and spices from lands and lifestyles I had never dreamed existed, together with the diesel fumes of city buses and blaring horns of hurried taxi drivers fashioned the moments of a Saturday afternoon and the memory of a lifetime.

In winter, to prepare to walk the several blocks to the bus stop, Dad would tie a thick layer of newspapers around my torso and button up my

coat over it to keep out the biting wind. I'd do the same for him. Then he'd grab his crutches, and we would find our way through the snow, stand on the crowded bus for the hour ride, and walk another two blocks to finally arrive home. Dad was my first Zen master. No beautiful, forested mountaintops. Rather, city concrete, contented concentration, caring ways, and doing his utmost.

My father didn't know what Zen was—at least I don't think he did. He was a fairly devout Catholic and a humble, prayerful man. God to him was a faithful God, gracious and protective, a provider, and a loving friend, but certainly out there. I don't know if Dad ever thought of God within, but he did have confidence in his own strong self—and he lived it fully. Dad certainly embodied the spirit of his maxims that to the present day ring in my ears: "There's a place for everything, and everything in its place." "A thing worth doing is worth doing well." "A stitch in time saves nine." In a genuine spirit of generosity, Dad gave regularly to support his parish church, occasionally sent money to the missions, and always had a few coins for the St. Vincent de Paul "poor box" at Church.

When I was a teenager, to supplement his fairly meager income, I would go with Dad from restaurant to restaurant in downtown Detroit, asking the cook or owner if they would like their knives sharpened. If the answer was yes, we would carry ten or twelve dozen knives home and go down to the basement where Dad would teach me how to serrate the knives. He would take a file, situate the knife on an anvil, and with a strong, smooth stroke, create a fine tooth-combed edge in each knife, one by one. Or, if such was the request, he etched a scalloped edge, one indentation at a time, using a spinning, screaming, sparking grinding wheel until each knife was shiny, smooth, and sharp. Then Dad would say to me: "It's your turn." I learned early on to pay attention, to be in the moment, and to focus, concentrate, and be willing to begin again if the desired edge was uneven or dull.

As a child, Dad said he was known as the "I don't know" kid; he said that was his response whenever asked a question. But he later turned "I don't know" into "I'll try" or "I'll figure it out." He grew in ingenuity, creativity, resourcefulness, confidence, and satisfaction in learning how to repair just about anything—lawn mowers, clocks, plumbing, broken windows and toys—often inventing a tool to accomplish the task. He grew to have a deep faith in himself and then raised three children who weren't afraid to live out another of his mottoes: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again."

Yes, Dad had faith in himself. He also had faith in his fellow human beings. If a customer or neighbor showed up scowling looking sad or intense, Dad would be so happy if he could offer ways for that person to turn their darkness into light, so to speak. A frown would most often be turned to smiles or laughter before leaving Dad's presence. I don't think it was because Dad was naïve to people's pain and problems. Rather, he had the wisdom to share with people some story or simple explanation that impermanence truly does surround us, that "this too shall pass."

Partly because he was raised during the Depression, partly because money was well earned and sometimes scarce, Dad certainly did not waste anything. He treasured every crumb of food on his plate or drop of ice cream from the Sealtest pint. He wore his shirts until they hung in tattered glory off his shoulders, elbows protruding through the gaping holes. He donned work aprons at his job to protect his clothes from further injury or from the inevitable grease and stains of his livelihood. He polished his shoes innumerable times to preserve them and had them repaired until there was no strength left in the leather to receive another stitch or patch.

Someone painted a picture for Dad, on heavy cardboard, which hung in his workshop for all those years. It was a side view of an elderly Dutch or perhaps German man with a magnificent meerschaum pipe hanging from his mouth

Sandam Tammy Nakashima

almost to his waist, relaxed, with curly white hair descending from a stately and fashionable cap on his head. The caption with the picture proclaimed: "Ve get too soon old, und too late schmart." Somehow that picture embodies my father's sense of humor as well as his humility and practical honesty. The picture is now in my bedroom at home, yellowed, somewhat misshapen, and patiently waiting to be framed someday for one of the grandchildren. As I think about it, it is also another take on the gatha called out in the mornings at practice: "Do not waste your life!"

Dad modeled generosity, an energetic approach to life, and respect for all, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral. He was a man of interior strength and means with a childlike love of the moment and an appreciation of fun and playful times. During our annual trips to Boblo Island, watching the children on the amusement rides brought as much joy and delight to Dad as it did to us. He'd play catch with the baseball or football even though unable to run the bases or the fields. He'd delight in Monopoly, Scrabble, or Cribbage. He especially enjoyed the neighborhood children. They would lie along the sidewalk so he could swing himself over them with his crutches as he walked home from work, his weariness falling away in that moment with the children.

Dad died in 1987. His lessons and everyday

Zen ways are etched in my memory and spirit. I think that's what makes me want to wipe the sink clean and dry from puddled water and bits of rice or tea bags at the Zen Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor after breakfast. And make me take delight in that moment—doing it well, because it's worth doing.

Or maybe the lessons from Dad influence me when taping trim in the kitchen at home, with focus, and a deep sense of satisfaction and patience, readying the walls to be painted—again.

Was it that early Zen training that supported my own efforts and choices in parenting my own children? They are confident, capable, ready to say "I think I can" or "I'll figure it out…."

Why do I notice the discomfort, even suffering, of a friend or client apparent in their posture or facial expression? And then find myself ready, if the moment indicates, to be of help or comfort? Is it Dad's compassion for another human being coming through?

When I was seventeen, I entered the convent of the Adrian Dominican Sisters in southeastern Michigan. So many aspects of the convent life felt normal and comfortable to me. It was a quiet, simple life. Daily spiritual practices included prayer, meditation and contemplation, attendance at religious services, chanting, prostrations (certainly not 108, however), keeping profound silence overnight, occasional fasting, and lots of work practice. I was okay when I was assigned to scrub the massive marble stairs week after week for months, or given the unpopular "obedience" of cleaning bathrooms or bringing breakfast to an elderly, bedridden nun who wanted her toast hot and her tea steaming. My heart was full and sincere entering the beautiful Holy Rosary Chapel each morning for community chanting, prayer, and rituals. Were the lessons my father taught me there, then, upholding me?

For eleven years I lived the life of a nun: studying, teaching, praying, exploring spirituality and theology, and growing in some understanding of human relationships and the human community, with its variations and needs both locally and abroad. Two and a half years of the eleven were spent living and working in the Philippines. All eleven years were wonderful, sometimes quite challenging, most often simple and lived moment by moment, day by day. Dad's Zen lessons were brought to the meetings, the chapels, the classrooms, the gardens, the sit-down strikes, and the celebrations of births and deaths.

At age twenty-eight, I decided to leave the convent—something in me longed for marriage and family, though there were no guarantees of finding either. I left the convent, but the convent did not leave me. The convent that remains in me throughout my life is a virtual convent—full and flowing from the deep and interior lessons learned as a child. Respect, generosity, deep joy, service, compassion, spiritual practice, a loving attitude, and a sense of commitment to…a vow to…become a Buddha. Is this not what the gatha for the evening bell reminds all those who are there, and here, and everywhere, to become?

I know from experience that life is certainly not perfect. Living in the convent was not perfect. Family life is not perfect nor was my dad. He had his "stuff" to deal with. His political views were debatable. Occasional close-mindedness limited his opportunities for growth. I'm sure there were times he felt discouragement, disdain, or despair, as have I. Yet my call to everyday devotional, monastic, vowed life remains. I offer gratitude for the lessons of Zen living offered first by my father. Dad was not yet a Buddha. He was not entirely enlightened. Or was he?

Kobul Marie Kuykendall is a second year student in the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary. She lives in Brighton, Michigan with her husband, Bill, and spends three nights a week at the Zen Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor for practice and training. She works full time as a hospice spiritual care counselor.

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constantly question your true nature

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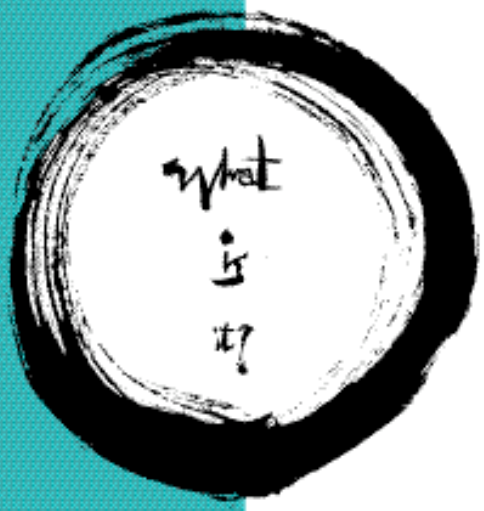

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ALL WELCOME!