



Water Wheel

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

— Gate of Sweet Nectar

Punna's Offering

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao



Punna was a poor servant. One day, she made a cake for herself of powdered rice-bits. Then she saw the Buddha on the road, bowed reverentially, and said,

"Your Reverence, this cake is made mainly of broken rice-bits and has neither oil nor flour in it; it may not be sweet, but if you would be so kind as to accept it, you will enable

me to obtain the sweets of nirvana."

The Buddha accepted the offering of the cake of broken rice-bits.

Punna said, "Your Reverence, just as this cake, when I offered it to you, became flavorful and worthy of you, so may I, who am a slave to others, but have now come to you, be freed from the enslavement of desire."

*"May it be so," responded the Buddha, and he went on to preach a sermon. (from *The Hidden Lamp*, Wisdom, 2014)*

This is a story from 6th Century India when the servant girl Punna met Shakyamuni Buddha. Offering a cake which she had made from broken bits of rice kernels, Punna stretched out her hand to the Buddha and he, in turn, stretched out his hand.

A few months ago, Marianne Ihlen, the 1960's muse of musician Leonard Cohen, was told that she had only a few days to live. A friend contacted Cohen and asked him to write a note to her in the hopes that she would receive it before she died. Within a few hours, Cohen's note was delivered and read to her. In part, his message read: "Know that I am so close behind you that if you stretch out your hand, I think you can reach mine." It is said that when she heard these words, she stretched out her hand.

Roshi's photo by Jeff Drongowski. Photographer at the LA Woman event.



Our Mala making workshop.

Today, Punna and the Buddha are stretching out their hands to us, and we are stretching out our hands to them. Koans are like this simple yet profound gesture. It can be said that this very action of "stretching out the hands" is all that it takes to touch the buddha ancestors, to touch the mystery of wisdom and love.

This week I am holding a Preceptor Empowerment (Denkai) retreat for Dokai. The heart of the retreat is bowing to the female and male ancestors. The instruction is to bow until one's new inner robe is worn through at the knees. When we bow, we lower our body onto our knees

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and place our forehead on the ground, then raise the palms of our hands above our ears. It is said that the Buddha is in the palms of our hands, and, in this way, the bodhi mind is raised above our own head.

We do this over and over when bowing — lower the ego-mind and raise the bodhi mind, allowing the inner voices to cease and disappear into bowing. We become bowing itself and our hands touch the hands of the ancestors. This is the spirit, not only of the transmission retreat, but of lowering oneself through bowing.

Punna, a slave during the Buddha's lifetime, stretched out her hands to the Buddha. She served her owners whole grains of rice while she herself ate only the broken bits. On this occasion, she had made a cake of these broken bits, but before she could eat it, she saw the Buddha and spontaneously offered it to him.

**“Throw yourself as you are
into the heart of the Buddha.”**

Imagine this: you take all of the broken bits of yourself — all the parts you reject, hide, and are ashamed of — and offer your brokenness to a buddha. Perhaps you think that offerings must be made of precious things. A buddha has no need for precious things; a buddha can receive anything and everything because he sees beyond the appearances of things. Maezumi Roshi once said to someone in turmoil, “Throw yourself as you are into the heart of the Buddha.” Punna gave herself just as she was to Buddha.

Can you make such an offering to the Buddha?

During one of my visits with Sensei Daishin, who is in rehab following a stroke, he was in a reflective mood and said, “I am so sorry for how I hid myself from you. I was just so caught up in what I should be, in what a Zen student should be, and in what a Zen teacher should be.” Dogen Zenji said, “In the whole world, there is nothing hidden.” And yet, we hide. Recently, someone asked Roshi Bernie, also in recovery from a stroke, if they could take a photograph of him in his condition, and Bernie replied, “There is nothing to hide.” And yet, we hide ourselves and pretend — we want to be free, but we don't quite know how to free ourselves.

While we were on pilgrimage in China, I met a nun from rural China. She was very curious about me and kept saying, through a translator, “You are like my sister. I want to give you something.” But what? All she had with

her was a well-worn, faded blue handkerchief with a wide striped border. She offered her only handkerchief to me saying, “This is all I have to give you.” She stretched out her hand without shame or embarrassment. I stretched out my hand in wonder.

Punna said, “Your Reverence, just as this cake, when I offered it to you, became flavorful and worthy of you, so may I, who am a slave to others, but have now come to you, be freed from the enslavement of desire.”

Punna recognized that her offering fell short of a true delicacy, but it was all she had and she offered it wholeheartedly. With these words, *just as this cake, when I offered it to you, became flavorful and worthy of you*, Punna tells us that the receiver transforms the gift. Those who are concerned about giving, please be equally aware that one's receptivity is the apex of generosity.

Punna asks to be *freed from the enslavement of desire*. What does she see as the true bondage? Why does she not ask to be freed from the bondage of slavery? Of course, we are not saying that slavery and poverty are acceptable, but that Punna had looked deeply at what bound her. How is it that in the midst of servitude, she had raised a vow to be freed from all that enslaved her inwardly? She was truly a “hidden lamp,” someone who saw through the transiency of her physical and social predicament.

Punna saw that there was a life for her outside of her own story of being a slave woman. She sensed that there was a life outside of the reactivity and rightness of the ego-self; that living in the mindset of fairness-and-unfairness was a trap not just for herself, but for those who enslaved. Punna sensed that there was something beyond the appearances of things and she wanted to know it.

What do you long to be free from? What do you ask for?

With three simple words, *May it be so*, the Buddha affirmed her worth as a human being worthy of the Dharma. He stretched out his hand and said, “Punna, I see you — I see you as the human being-buddha that you are.” Is there anyone who is not worthy?

Regardless of conditions of class, race, gender, or poverty, we are all fully capable of liberation. So take up the ego-bits of self — the brokenness, negativity, shame, guilt, and all that you keep hidden — and make an offering of it. Then, with all humility, stretch out your hand and offer it to the Buddha.

May it be so.

Roshi Egyoku is ZCLA's Abbot & Head Teacher.

The Finger and the Moon

Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Study

by Roshi Nancy Mujo Baker



Study is an important part of Zen practice, whether it be of liturgy, sutras, koans, or precepts. It is, one might say, the finger pointing to the moon, and, as Zen tells us, we should never confuse the finger with the moon itself. The finger is, of course, the teachings about Ultimate Reality, which we come to know intellectually, while the moon is the Ultimate Reality

itself, which can only be known experientially. These are two very different kinds of knowing.

Hearing the metaphor of the finger and the moon sometimes has the effect of making us think we can ignore the pointing finger as if it weren't important. But the finger – or “view,” as Tibetan Buddhism calls it – is crucial. Among other things, it tells us that “the moon is over there not over somewhere else.” Of course, this is just a metaphor as well, since the “moon” is not located in some particular place. Nonetheless, it is a useful metaphor. There seem, therefore, to be two dangers connected with study. One is avoiding it altogether because it is not the “moon.” The other is engaging in study but losing sight of the fact that whatever is being studied, namely the “finger,” is pointing away from itself and not to itself. How can we restore both the finger and the “away from” for ourselves?

In order truly to restore anything, we first need to inquire into how we lost sight of it to begin with. Here's where we need to do some inquiry to discover in ourselves the egoic conditionings or patterns that make us reject the finger altogether or else forget that it is pointing beyond itself. It doesn't matter where these patterns come from, namely, what early familial or school experiences helped to create them. All that matters is recognizing them, which in itself is the beginning of disidentifying from them.

Resistance to study is usually due to a fear of being wrong or stupid or slow or of simply not understanding something. Sometimes, the fear isn't even conscious. Let's face it, the Dharma, like all religious teachings, is really difficult, partly because, spoken or written, it is pointing beyond itself. But the problem with avoiding study is that we can end up engaged in not only what I like to call Sinatra Practice (“My Way”) but also Sinatradharma as opposed to Buddhadharma.

Then there are the patterns that make us forget that the finger is pointing away from itself. Some people need to know more or learn faster than others as a way of having an identity or being reassured that one exists, but this is just a version of the mistaken identity the Dharma addresses. Then there are the “experts” and the “perfectionists.” Once we discover what our patterns are, perhaps reinforced in our early school experiences, notice how they can show up at dinner parties, in the workplace, in reading books, and even in casual conversation. All this could be boiled down to the quality of our listening – whether that listening is to someone speaking, to a text we are reading, or even listening to oneself and one's experience.

In all these cases, our attention is not 100 percent on what we are studying or listening to. Part of our attention is on negotiating our way within the egoic pattern, usually with a lot of comparing mind. It all, of course, starts with school. All of us have suffered some kind injury from school, whether we've been good students and loved it, or not good students and hated it. Injury to what? To our natural freedom, our natural autonomy, creativity, and openness. To our natural capacity to be in a state of Not Knowing, to truly listen – and thus to be able to Bear Witness.

Those of you who are used to the Three Tenets of the Zen Peacemakers, and thus to the notions of Not Knowing and Bearing Witness to the suffering of others, may wonder what it could possibly mean to Bear Witness to a sutra or a koan. We could ask this in another way: How can we study in a state of Not Knowing? What could this mean? Being ignorant of the words of the Sixth Patriarch's famous poem or of how many links there are in the chain of causation is not what Not Knowing means. Not Knowing is total openness to something without any interference from my egoic conditioning, my patterns. Two kinds of Not Knowing come to mind here. One has to do with a certain kind of listening. For example, chanting over and over something like the *Heart Sutra* without intellectually trying to understand it, but being nonetheless totally present to it. One day, something can suddenly penetrate. It could be that only tears occur, and in these kinds of cases, it is the Faceless Fellow recognizing himself or revealing himself to himself. And this reminds me of one of my very favorite Zen stories from the *Denkoroku*:

The forty-ninth patriarch was Zen Master Hsuehtou Chih-chien. When Tsung-chueh was at Mt. T'ien-t'ung, one day he entered the hall and said, “The World-honored one spoke with a hidden meaning, but it was

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not concealed to Kasyapa.” When the master heard this, he was suddenly awakened to its profound meaning. Standing there in the ranks with the others, his tears fell. He unconsciously burst out, “Why haven’t I heard this before?”

He had, of course, very often heard the story about the Buddha raising the flower and twirling it and Kashyapa being the only one who responded – famously, with a simple smile. But these words finally penetrated so powerfully that it woke him up, as the rest of the story makes clear. What is important to notice here is that the “profound meaning” was not actually “hidden.” As it says in a few places in the New Testament, “Let them hear who have ears,” namely, only those who have the “ears to hear” will understand what is being said. This kind of hearing, this sudden penetration of the truth, is not something we can bring about through any kind of effort. It is a grace. In fact, it is ceasing from all “efforting” that brings us to the state of Not Knowing and opens us so deeply that we can receive the truth. There can be big and deep experiences like this, but all of us know versions of it – a sudden insight, getting a joke, being deeply moved by something. In all these cases, we are carried away from “me” to a little glimpse of the “moon.”

The other kind of Not Knowing in relation to study has to do with a willingness to be puzzled, deeply puzzled in fact. We might think of being puzzled as a form of Not Knowing, but I think that is not yet Not Knowing. Not Knowing is rather a certain kind of relationship to our puzzlement. We can actually develop the knack for holding puzzlement in a state of Not Knowing. It is, in the words of T. S. Eliot, “waiting without waiting for something.”

The great 20th century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said that philosophy begins “when I don’t know my way about.” He actually confessed to confusion and advocated a willingness to be confused. Interestingly, the way out of “not knowing my way about” was not to claw his intellectual way out. Rather, he said:

My talent consists in being capable of being puzzled when the puzzlement has glided off your mind. I am able to hold the puzzlement when it has slipped through your hands (and you therefore think you are clear). The art of the philosopher is not to be cheated of his puzzlement before it is really cleared up.

Wittgenstein never rushed to early closure – in fact, there is no closure in all aspects of his thinking.

His work thus has much in common with the Dharma, but that is another story. The need for closure shows up not only in our study, but in our ideas about ourselves, others, the universe, you name it. It is a form of separation and the opposite of openness, of Bearing Witness in a state of Not Knowing. As for our inner ordinary psychological experiences, Rumi tells us in his poem “The Guest House” that we have to welcome everything, “even a crowd of sorrows,” because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.” So can we be in that state of total welcoming, of Not Knowing, and Bear Witness to whatever we are studying with an openness and curiosity about what it is saying and not what I project onto it? This is the kind of listening asked of us during a teisho. But since “everything preaches the Dharma,” the whole universe is a teisho – and to practice being totally open is our study.

There is much more to be said and this is a beginning.

Roshi Mujo is a teacher at No Traces Zendo in New York.

With gratitude to Joseph

June 11, 2016

Greetings,

As you probably know, I have been a Practicing Member with ZCLA for quite some time now. Because I don’t actually live in the Los Angeles area, I don’t get many opportunities to come down and practice together with the Sangha. Actually, shortly after Maezumi Roshi’s death, I stopped coming down altogether.

However, I did promise myself that I would still support the Sangha by continuing to send my membership fee until the day that I stopped working. After thirty years, that day has finally arrived and I will be joining the ranks of the retired this month.

I am enclosing my last two membership fee payments with this letter and kindly ask to be removed from the membership roster. I am happy in the knowledge that there is a place – a community like ZCLA – where people can go to meditate and to deepen their practice.

In Gassho,
J. Ramirez



Celebrating a New Preceptor and Dharma Holder

by Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao

On Saturday, August 20, 2016, Jeanne Dokai Solitary-Plum Dickenson received the empowerment of Preceptor from Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao. Sensei Raul Ensho Berge served as her Precept Teacher during the ceremony, which was witnessed by several Zen Preceptors, her husband James Bodhi-Song Graham, and her son Eric Velazquez-Dickenson. This empowerment marked the culmination of many long years of practice and study with Roshi, other Zen teachers, and the Sangha. Dokai is now empowered to confer the Zen Bodhisattva Precepts in the ceremony of Jukai.

In addition, Dokai was recognized by Roshi Egyoku as having completed her formal Zen Buddhist Priest training. She can now officiate at weddings, funerals, and all other rites of passage that mark our lives. She will continue to hone and expand the art of liturgy and ceremony and the use of ritual as a skillful means for awakening.

On Sunday, August 21st, at our Sunday morning Sangha gathering, Roshi Egyoku conferred the title of “Dharma Holder” on Dokai, explaining that she is now an Assistant Teacher at Zen Center and entering into the final years of her formal Zen training with Roshi. She will continue to offer Face-to-Face meetings, give Dharma Talks, lead sesshin and retreats, and offer classes and other forms of instruction under Roshi’s tutelege.

For the Dharma Holder ceremony, Dokai chose the koan “Ziyong’s Earth” from *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women* (Wisdom, 2013). Dokai ably demonstrated Ziyong’s Dharma of the generosity of no-restraint and affirmed women’s practice through the ages.

Congratulations to Roshi Egyoku, Dokai, and all of the Sangha, past, present, and future!



Roshi Egyoku and Dokai.



Dokai presenting “Ziyong’s Earth.”



The Sangha gathers for a celebration.

Getting Down with the Homeboys

by Kathy Myoan Solomon



About two years ago, I started volunteering at Homeboy Industries. Sometimes I hate it, other times, I love it, but I don't miss my Thursdays for anything. I once heard the founder, Father Gregory Boyle, speak and was so moved when he talked about the love he felt for his homies and what a privilege it was to know them and their families. He cried when he talked about all the funerals he

presided over. He entered the barrio as a young priest bike riding through a crime-ridden area trying to get to know everyone. Now, he is adored and respected and trusted. I just knew that someday, I would be part of the Homeboys family.

At a meeting of women who met monthly to talk about New Age spirituality, I said that my idea of spirituality was service and would anyone like to join me and tour Homeboys. Only an Israeli nurse said yes. So we went down there and were both smitten. She was assigned to tattoo removal, one of their many free services. You can imagine how difficult it is to get a job with gang tattoos all over yourself.

I wanted to be a tutor since I had a teaching credential and speak Spanish. They put me in the gift shop, endlessly folding t-shirts. The gang gals looked at me like I was crazy while they compared their long, fake-jewel-encrusted nails. They'd laugh and ask if I could adopt them and their many babies. I got upset and judgmental, but I had to admit -- they were super attentive to the customers and had nothing but love and devotion for Father G.

In the parking lot, donations of clothes were distributed to the Homeboys community. I begged the woman running it if I could volunteer but she dissed me for months. Then one day, she asked if I could take over. I was thrilled to get out of the gift shop and into the clothing business.

Men and women just out of jail would come by and we'd dress them for court, work, or school. We got homeless people and drugged out people and crazies and people who sold the clothes on Alameda street. My judgmentalness and anger kicked in big time. For a while, a vintage clothing dealer helped me, but he burned out and I was left with the whole mess.

Now I was in charge of homie workers and people doing community service. The latter were generally willing to work. Some of the homies would sit around or go on extended breaks. I projected all my middle class values on them and got lots of disrespect. I had things thrown at me, was yelled and sworn at. I realized I had to back off, shut up, and start listening. Limiting them ("Please fold the clothes. Please only take two items.") did not work if it sounded like an order. Talk about authority issues! I was also painfully aware of their back-stories. In and out of jail, illegal, unschooled, drugged out with as many as six children by the time they were 30.

But what were a few items of clothing compared to learning compassion, respect, real service and generosity? In general, the homies are street smart manipulative survivors. The gals are pretty stable; they have to take care of their kids. The men come and go. There are always new faces waiting to meet with Father Boyle to hopefully get some work. I realized how happy I am to be there every week and how much my life has been enriched.

My many friends at Homeboys include J who spent most of his life in jail for murder. He treats me with respect and has so much emotional intelligence. Another friend, K, is a community service worker. She's a thalidomide baby, lives in a wheel chair, and is sharp as a tack. Then there's the wealthy couple who come every week because Father Boyle helped them when they were young and just off the train from Mexico. My friend, the Israeli nurse, is still removing tattoos, and now, she's even teaching classes.

I've learned that I am so much like the homies. I've had a more privileged life and can restrain myself a little more. That's what keeps me out of jail. I've learned that if we don't help others by providing the many services that Homeboys does, gang members are going to go out and get what they need to take care of their families.

What really inspires me is when people's lives get turned around. Like F, an artist who is preparing for a show at L.A. Louvre, the premier gallery in LA, and the former gang member who is getting a complete scholarship to attend Oxford University in England. I recently saw him receive a bouquet of flowers from the Queen of Sweden. These kind of stories make my heart swell.

Myoan is a member of ZCLA and who has been volunteering weekly at Homeboy Industries for the past two years.

Incoming/Outgoing Head Trainees

It's Not About Me

by Darla Myoho Fjeld



Although I have been a sangha member through at least a dozen Head-Trainees' tenures, one of whom I live with, I can honestly say that I enter my Head-Trainee or Shuso year not-knowing. And that's the way I hope to keep it: completely open to whatever arises.

This year is not about me. No year, or month, or week, or day is about me, but this year, I and the Sangha might be confused into thinking it's about me. After all, everyone has to wait for the Head-Trainee to exit the Zendo before they can leave, and the Head-Trainee has a reserved seat in the Zendo and a place to stand in the Ryoban line in the Buddha Hall.

This is not to say that I am not grateful to Roshi and our Sangha for giving me this opportunity to deepen my practice, the through-line of which is the Three Essentials of Zen Practice: Great Faith, Great Doubt, and Great Determination. All three are profound aspects of my practice, but it is the last of these – Great Determination – that I hope will carry me through this year: cutting through my fears, self-consciousness, and clinging.

I vow this year to be sincere. What I mean by this is that I will do my best to express my true self. I need to state this, because I sometimes remain invisible for the wrong reason, and saying that this year is not about me is not the same thing as being invisible out of a lack of confidence or out of shyness. Rather, my vow of sincerity is to let it all hang out for the benefit of my Sangha and for the integrity of our teaching-learning relationships.

I am looking forward to a year of learning, teaching, crying, loving, laughing, serving, and gratitude. I could not embark on this year without the support of Roshi and my teachers, my partner Senshin, and my beloved Sangha.

Myoho is the Zen Center's Temple Director and a Professor of Philosophy at El Camino College.

Seeing is Not Believing

by Bill Earth-Mirror Corcoran

My year as head-trainee has been a period of ups and downs, reversals and growth. My personal vows to address climate disruption and to press for equity and justice are consuming commitments. My perception has been, however, that my practice at ZCLA has not had the steady, momentum-building path that I perceive in others who've taken this training position.



During the year, I've often allowed myself to drift into head games about being an insufficient practitioner. Am I letting a desire for approval and rewards lead me astray?

How subtly my practice turns into "I need to become something better, something more!" The flip side of that "need" is the self-damning judgment that I am a "bad" or "insufficient" head-trainee.

At such times, the words that guide the head-trainee – "See as Is" – have pulled me back to ordinary life. Just chanting, just bowing, just going to face-to-face, just boarding a plane or leading a meeting. It's enough, it's everything!

Over the year, I've experienced a more acute awareness of how my body, speech, and mind feel. Accompanying that heightened awareness is a pervasive "settled" feeling – a remarkable contrast to a life of fear and depression. Many rickety structures have been collapsing. During this training period, I have been humbled and moved by the caring support I have received and felt from the Sangha throughout my year. Their help, corrections, and hugs are deeply appreciated. Roshi's commitment and her persistence with a particularly thick-headed practitioner is something I can never repay.

Serving as head-trainee has been a special time in my life. However it might be characterized – good, bad, meh – it is, in the end, my emerging life. It feels right to appreciate it all: ups, downs, reversals, and growth. See as is!

Earth-Mirror is a member of ZCLA and the Regional Campaign Director at the Sierra Club.



Going the Distance

When we asked “What motivated you to regularly drive a long distance to come to the Zen Center?” this is what they said:

by Sensei Pat Shingetsu Guzy



When I was asked to write a few words about why I would drive back and forth to the Zen Center from the west San Fernando Valley for over 25 years, I immediately thought, “What a strange question. Why not?” Experiencing the craziness of driving in Los Angeles traffic and to arrive at this peaceful oasis has been worth every minute of it!

Over the years, I have witnessed many changes both in my everyday life and the life of ZCLA. This practice has permeated everything I do and has made my life so much richer by making the Buddha Way a reality for me. And it began on the 101.

From my first meeting with Maezumi Roshi to practicing with Egyoku Roshi, these have been the most meaningful and precious years of my life. I remind myself every day, “Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost” and I am so grateful to the Sangha and teachers who continue to carry on the Dharma for all of us.

by Nina Dharma-Light Clark



I first started attending ZCLA in January, 2009. Back then, I lived in Riverside ten minutes from work, which was about 45 miles from the Center. The commute would take me an hour each way when there was little or no traffic. I would try to come to ZCLA in the evenings and on weekends.

Currently, I live in Menifee, which is about 90 miles away. Traffic from my current location seems to have gotten worse. It can take me between two to three hours each way. As a result, I have been commuting less to ZCLA than I would like. I come in about once or twice a month. Instead, I have been going more often to Zen Mountain Center on Sundays. That commute takes me about an hour and 15 minutes each way.

The motivation that drives me to commute to each center is the enjoyment and fulfillment I feel being part of these Sanghas. Being surrounded by others who have similar goals for their practice helps me deepen in my practice, which is very fulfilling.

by Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown



After two years of resisting Zen teacher Byakuren Judith Ragir’s persistent urging for me to “go see Egyoku at ZCLA,” I made the first trip just before the Zen Center’s 40th anniversary. Somehow, I must have sensed that my future practice was going to be developing a patience and acceptance that only the 405 and 110 freeways can teach. Over the years, I estimate I’ve driven 60,000-plus miles to

and from the Zen Center.

Why? It isn’t that I desire to have a carbon footprint the size of a kalpa. In summer, the commute can be made to Sunday morning service by bicycle and Metro – a six-hour round trip that demands a fitness I don’t currently have. Something more powerful than what’s convenient or practical compels me – a love of practice, a love for the Sangha and the container we create together, a love for Egyoku Roshi and the other teachers. In a word... love.

by Mark Shogen Bloodgood



On my birthday in 2000, camping at Big Sur, I read an article in *Tricycle* commemorating a milestone anniversary of the writing of Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*. This book made such an impact on me years before. Reading that article, it hit me that most of my spiritual strivings to this point had been intellectual in nature, not experiential. I felt a need to commit to a

meditation practice and find a teacher for guidance.

The first time I sat in our Zendo – street side, inner wall, second zabuton from the back steps – I was completely overcome with a sense of coming home. Tears streamed down my face. Thus began the first of my numberless sojourns from San Luis Obispo to Great Dragon Mountain over 16 years ago.

I found my teacher and throughout the years, taking refuge in the Sangha, strong bonds and deep friendships developed my motivation even more.

Teachings of the Street

by John Kyogen Rosania



During August, I participated in a Zen Peacemaker Street Retreat in San Francisco led by Co-Abbot Joshin Byrnes and Kosho Durel from the Upaya Zen Center.

We were a group of 11 practitioners (six men, five women) ranging in age from 35 to 75 who would live on the streets of

San Francisco for four days and three nights, experiencing homelessness first-hand.

The morning we were to meet in Union Square, I walked out of my friend's apartment with a plastic bag, a blanket, my driver's license, and a one dollar bill tucked into my shirt pocket. I walked the long route up Market street through the financial district past hundreds of homeless people.

When I found our group, I was immediately grateful. Without it, this experience would be more difficult and dangerous.

Our group was the container that enabled us to bear witness on the street, do daily council, sit zazen together, go on food finding and panhandling missions, and keep each other safe during the night.

We were all there for different reasons. Some had been homeless, some had children who had been homeless. I wanted to confront my own prejudices and boundaries, both my separation from those who live on the street and my mind's own worst case scenario.

Over the next few days, our group interacted with the city differently. Rather than a place in which we race from A to B, we wandered and meandered, our long days set by the hours of operation of the nearest food kitchens and pan-handling locations.

We ate at food kitchens run by Christian organizations who feed thousands of homeless people daily. Glide Church in the Tenderloin section of San Francisco feeds 2,500 people a day at four different meals. We ate there for breakfast which is a difficult time of the day. Sleeping on the street is hard, cold, and wet, and most of our group

slept only a few hours each night. Many homeless arrive at breakfast tired, irritable, and angry so fights and arguments are common. (This is one of the reasons why Glide Church offers a women's only breakfast every morning.)

One morning, I sat next to a man who appeared schizophrenic. I ate my oatmeal and drank my coffee and imagined how we wouldn't be able to communicate. As if hearing my thoughts, he leaned over and asked me for my sugars. A few minutes later, he asked me how I was doing and then pulled out a large pill container, with four compartments for each day of the week and a smaller container with vitamins and assorted capsules. He told me, "I need to take all of these every day, and these are to help balance out the side effects." He smiled again and we laughed at how crazy it was to take all of those pills. Where I had seen separation, there was connection and relationship.



During a sitting period we held outside a Franciscan Church, a woman came and sat with us. At the end, she thanked us and talked about how peaceful she felt there. She said she was high and then asked if she could show us the inside of the church. We walked

across the threshold and found the majority of pews filled with people sleeping. The smell was intense. We learned that an organization rents the church from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for the homeless to rest (which after a few nights sleeping on the street is truly Bodhisattva work).

Over the next few days, we made some friends, listened to stories, begged, bore witness to our own sadness and gratitude, looked through trash cans, got rained on, had parents usher their children away from us, were moved by the police, and had our hearts blown open. Many of my fixed ideas about homelessness dropped away. The tragedy spin, the I'm separate spin, the I-don't-know-what-to-do-so-I'll-look-away spin, the let's-fix-it-now spin. I found tragedy there alongside joy, love, boredom, friendships, laughter, and life being lived in difficult circumstances. In the end, I think all of us in the group discovered a deeper sense of gratitude for this life, a broadening of who we include in our sangha, and a newfound energy to support others as we were supported during our time on the street.

Kyogen is a member of ZCLA.

Kneading Dough and Zen Practice

by Dave Kakuon DeFrank



“Well, I mean, it’s just a recipe, right? You wrote it down so he could follow it?” my boss asked, seeing the lifeless mass of wet flour I couldn’t quite call dough what one of my cooks had prepared on my day off. My boss was upset, with good reason. I had been hired to give his bar the best pizza in Nashville, and a dough fail meant there would be no food to serve that night at what was supposed

to be the best cocktail bar in town. I was confused because I had written down the method in painstaking detail, had spent days showing him exactly how to feed, mix, and knead the dough into something living. I wanted to show him that good dough wasn’t a recipe, it was a method of cultivation through time, temperature, and attention in which you grow a whole civilization of delicately balanced bacteria into a healthy organism ready to perform its magic when it hits the fire. You had to play God to the dough’s

Adam, giving it life with your own breath. You can’t teach that in a recipe. Like Bodhicitta, it’s a will that can’t be given but has to come from within.

I like to think I’m pretty good at making dough. Zen practice has taught me a way of approaching cooking that feels like a non-separation between self, food, and process. But what about when this process involves bosses blaming you for others’ mistakes, or apathetic cooks who don’t feel a calling to knead dough in just the right way? Can I not separate myself from those aspects of the process, not react in knee-jerk defensiveness or blame while continuing my practice of producing great food? Just like in Zen, it’s easy to think I’ve found peace and fluidity when I’m alone in the kitchen or in the quiet of the cushion. But then the ticket machine starts buzzing with orders or the zendo bell is rung, and it’s an audible reminder that a practice of non-separation of self doesn’t end where it’d be convenient for me.

Kakuon is a member of ZCLA.

Generosity and Gratitude

by Darla Myoho Fjeld

Every year, themes arise like muses to remind me of why I do what I do. Over the course of this year, a dialectic of generosity and gratitude keep showing themselves in a multitude of ways. In our practice of zazen, we realize more and more the interdependent co-arising of everyone and everything – I see generosity and gratitude as calls and responses to the sense that we have of this co-arising.

The Zen Center could not make its many offerings without the generosity of its residents, members, and friends from the wider Zen community. We call upon a greater generosity than membership and program fees to maintain our buildings, grounds, staff, and programs. Two times a year, we offer opportunities for giving to the Zen Center: The Dharma Training Fund and the Annual Fund. With each of these funds, we set a goal based on our study of the Zen Center’s Budget.

This year, we stretched ourselves by raising our goal for the Dharma Training Fund to \$12,000 (\$2,000 more than last year) and I am happy to report that we surpassed this goal. This year, a couple and an individual

each put forth a \$1,000 challenge in honor of the lives of Sensei Nagy Buckley and Myokai Snodgrass. Three generous bodhisattvas met this challenge and 58 others stretched themselves to give as much as they could toward our goal – a good number of these were first-time donors. A deep wave of gratitude flows out to you for your gifts of generosity.

As we begin our 2016 Fall Practice Period, each of us will make commitments to intensify our practice by increasing our sitting. We will put our commitments on paper by filling in a Practice Period Form. One of the commitments we are invited to make is to donate to the Zen Center’s Annual Fund. The Annual Fund is the biggest fundraiser on the Zen Center’s calendar and is essential to the Zen Center’s functioning. This year, our goal is \$65,000 – a stretch, but a needed stretch to cover our costs. You will receive an annual appeal letter in the mail this Fall and we call upon your generosity to give as much as you are able.

Myoho is the Zen Center’s Temple Director.

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

The Zen Center is maintained by the hands and eyes of each one of you.

To **Jonathan Kaigen Levy** for leading the July Day of Reflection and Precept talk;

To **Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley** for leading the Just Summer Sesshin;

To **Darla Myoho Fjeld** for leading the Sangha Forum;

To **Patricia Keian Pfof** for her Dharma Chat on “Harmony”;

To our 3rd Quarter Tenzos: **Jessica Oetsu Page, Maya Rock, Roberta Myodo Brehm, Nan Reishin Merritt, Kim Kimu DeBacco, Geri Bryan, Bob Doetsu Ross, and Roland Palmer;**

To those who prepared snacks for the Day of Reflection: **Katherine Senshin Griffith, Geri, and Doetsu;**

To **Roshi Egyoku** for the Negative Vow Bonus Class;

To our 3rd Quarter Jikidos: **Reeb Kaizen Venners, Z Zeller, Geri, Doetsu, Dylan Neal, Chris Hackman, and Tim Taikan Zamora;**

To **Jessica Oetsu Page** for her three-year commitment to finding you a place to park when you arrive at the Zen Center;

To **Lorraine Gessho Kumpf** for leading Zazenkai;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for the Jukai Ceremony for **Pam Myogetsu Smith;**

To **Kimu** for leading the August Day of Reflection and Precept Talk;

To **Taikan, Yushin Yuen, Virginia Arnone, Tina Jitsujo Gauthier, John Heart-Mirror Trotter, and Myogetsu** for Fushinzamu Kitchen Cleaning;

To **Sarah McCarron** for her Dharma Chat on “Being Unqualified”;

To **Roshi Egyoku** for leading the Priest Retreat;

To **Taikan** for leading the September Day of Reflection and Precept talk;

To all those who helped with Dokai’s Denkai: **Roshi Egyoku** (Preceptor), **Sensei Raul Ensho Berge** (Precept Teacher), **Deb Faith-Mind Thoresen, Mark Shogen Bloodgood, George Mukei Horner, Jessica Dharma-Lotus Devine, Lilly Brodie-**



*So long to Maezumi Roshi’s archives.
Final destination: UCLA Library.*



Thank you to all those who attend morning service.



Thank you to Lilly Berge for the delicious cake she baked for Myogetsu’s Jukai.

Berge, and Tom Yudo Burger;

To **Karen Brodie** for editing the Mala Practice instructions;

To **Roshi Egyoku, Enduring-Vow, and Karen** for facilitating the mala making workshop, and to **Laos Joko Chuman** for taking photos;

To **Tom Dharma-Joy Reichert** for making scrumptious cookies and delicious tea;

To our Residents who do Security every night here at ZCLA: **Geri, Doetsu, Kaizen, Jolene Beiser, Kyogen, Mukei, Burt Wetanson, Gessho,** and to **Jotai and Yudo** for opening and closing the main gate on the weekends and Monday and Tuesday;

To our Day Managers: **Myoho, Kaizen, Faith-Mind, Mukei, Jitsujo, Shogen, and Kaigen;**

To **Dokai and Shogen** for teaching the Precepts Class Series;

To **Gessho** for leading the September Tangaryo and fixing lunch;

To **Conrad Butsugen Romo and Diane Enju Katz** for their Personal Practice talks;

To **Yoko Okumura and Chris Ruiz** for showing us their film “Sit” and the discussion afterwards;

To **Mukei** for his tech support for videos we show and for skypeing;

To **Jolene Beiser, Faith-Mind, and Roshi Egyoku** for the transfer of the ZCLA/Maezumi Roshi Archives to UCLA Library;

To **Roshi Egyoku and Yudo** for preparing the Fall Practice Period Commitment Forms and to **Roshi Kodo, Sensei’s Shingetsu, Ryodo, Koan, and Kyogen** for their input.

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The Lincroft Zen Sangha (New Jersey)
led by Roshi Merle Kodo Boyd

The Monday Night Meditation Group (Pasadena, CA)
coordinated by Betty Jiei Cole

The Ocean Moon Sangha (Santa Monica, CA)
contact John Kyogen Rosania

The San Luis Obispo Sitting Group (CA)
coordinated by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Santa Barbara Zen Center (CA)
led by Sensei Gary Koan Janka

The Valley Sangha (Woodland Hills, CA)
led by Sensei Patricia Shingetsu Guzy

The Westchester Zen Circle (CA)
led by Sensei Kipp Ryodo Hawley

Outreach Groups

CMC Buddhist Fellowship Group
California Men's Colony (CMC)
San Luis Obispo, CA
led by Mark Shogen Bloodgood

Contact info@zcla.org for information.

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Our mission is to know the Self, maintain the precepts, and serve others. We provide the teaching, training, and transmission of Zen Buddhism. **Our vision** is an enlightened world free of suffering, in which all beings live in harmony, everyone has enough, deep wisdom is realized, and compassion flows unhindered.

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Sangha Rites of Passage

Welcome New Residents

Laos Joko Chuman
Susan Yushin Tipton

Welcome New Members

Mike Bard
Mike Blottin
Lisa Margolis
Joe McGowan
Julie Suhr

Resident Leave-Taking

Gabriel Lucero
Dave Kakuon DeFrank

Shared Stewardship Entering

Altar Flowers Group:
Geri Bryan
John Kyogen Rosania
Bob Doetsu Ross

Shared Stewardship Leave-Taking

Buddha Hand Circle:
Betsy Enduring-Vow Brown
Tenzo Circle:
Dave Kakuon DeFrank

Circle Member Leave-Taking

Teachers Circle:
George Mukei Horner
Tree Watering Group:
Gabriel Lucero
Sebastian Lucero



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