

Pine Gate

MINDFULNESS COMMUNITY

Volume 13, Issue 1
Winter 2014



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Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate Mindfulness Community, who practice Engaged Buddhism inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama and Sulak Sivaraksa. Friends of the community also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of approximately 700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience. The community has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of collective insight. Effortlessly it appears. It is a Quarterly Newsletter, appearing three times a year. Quirky! The Pine Gate Mindfulness Community welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.



Peace Ambassadors

by Ian Prattis

With the splendid 11th Friends for Peace Day in Ottawa City Hall over (See next article by Koozma Tarasoff), I recall our first Day in the autumn of 2003. The two activist speakers scratched at the last minute due to illness. As a backup I did my best to step into their shoes. In the pouring rain this is what I said:

I want to talk to you about our children and the kind of future we create for them. Do we teach them peace? Or through neglect do

we allow violence to flood their minds, hearts and consciousness so they learn war? Even worse, do they live out our own personal wars expressed through our violent attitudes, speech and actions towards them? I ask every adult here, particularly men, and in our country to deal with their internal wars so that only the best in us is passed on to our children, not the worst in terms of violence. How do we deal with our internal wars, hatreds and fears that constitute our Wild Mind? We must stop running; stop hiding behind our addictions and busyness. We

speech, attitudes and actions. We show our children the way to peace by learning to be it. Since 9/11 the level of hate and violence globally has increased dramatically. Excessive violence has been used to suppress violence. This is not the way to proceed. There is no “them” and “us”. We either learn to live peacefully together or we all suffer and die together.

All violence is injustice and we have to teach our children the truth about war. Not about winners and losers, but about the long term



come to a stop, look deeply into the eyes of our children and make a commitment to face our internal demons and transform them by stepping on to the path of compassion. Not by transmitting our wars and internal afflictions to the children of the world. We need community for this, to support us in sacred ceremony, meditation and creative spirituality so that we raise our consciousness by retraining our minds, through refining our

suffering on both sides. It is only citizens of the world standing together for peace and saying “No to War” that will stop it. But the hatred grows and the suffering increases. What can we do as individuals to change this? We go to work—with ourselves. First of all we must uproot the violence and war within our minds. To prevent war we nurture non-violence. We practice meditation and

prayer in daily life to transform the poisons within our minds and within our nation.

We enter into true peace negotiations by learning the methods of deep listening, of respectful and non-violent communication. By understanding and bringing our mindless, selfish agendas to a stop. We create peace by knowing that compassion is the antidote to violence and hatred. We must also make peace with Mother Earth. If we injure Mother Earth, we injure ourselves. Our civilization has caused such deep harm to the earth that we humans may soon become an endangered species. We have imposed so much neglect and ignorance upon the Earth. The solution is not political or economic—these are secondary. The primary solution is spiritual. Every faith and spiritual tradition must renew its ethics and responsibilities and honour the interconnected nature of humanity with Mother Earth. We must make it clear to our political and corporate leaders that the violence they commit in our name is no longer acceptable. We must hold them to account and influence them with our clarity, wisdom and courage. The actions we take now are shaping the possibilities for future generations.

So here is our challenge. Today, in the pouring rain and thunder storms we have experienced peace, a deep peace shared between many traditions, cultures and religions. This experience evaporates into nothing if we do not translate it into action. Begin the work on yourselves today, so that your attitudes, speech and actions become an example to your children, friends and communities. Take the practical steps to make peace with Mother Earth in terms of what you consume and support. Then represent your community, in coalition with other communities, to political and corporate leaders. Show clearly that we are

choosing peace and harmony within ourselves, within our communities and with Mother Earth. Together we can do it. We are Ambassadors of Peace after all.” ☯

2013 Friends for Peace Day

by Koozma Tarasoff

The 11th Anniversary of Friends for Peace under the leadership of Ian Prattis and his team from Pine Gate Mindfulness Community, was an outstanding event. With a coalition of 50 organizations in the Ottawa area, Friends of Peace has been an integral part of the Annual Ottawa Peace Festivals. There were peace and environment booths along the periphery of the hall, a food court at the back, a long set of tables on which were items for the Silent Auction, and the stage at the north end. Mony Dojeiji and Alberto Agraso had a booth publicizing their European-Asian Walking for Peace: An Inner Journey, about their 5000-kilometer, 13-country, 13-month walk for peace from Rome to Jerusalem in 2001.

The OrKidstra Kidplayers, by Executive Director Tina Fedeski, and Kidsingers directed by Margaret Tobolowska, Jeannie Hunter, and Jennifer Martinez, were excellent. Among the songs in the half-hour presentation was 'Ode to Joy', with some 35 instrumentalists and 20 young children.

Dandelion Dance Company, directed by Hannah Beach, brought forth some 11 young lady actors, dressed in black, up to the age of 18. With their passion for nonviolence and the basic rights for

people, the Company presented four themes designed to build a better peaceful world: (1) We have a right not to be bullied and harassed;

dealing with the misdeeds of the Canadian government with the Native population in the country. "Enough is enough. It is time to



OrKidstra Kidplayers, Ottawa City Hall, September 28 2013.

(2) We have a right not to be hungry; (3) We need to deal sensibly with a 'cash, credit, and debit' society; and (4) A poem on our hope and dreams that we want for our society.

The Big Soul Project (some 50 people as singers and a 4-piece band), headed by Roxanne Goodman, Music Director, has appeared at the Friends for Peace every year, on this day for the 11th time. They were excellent in fulfilling such numbers as "What are we going to leave behind when we leave?" Its message: "Now is the time, will you be able to say I was here?" "When I leave this world, will I make a mark that I was here?" The implication is that what we do today will affect the quality of life tomorrow.

The Metis storyteller Robert Lavigne titled his talk "Idle No More" to highlight the urgency of

act now! This is a movement of awareness. Remember 99 to 1 percent? This formula does not work. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. And the environment is being destroyed... This is part of our Spring."

Ian Prattis presented the annual Peace Awards. The first went to Douglas Cardinal, "a visionary world master" who was the architect for the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Born to a German-Native family, Cardinal said that all of Nature including human beings are interconnected. "Life springs through every being and rock in this life. This is a symbiotic relationship of life and nature.

Each person has divine creation in them...Each person is a God... We are Gods on this land. That is our legacy. We have the capacity to create as well as destroy... Elders trained me to honour culture as the peacemaker. We come from a society where everyone is noble, unique and responsible." Ian Prattis then turned to the second recipient of the 2013 Peace Awards. This was to Amber Lloydlangston, historian at the Canadian War Museum and the key person who developed the Peace Exhibit there. Ian praised Amber for her excellence in producing such a unique exhibit, beginning with the Aboriginal Six Nations story. The exhibit officially ends in January 2014. Ian remarked: "Let's help to make this a permanent exhibit, so that peace remains as an integral part of the war museum."

After receiving her Award, Amber Lloydlangston said that she was humbled in being present with such a candidate as the renowned Douglas Cardinal. In the Peace Exhibit, she said that she and her colleagues wanted to show to Canadians what peace means in the form of diplomats, soldiers, peacekeepers and humanitarians.

Lucille Hildesheim's performance on the Celtic Harp was outstanding. The closing Friends of Peace Band from Montreal, led by Sonja Ball and friends, was very lively, with a focus on how lucky we are to be alive. "This is about being happy and our right to be happy." That was certainly the feeling at the end of this magnificent day. The diversity of citizens who came to the Friends for Peace Day laughed, danced, cried and went home with confidence and solidarity.

Peace, Planetary Care and Social Justice are alive and well in our northern city. A Circle of Nations no less. ☯



Friends of Peace Awards, Ottawa City Hall, September 28.

Educators' Mindfulness Retreat

by Lisa Karuna

In August, 2013, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and monastics from Plum Village came to Brock University in Saint Catharine's, to lead a retreat for teachers and educators. I attended as a member of Thay's Order of Interbeing and as someone who has been working with government, business and civil society leaders to reduce discrimination, for many years.

The first retreat I attended with this beautiful Sangha was at Blue Cliff Monastery in New York, when I took the fourteen mindfulness trainings with Thay. The ceremony was in the presence of a retinue of sixty or so fully ordained monks and nuns, with perhaps a hundred lay ordained men and women flanking us on either side. To take the precepts—or the mindfulness trainings as they are expressed in the Order of Interbeing, in the presence of a full community, with monks and nuns on equal footing, elderly and young, and many races, and lay practitioners who have stepped forward to make a deeper commitment, awakens the heart to its highest potential, to a profound solidity and sense of harmony in brotherhood and sisterhood. It feels authentic and balanced, an honouring, witnessing and receiving of the full transmission of the Buddha's teaching. It was a powerful, transformational experience again in August, to be on retreat in the presence of a full Fourfold Sangha. Giving us the opportunity to practice in the presence of a Fourfold Sangha is one of the important ways in which Thay bridges theory and



Lisa at the Blue Cliff Ordination Ceremony, 2011

practice. Thay himself embodies the teachings, as does the community he brings together.

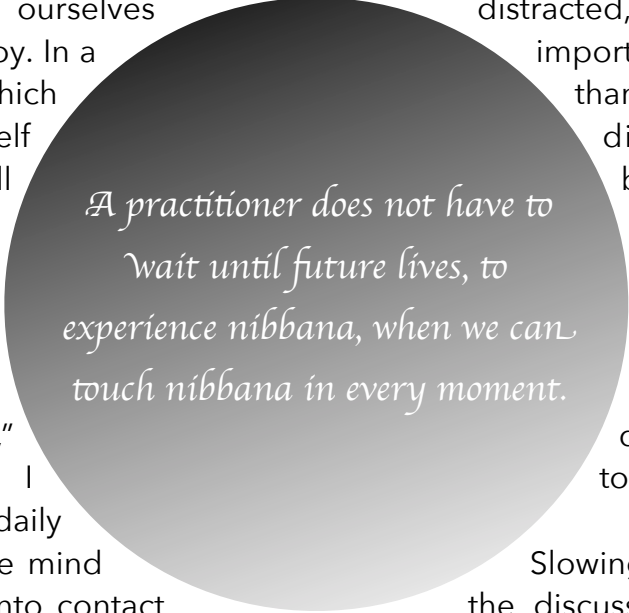
Like the Buddha, Thay teaches in metaphors, bringing very abstract and difficult concepts, like emptiness, to life. In his use of language, like the word "interbeing," and practices, such as looking deeply, our obsession with identity is gradually released. In Thay's way of teaching, a good practitioner knows that dukkha and nibbana inter-are. A practitioner does not have to wait until future lives, to experience nibbana, when we can touch nibbana in every moment. In a small suffering, we can still free ourselves and generate a feeling of joy. In a big suffering, the likes of which Thich Nhat Hanh has himself lived through, we can still generate love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.

"With every step, I kiss Mother Earth with my feet," are Thay's words which I remember when I walk in daily life, because they bring the mind quickly into the feet and into contact with the earth. With every step, they inspire an understanding of our interdependence with the planet in a softened and intimate way, rather than the distant or alarmist way we may hear every day in the news. It also invites the long-banished feminine back into the spiritual psyche and living practice, as does his recent book, "Love Letter to the Earth."

At 87 years old, Thay travels a grueling schedule across continents, catches the coughs and colds which practitioners

generously bring along with them, and still teaches with the freshness of a spring flower. On some days, Thay moves vigorously, on others, he moves gingerly, never outpacing his breath. During this particular retreat, rather than count steps and follow my in and out breath, I tried to model what I observed in Thay. I decided to learn how to move, and speak, and eat, and sit, in such a way, that I never disconnect from the breath. When our breath stops, it is a signal from the nervous system that we are outpacing the breath, we are stressing the mind or body. In fact we stop breathing all the time. It happens when we move too quickly, we are anxious, distracted, or we think it is more important to finish a sentence than to breathe. As soon as I disconnected from the breath, I stopped whatever I was doing until my breath became natural again, and resumed activity in such a way, that I did not disconnect from it. I had to slow down many times!

Slowing down was the focus of the discussions and presentations of the retreat, which brought together many educators from across Canada and the United States. There were presentations on the ways in which mindfulness is being integrated into educational programmes across North America and Europe. There were teachers, principals, and leaders from school boards, including Catholic ones. What struck me the most about the discussions, was the crossroads at which dedicated educators seemed to find themselves. Downward pressures on the education sector, especially in the United States,



*A practitioner does not have to
wait until future lives, to
experience nibbana, when we can
touch nibbana in every moment.*

leading to job losses, lower wages, job insecurity and an unrealistic work burden are making it almost impossible for educators to slow down and many teachers were suffering from burnout.

Besides teaching mindfulness in schools, it became apparent that mindfulness practice was crucial for educators themselves to simply survive the mounting stresses of their profession. Many asked, "How can we be mindful in a world that is making mindfulness more difficult? Do we have to quit our jobs? Or do we have to engage in social action at some point, to help society restore the balance?" So the conference theme enabled educators to look deeply at whether mindfulness and right livelihood may require us at some stage to step into social action. As individuals, each person could quit his or her job, but they would fall on hard times, and they would abandon the system, and the students, at a time when their support is needed more than ever.

The most poignant moment for me during the retreat came when the lay Order members were invited on stage to participate in the final chanting, at the end of the retreat. During the retreat, Thay had told us of a dream he had that he was about to meet and perform for a great teacher. In that dream he was chosen, while another boy was not chosen. That boy was his old self. In the

dream, when Thay is about to finally perform for the teacher, he wakes up just before.

As I walked up to the stage, to sing with the monastics, it was almost a mirror of the story. Because, on walking up to the stage, Thay was facing me, and mind was so still, that I did not bow my head or raise my hands in prayer. My eyes met the eyes of the teacher and there was complete stillness. I respected Thay's spaciousness, and the moment of stillness, and moved towards the front of the stage to sing with the monastics. But when

the retreat ended, my old self reminded me, that I just met

the Teacher, and I did not

bow! In the moment,

there was oneness

with the teacher. But

in the recollection

of the moment,

there was shame

for not bowing,

and regret that this

was probably the

only moment I

would ever have to

do so! More than

anything, in the

moment, I saw Thay's

humanity, his gentleness and

fragility, and the little child in me so

regretted not taking the hand of the little

boy, to ask him to come along and chant with

us. Instead, I passed him by, and left him

alone. Oh what suffering!

As Thay teaches, in true love, the willingness to love is not enough. We need the capacity to love, which requires an understanding, an understanding of what the other person needs, what makes him or her happy. So maybe the first instinct, to respect Thay's



spaciousness was the right thing to do. To rest in the beautiful stillness, a oneness, without bowing, was the realization that Lover and Beloved are not separate. Seeing the little boy in Thay, I understood that the teacher is a human being first, who still suffers. We should love that person as a human being first, and not get lost in reverence, because this can be self-centered and have nothing whatsoever to do with true love.

And so the precious retreat passed, providing infinite nutriment for the spiritual garden of transformation.

Presentations on Mindfulness in Education:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJ6arS3OIF0>

The Five Mindfulness Trainings:

<http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-five-mindfulness-trainings/>

The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings Interbeing:

<http://plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-fourteen-mindfulness-trainings/>

Love Letter to the Earth, by Thich Nhat Hanh

<http://www.parallax.org/cgi-bin/shopper.cgi?preadd=action&key=BOOKLLTTE> ●

Renewing Buddhism

by Thay

Buddhism is an art and must be progressive otherwise it stands still. We can modify the teachings so they are applicable and relevant to modern society. New sutras, training, precepts. New findings and new research. If we don't renew, then Buddhism stands still and we do not honor the ancestors. It must be appropriate for the people and the era, otherwise it is not true Buddhism.

See how the Five Trainings and the Ten Novice precepts are now very different from traditional forms—much better. We must have courage to renew. Can we reduce the number of monastic precepts? Usher in a new Buddhism.

Follow the link below and fast forward to the audio recording at 34:30. You will get 20 minutes on Renewing Buddhism. (Thanks to Kenley Neufeld)

<http://tnhaudio.org/2013/12/10/mother-earth-seeds/> ●

New Dharma Talks on YouTube

by the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

Engaged Buddhism

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oseyGy041A

Engaged Buddhism is rooted in the Buddha's first dharma talk on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The implications for Engagement were neglected during the long period of exclusive monasticism, whereby monasteries were supported by the resources of villages and towns in their hinterland. This was not the intention of the Buddha. In 1966 Thich Nhat Hanh recreated the balance with the term "Engaged Buddhism" in the 'midst of the Vietnam War. His view was that Buddhism had always been engaged, only conservative monastics had neglected the obvious intent of the Buddha's first dharma talk.

H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama and Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand also brought the nature of Engaged Buddhism back to the centre of

Buddhist values and intentions. The engaged practice of Pine Gate Mindfulness Community is illustrated for its formation of a city wide coalition in Ottawa - Friends for Peace Canada - with a mandate of Peace, Planetary Care and Social Justice.

Consciousness and Judgment

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kmZoyyluTZs>

The investigation of "Judgment" leads to a Call Centre with the outgoing message of "judgment." Judgment is, however, not alone. It has many companions in the Call Centre—discrimination, hate, distraction, ignorance, fear, delusion, greed, oppression and so on—sending outgoing messages that cause suffering. This is a prelude to introducing a simple model of Healing before talking about 8 Levels of Consciousness. The Call Centre of suffering is none other than "Manas." Investigation is on how it is created, what feeds it and how do we transform it. The dharma talk closes with a Miracle of Mindfulness. ●

Winter Study Session

by the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

In 2014 our program continues with the "Fully Alive" retreat by Pema Chödrön as the main study of the Winter Study Session beginning on Thursday January 16, 2014, 7.00pm - 9.00pm. The Fall Study Session provided some deep and pithy dharma from Pema Chödrön. It was interspersed with talks from Dharmacharya Ian on Engaged Buddhism, Consciousness, Judgement, The Sutra on Knowing the Better Way to Be Alone, the Two Arrows Teaching and the Science of Mantra. Deep Relaxation with Carolyn and a Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation rounded things out.

The Fully Alive retreat is on 2 DVD's and totals 5 hours. We begin the Winter Session with Talk 4. The book—Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change by Pema Chödrön—is the text. Folk are encouraged to get a copy, either from Singing Pebble or Serendipity bookstores in Ottawa. The second DVD and discussion sessions will be interspersed with the Buddha's Foundation Teachings, plus important ceremonies such as a Tea Ceremony to stir the pot of dharma. The focus on the "Fully Alive" retreat addresses the difficult times we are in. Life sometimes seems like a roiling and turbulent river threatening to drown us. Why, in the face of that, shouldn't we cling to the safety of the shore—our comfortably familiar patterns and habits? Pema Chödrön teaches: that kind of fear-based clinging leads only to greater suffering. In this recorded retreat, based on the program "Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change" she provides a wealth of wisdom for learning to step right into the river, to be completely, fearlessly, present even in the hardest times, the most difficult situations. It's the secret of being fully alive. When we learn to let go of our protective patterns and do that, we begin to see not only how much better it feels to live that way, but, as a wonderful side effect, we find that we begin to naturally and effectively reach out to others in care and support. The teachings and practices include:

1. A teaching—based on Native American prophecy—for cultivating the ability to take nothing personally.
2. A guided meditation for developing patience in the midst of irritation.
3. A curiosity practice to release your mind from old habits.
4. Tips for accessing your innate strength and confidence—simply by altering your posture.
5. Ways to make your practice the impetus for serving others."

Meditation Guidance from Pema Chödrön:

1. First of all—come into the present. Be aware of what is happening with you right now.
2. Be fully aware of your body, its energetic quality.
3. Be fully aware of your thoughts and emotions.
4. Feel your heart, place your hand on your heart. Accept yourself just as you are.
5. Go into the next moment without any agenda
6. Now deal with an incident that has hurt or alarmed you
7. Just be with the pain of it.
8. Ask yourself—am I going to dwell on who/what caused this suffering or am I going to take care of it?
9. Come back to the pain and just be with it
10. Ask yourself—who is running the show—all my fears, negative thoughts, blaming and judgements or the best that is in me?
11. Make a conscious choice—the best in me
12. Summon your resources of Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity—The Buddha's Teachings on Love.
13. Come back and be with the pain
13. Place Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity in a practice—Walking Meditation, 4 Brahmaviharas Meditation, Touching the Earth etc.
14. Come back to your heart—place your hand on your heart.
15. Breathe and smile. ☺

Soft Heart Meditation and Poem

by Jacqueline Shoemaker Holmes

Jackie is the Founder of Wellness Educator at Heart Shrine and a member of Pine Gate.

Radiant Heart Guided Meditation

Read this guided meditation silently to yourself, or aloud to yourself, loved ones, friends, and community.

With a deep breath in, sit or lie down comfortably. Feel the press of the buttocks or back into the chair or ground. Ground yourself sturdily into your dynamic stillness. Feel your energy and know you are here. Hands raising slowly; finding the heart. In prayer position or with one hand clasped over the other over your heart begin to breathe calm, slow, warm breath into your heart centre. With each breath, know that your heart is there. Serving you. Guiding you. Asking for very little in return. Warm your heart. Hold it in your hands. Breathe warmth into your centre. Your core. Rhythmically

guide the breath down into your heart centre. Feel the rise and fall of the chest. Feel the opening you are creating. The life force you are activating. Breathe. Once your heart is warmed, picture it your mind's eye. Your heart can be any colour, any texture. It may be a ball of light. It may be deep and beautifully red. It may be a feeling, a knowing, that cannot be captured. Connect with your heart. Feel it warm and beating inside you. Allowing your breath to be natural, continue to hold your heart and your mind. Knowing that there is no distinction between them. Opening, linking, connecting your soft heart and your strong mind. Knowing they are one. Soft heart. Warm heart. Mindful heart. You are the beauty of your heart and that beauty always resides in you. Breathing in warm heart. Breathing out connection. To the mind. To the self. Begin to imagine that you are wrapping light around your heart. Let your wisdom choose the colour. Let your inner intelligence guide you. Wrap your heart. Allow it to rest in beautiful, radiant light. Soft heart. Warm heart. Radiant heart. Bringing a knowingness to that radiant heart. Knowing it is always available. That you can always warm your heart with your hands. Knowing that you can radiate that warmth through your whole being. Uniting mind and heart. Bringing union to your body. Allow yourself to feel whole in this radiance. Allow yourself to feel radiant. Warm. Soft. Begin to imagine this radiant light from your united heart spilling forth from your heart. Imagine it pouring through your body. Radiating through your skin. Sending light to every corner of your being. Breathing light into every pocket. Out every pore. Feeling radiant. Warm. Soft. In union with yourself. Knowing you have much to give yourself. You are not lacking. You are filled with a radiant light that illuminates your being. Rushes out

your eyes. Your skin. Your body. You have enough light to share. You can touch others with your light. Sending it softly and warmly to those you love. Soft and warm and radiant uniting you and your loved ones. Uniting you and your community. Uniting you and the world. Never lacking. Always replenishing. Your light is too bright to dim. Too bright to stop. It is ceaseless. And always available within you. Soft. Warm. Inviting. Again, sending radiant warmth to yourself. See yourself bathed in the light that shines from your heart. Knowing your warmth. Your tenderness. Your generosity. You are the light of your generous heart. You are the light of this world. Be brave. The world needs your light. Rubbing hands together and washing ourselves in light. Our head, our necks, shoulders, chest, backs, arms, legs, feet. Take your radiant heart into the world and let it guide you in wisdom and in joy. Be kind to your radiant heart. It is you.

Softness Poem

In a world that often feels harsh and cold
May you be warm and soft

In unstable conditions
May you bend, bow, and sway

In the face of danger
May you connect with the soft heart of possibility

In situations of fear
May your heart drip onto the pavement like wax

In the face of anger
May you know that you are good

In blustery weather

May you ride on the wings of the wind
In deepest grief
May you know your light
In darkness
May you be emboldened by your illuminated path
In sadness
May you find your deepest joy
May softness fill your being
Not as weakness
Not as inability
Not as lethargy

May softness fill your being, loosen your jaw,
open your heart
So that you may receive the gifts of your life
Of this life
Imperfect and shifting
Unstable and changing
May softness lead you
So that light can enter your being
And truly guide your way. ☯

YouthBuild and the Eight Fold Path: Part II

by John Bell

It might be possible to understand YouthBuild as engaged practice by looking through the lens of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Right View. In the historical dimension, in this country, low-income young adults have been perceived as “high school dropouts,” “criminals,” “welfare recipients,” “unwed mothers,” “unmarried fathers,” “drug dealers,” “gang bangers”. They are viewed and treated as undeserving people, assumed to be worthless, and therefore, not worthy of societal investment. In contrast, YouthBuild views each young person as a sacred being, worthy of love and respect, to be treated with caring and compassion, patience and faith. YouthBuild does not hold their past against them. Listen to Justin Taylor, from Springfield, MA: “YouthBuild shines a ray of

light into the dark places of the community where hope is very dim and limited, giving second chances and helping down and out youth realize the importance of their lives.”

Right Intention. It is the intention of the program to provide an environment for young people to heal from real life trauma enough that self-confidence and self-compassion arise, watering their inherent seeds towards good will and increasing self-discovery and self-control. Jason Phillips, from York, PA, says: “The YouthBuild program builds up confidence, character, and leadership. It helped me come out of my shell to speak on different issues, because I was reserved, and the program kept pushing that we all have a voice and that we had to be heard. It helped me grow tremendously.”

Right Speech. We know that words can create suffering or promote well-being. Most YouthBuild young people have been deeply hurt by harsh, violent, critical words, and many have learned to throw hard language

right back, adding to a toxic environment. In YouthBuild, we practice “appreciations”, we use “pull ups not put downs”, we do “shout outs” and “show them some love”. Programs teach young people to speak with respect towards each other and themselves.

Right Action. To contradict a hard, often violent environment, YouthBuild consciously builds a positive program culture in which people are expected to treat each other with respect and caring, and give each other encouragement. We often have rival gang members in the same program, who learn to first respect, then care about each other. We’ve had examples of these former rivals then going out into the community and brokering peace treaties between their respective gangs. We have YouthBuild schools but we have no metal detectors at the entrance, very little violence, few fights.

R i g h t Livelihood.

M a n y
YouthBuild
young people
h a v e
depended on
selling drugs
or stealing for

their livelihood. Living in poverty, needing money, having no jobs available, seeing friends and family members dealing, they saw few other options. So YouthBuild, besides being a drug and alcohol-free program, offers real work building housing for low income people. From the beginning, staff say that you can’t make it with one foot in the program and one foot in the street life. You will need to make a choice. YouthBuild is a community service project-building housing. So, when young people who were

seen as hoodlums and no-goods, walk through their community wearing their hard hats and tool belts, and people smile and nod approvingly. Young people bring their family and friends by the house, and say, “I built that!” When young people see a formerly homeless family move into the house they built, their hearts fill with pride and meaning. This is right livelihood!

Right Effort. Right effort pertains to two levels of YB. The first is that it has taken persistent and steady, careful work for the past 32 years to bring it from one program in East Harlem to 273 programs around the country with \$100 million federal appropriation and great cohesion across this network. We have had to adhere to a set of advocacy principles and practices to gradually increase the federal and private financial support for this expansion. We’ve

“For the first time in a long time, I am able to see where I am heading.”

w o r k e d
t o
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p o l i c i e s
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w o r k f o r c e

d e v e l o p m e n t,

and criminal justice that have failed our communities, and to influence the new systems of national service and alternative education, to embrace our effective principles and philosophy. Over these years, we’ve had to learn not to give in to feelings of discouragement and powerlessness, not to give in to the temptation to criticize and bad-rap people who didn’t agree with us, not to give in to just protesting but rather to proposal positive solutions.

Secondly, at the local program level, Right Effort shows up as steady encouragement for the young people to stick with it, even when they get discouraged, to keep focused on their goals, to keep countering their negative thoughts and behaviors with more wholesome thoughts and actions. It's not easy to change long standing, culturally ingrained habit energies. But it is possible, and right effort is essential.

Here's TaRhea Ray—from Los Angeles. "The people at YouthBuild made me realize that I am a leader in my society and it is up to me to take action and become one. My moments spent here will be moments that I will cherish for the rest of my life. Never have I ever been in an environment where I've been appreciated for just being who I am; very honest, determined, caring, and understanding...YouthBuild has taught me that it's ok to be yourself."

Right Mindfulness. Right Mindfulness is awareness of things as they are. In YouthBuild, young people are asked to see more clearly and not accept the negative messages that they got hammered with. Tyra Johnson—another student from Los Angeles, said: YouthBuild is "like a windshield wiper. My life is the windshield. It has been rained on and hit with rocks many times throughout my life. The windshield wiper of YouthBuild swept away everything so that my vision became clear. For the first time in a long time, I am able to see where I am heading."

Right Concentration. Right Concentration is a one-pointed focus to help train the wandering monkey mind. In YouthBuild, there is concerted attention to focus on the positive, on success, on healthy choices, on controlling ones reactive emotions, on developing healthy relationships, on

mastering one's addictions, on aspiring to one's full potential. Of course, the YouthBuild versions of right effort, right view, right speech, and right action reinforce this positive focus. Andrea Hanshaw—from Kingston, NY put it like this: "I involved myself in YouthBuild's Voter Engagement Campaign, and soon realized it was the first time I felt like I was making a difference. Now I have the confidence to move forward, and the motivation that I need to pursue a career. The best thing about this whole experience is that I found my true passion. When I graduate from YouthBuild I want to work with disadvantaged youth."

CLOSING COMMENTS

Over 2 million low-income 16- to 24-year olds are out of school and unemployed in the United States; and another 300,000 are incarcerated. Without a decisive intervention they are likely to be parents of another generation raised in powerless poverty. Yet they possess enormous intelligence, energy, and potential to become forces for good. If we can break the cycle of poverty by educating, employing, and mobilizing low-income young adults, we believe we can change the equilibrium. YouthBuild works with a small fraction of these 2 million. But we believe that with adequate social investment in programs like YouthBuild, that adapt Buddhist teachings in the ways I've described, we could significantly reduce poverty in a generation.

I'll close with two quotes from YouthBuild participants.

Jason Phillips, from York, PA: "My YouthBuild experience was beautiful: the student-teacher ratio, small classrooms, a lot of attention, one-on-one problem solving,

counseling, and an overall good feel. The whole vibe was really family oriented: group breakfasts; everyone talking about their lives and their stories; everybody reaching out and helping each other educationally and with construction training; and being in a community, cleaning up and rebuilding homes, and turning nothing into something. YouthBuild gave me a good eye for seeing possibilities where others may not."

And finally, student *James Gates, from St. Louis*: "When I leave YouthBuild at the end of the day, I can't wait to get back the next day. At home I lie in bed thinking about the fact that I am building a house for a homeless mother and child... I used to think I was a bad person. Staff helped me find my real self. Now I just want to belong to a great movement to bring respect to my peers." ●

Indigenous Elders Statement

by Chief Arvol Looking Horse and other Elder Signatories

This statement reflects the wisdom of the Spiritual People of the Earth, of North and South America, working in unity to restore peace, harmony and balance for our collective future and for all living beings. This statement is written in black and white with a foreign language that is not our own and does not convey the full depth of our concerns.

The Creator created the People of the Earth into the Land at the beginning of Creation and gave us a way of life.

This way of life has been passed down generation-to-generation since the beginning. We have not honored this way of life through our own actions and we must live these

original instructions in order to restore universal balance and harmony. We are a part of Creation; thus, if we break the Laws of Creation, we destroy ourselves.

We, the Original Caretakers of Mother Earth, have no choice but to follow and uphold the Original Instructions, which sustains the continuity of Life. We recognize our umbilical connection to Mother Earth and understand that she is the source of life, not a resource to be exploited. We speak on behalf of all Creation today, to communicate an urgent message that man has gone too far, placing us in the state of survival. We warned that one day you would not be able to control what you have created. That day is here. Not heeding warnings from both



Nature and the People of the Earth keeps us on the path of self-destruction. This self-destructive path has led to the Fukushima nuclear crisis, Gulf oil spill, tar sands devastation, pipeline failures, impacts of carbon dioxide emissions and the destruction of ground water through hydraulic fracking, just to name a few. In addition, these activities and development continue to cause the deterioration and destruction of sacred places and sacred waters that are vital for Life.

*Powerful technologies are out of control
and are threatening the future of all life*

The Fukushima nuclear crisis alone is a threat to the future of humanity. Yet, our concern goes far beyond this single threat. Our concern is with the cumulative and compounding devastation that is being wrought by the actions of human beings around the world. It is the combination of resource extraction, genetically modified organisms, moral failures, pollution, introduction of invasive species and much more that are threatening the future of life on Earth. The compounding of bad decisions and their corresponding actions are extremely short-sighted. They do not consider the future generations and they do not respect or honor the Creator's Natural Law. We strongly urge for the governmental authorities to respond with an open invitation to work and consult with us to solve the world's problems, without war. We must stop waging war against Mother Earth, and ourselves.



We acknowledge that all of these devastating actions originated in human beings who are living without regard for the Earth as the source of life. They have strayed from the Original Instructions by casting aside the Creator's Natural Law. It is now critical for humanity to acknowledge that we have created a path to self-destruction. We must restore the Original Instructions in our lives to halt this devastation.

The sanctity of the Original Instructions has been violated. As a result, the Spiritual People of the Earth were called ceremonially to come together at the home of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe Bundle. These Spiritual Leaders and those that carry great responsibility for their people from both North and South America came together with the sacred fire for four days at the end of September 2013 to fulfill their sacred responsibilities. During this time it was revealed that the spirit of destruction gained its' strength by our spiritually disconnected actions.

We are all responsible in varying degrees for calling forth this spirit of destruction, thus we are all bound to begin restoring what we have damaged by helping one another recover our sacred responsibility to the Earth. We, the Original

Caretakers of Mother Earth, offer our spiritual insight, wisdom and vision to the global community to help guide the actions needed to overcome the current threats to all life.

We only have to look at our own bodies to recognize the sacred purpose of water on Mother Earth. We respect and honor our spiritual relationship with the lifeblood of Mother Earth. One does not sell or contaminate their mother's blood. These capitalistic actions must stop and we must recover our sacred relationship with the Spirit of Water.

The People of the Earth understand that the Fukushima nuclear crisis continues to threaten the future of all life. We understand the full implications of this crisis even with the suppression of information and the filtering of truth by the corporate owned media and Nation States. We strongly urge the media, corporations and Nation States to acknowledge and convey the true facts that threaten us, so that the international community may work together to resolve this crisis, based on the foundation of Truth.

We urge the international community, government of Japan and TEPCO to unify efforts to stabilize and re-mediate the nuclear threat posed at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant. To ensure that the Japanese government and TEPCO are supported with qualified personnel and information, we urge the inclusion of today's nuclear experts from around the world to collaborate, advise and provide technical assistance to prevent further radioactive contamination or worse, a nuclear explosion that may have apocalyptic consequences.



*The foundation for peace will be strengthened
by restoring the Original Instructions in ourselves*

Prophecies have been shared and sacred instructions were given. We, the People of the Earth, were instructed that the original wisdom must be shared again when imbalance and disharmony are upon Mother Earth. In 1994 the sacred white buffalo, the giver of the sacred pipe, returned to the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people bringing forth the sacred message that the winds of change are here. Since that time many more messengers in the form of white animals have come, telling us to wake up my children. It is time. So listen for the sacred instruction.

*All Life is sacred. We come into Life as sacred beings. When we
abuse the sacredness of Life we affect all Creation*

We urge all Nations and human beings around the world to work with us, the Original Caretakers of Mother Earth, to restore the Original Instructions and uphold the Creator's Natural Law as a foundation for all decision making, from this point forward. Our

collective future as human beings is in our hands, we must address the Fukushima nuclear crisis and all actions that may violate the Creator's Natural Law. We have reached the crossroads of life and the end of our existence. We will avert this potentially catastrophic nuclear disaster by coming together with good minds and prayer as a global community of all faiths.

We are the People of the Earth united under the Creator's Law with a sacred covenant to protect and a responsibility to extend Life for all future generations. We are expressing deep concern for our shared future and urge everyone to awaken spiritually. We must work in unity to help Mother Earth heal so that she can bring back balance and harmony for all her children. ☯

Ottawa Friends of Tibet

by Barbara Brown

In the fall of 2013 Ottawa Friends of Tibet (OFT) was awarded a Peace Grant of \$1000 by Friends of Peace given to organizations that have made a difference locally and internationally. OFT was recognized for its extraordinary efforts to complete a seniors' residence for destitute elderly Tibetans in Kalimpong, northern India and for support of the Tibetan Resettlement Project in Ottawa.

OFT was founded in 1996 by Jurme and Angela Wangda and a small number of volunteers. The organization is dedicated to improving the health, education and economic conditions of Tibetans and Tibetan refugees in India, in Canada and elsewhere. In 2001, OFT became a federally registered charity. Current projects include the completion of construction of a seniors' residence in Kalimpong, India and, in cooperation with Child Haven International, the funding of two orphanages for Tibetan children, one in New Delhi, India, and one in Tibet near Lhasa.



The OFT mission is to serve disadvantaged Tibetan children, men and women in India, Nepal and Tibet, and to increase public awareness and appreciation of Tibetan culture. The Ottawa Friends of Tibet also aims to establish an Ottawa Tibetan Centre to increase awareness and appreciation of Tibetan culture and to further the understanding of Buddhist philosophy and practice. OFT publishes a newsletter twice a year which is both posted on its website (www.oft.ca) and sent out to a listserv of 450. OFT holds an annual fundraising dinner for about 200 people and regularly sponsors visitors from the Tibetan community in South

Asia, including visual artists, musicians, monks and doctors who take part in public meetings to inform Canadians about issues surrounding Tibet and Tibetans.

At present OFT financially supports four projects:

The Maitreya Home and Foundation in Delhi India for the care and education of destitute Tibetan refugee children. Dakpa

Rinpoche, a Tibetan Lama, is currently in charge of the foundation and the home. There are 24 children in the home. Child

Haven International provides the main support. OFT makes an annual contribution of \$1000.

An orphanage and school that cares for orphaned or poverty-stricken children near Lhasa, Tibet. Through Child Haven International, OFT contributes \$5,000 annually to the orphanage. There are currently 41 children and 4 women there.

The Tara Mandala Seniors Home for elderly Tibetan refugees in Kalimpong India. OFT has raised \$200,000 for the seniors' home. This amount was matched by the Central Relief Committee of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The home sets new standards for elder care in the region. In the preparation of the engineering design and drawings, the Canadian and local partners consulted other Tibetan communities in India who had built homes for the elderly. In the course of these discussions it was agreed that current designs were sometimes dark and airless. As a result of this experience the Kalimpong home features a new 'L' shaped design which allows for more space, light and air in the residence. The "L" shaped design was based on Jurme Wangda's request to and discussions with a well known local architect and engineer Mr. Ashok Kumar. Tara Mandala opened in February 2012. Twenty Tibetan refugee seniors became the first residents. The Tibetan community in Kalimpong and the surrounding area is small and dispersed. There are few homes for elderly Tibetans. The selection of Kalimpong was made to ensure a central location able to serve the poor and elderly from a wide geographic region including Bhutan and Sikkim.

Schools in Ottawa have been encouraged to participate in fundraising for the home. For example, Sir Wilfrid Laurier High School has raised money to sponsor a room in the residence and is planning a visit to Kalimpong. Other visits of Canadians to the centre are also planned.

The President of OFT, Mr. Jurme Wangda, identified the need for the seniors' home and secured the approval and engagement of the Dalai Lama and of the Office of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala. Mr Wangda was also instrumental in getting local Indian government approval for the project. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has named the Kalimpong Home "Yolu kopai Geso-khang," which means the Tara Mandala Seniors Home "Ornamented with Turquoise Leaves," the mandala of Bodhisattva Tara. The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (HHDL) donated the land on which the home stands.

The contribution of \$200,000 to the home is a huge accomplishment for a small NGO the size of OFT which has no permanent staff and only a small cadre of about 10 volunteers who steer its work. OFT will continue its relationship with Kalimpong Seniors Home and will contribute funds directly to the home as needs arise.

4) Palden Pawo Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal, for the education of young monks. In 2013, OFT contributed \$3000 to the monastery. Right now there are 24 monks in the monastery in Kathmandu and they need help. Only three senior monks who are in their thirties and forties take care of the monastery. They are looking after 21 destitute and orphaned young monks. In 2007 Bonnie Cappuccino of Child Haven,

Angela and Jurme Wangda asked the local high school of Tragu Rinpoche to send eleventh and twelfth grade students to teach the young monks. As time goes by and the monks advance to higher school grades they will need a professional teacher, which will cost much more. The monks also need funds for proper healthcare.

To become a member, make a donation or learn more about OFT visit our web site at www.oft.ca. ☺



Seeds of Peace

by Michael Anzonye

Since the days of Eden
We've cherished eating
Fruits forbidden
Destruction ridden
Instead of weeding
Malignant seething
We let thistles grow
Out of control
The hate and lust
We learn to trust
Or anger
Which leads
Our tongue to curse
Are truly weeds
Producing sower deeds
Deeds harming
Us or others
Of different mother's

Since we all stem from one
Ancient parental essence
All as family should receive
Our love as presents
Yet division is fueled
By our selfish views



Diffused by celebrity crews
Making acting like fools
Look completely cool

The lifestyle we see
In most movie screens
Only lead to traps
Leaving participants marred
And forever scarred

So
Our heart keeps beating
For some greater meaning
Beyond the drugs,

the sex
and chrome wheels spinning

If only we looked within
Into our souls pristine
We would see our hope
Is in walking the moral road
And cultivating love
To resolve life woes
Will leave us being
A more peaceful being

God planted seeds
Of peace
Within us all
Even before
Adam and Eve's
Sinful fall
There is honesty
There is sincerity
There is chastity
There is fidelity
There is unity
There is solidarity
There is all things good you see
Buried deep within our humanity
That's waiting to blossom
Just like a flower

As we remove evil weeds
By wielding compassion's marvelous power

I said:
God planted seeds
Of peace
Within us all
Even before
Adam and Eve's
Sinful fall
There is honesty
There is sincerity
There is chastity
There is fidelity
There is unity
There is solidarity
There is all things good you see
Buried deep within our humanity
That's waiting to blossom
Just like a flower
As we remove evil weeds
By wielding compassion's marvelous
Power

~"VEssEL - What are you carrying?" 🌙

Alchemy

by Angie Kehler

I have been reflecting on the name bestowed upon me after receiving the 5 Mindfulness Trainings ceremony and how I can bring that into the world. I wrote a poem about this.



Presence

by Rumi

This we have now
Is not imagination
This is not
grief or joy.
Not a judging state,
Or an elation,
Or sadness.
Those come
And go.
This is the Presence
That doesn't.

Q: Will you take time today to be present? Did you know that all else comes and goes, but the presence does not? 🌙

What If Nobody Shows Up?

by Ian Prattis

It happens. That unanticipated moment when you—the facilitator—are there, and nobody shows up. I remember with a mixture of anxiety and humor the first time this happened. One fall evening I had cleaned the meditation room, set the cushions in a neat semi-circle in front of the simple altar, meditated beforehand, and made sure the notes for the Dharma talk were ready. And nobody showed up. At first I thought friends were just a little late, but thirty minutes past the hour convinced me that nobody was coming. I was disappointed and remained so, until two beautiful beings caught my attention. My dog, Nikki, and my cat, Lady, were sitting patiently close by me in the

meditation room, waiting for my attention. They were fully present, only I was not. When I did notice them, I smiled. Only then could I look deeply at my thoughts. What in fact was disappointed?

My ego, expectations, habit energies, and mental formations—these were all certainly disappointed. Yet the moment I smiled to my loving animals, the disappointment began to fade away. I was left with the insight that of the many elements necessary for a sangha facilitator, on this night it was Equanimity with a capital E that I needed most to nurture. After inviting the bell for Nikki, Lady, myself and absent friends, I meditated on the Four Brahmaviharas: Love, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity—the Buddha's teachings on Love—with a particular emphasis on the Fourth one—Equanimity.

The following evening, the doorbell rang at 7.00pm and two friends from the sangha came in, followed by another three, then five minutes later by another four. I welcomed them with surprise at seeing them. They were puzzled by this welcome, then told me that this was our sangha evening. I had prepared for them the day before in error! We all laughed until the tears rolled down our cheeks when I told them the story. Our meditation and gathering that night became known as the Night Of Warm Smiles And Quiet Chuckles, as once again Nikki and Lady joined us. Not surprisingly after meditation, our discussion was about Equanimity. Of how we can so easily get caught in our projections and mental formations when Equanimity is absent. Also we shared at length our experiences of its interconnection with Love, Compassion and Joy—the remaining trio of the Four Brahmaviharas. To make this come alive we all knew that our practice had to become more skillful, drawing on one another's support.

There are many things I could write about the Pine Gate sangha practice—our hikes in the

forest, finding a quiet place for a Dharma talk, then on to a waterfall for a silent and mindful lunch. Of the generosity of sangha members as they take their practice out in an engaged manner. The sangha practices in the true spirit of engaged Buddhism with the introduction of mindfulness practice into city schools, and the formation of Citizen's Coalitions to protect the city environment from inappropriate development, and to undertake peace marches to bring about an end to war. The other groups in these Coalitions are quite happy to find a meditation group at their core, and I do believe we assist them with our steadiness, especially as one sangha member created and monitors their website. There is so much more—yet for me the Evening Of Warm Smiles And Quiet Chuckles after the Day When Nobody Showed Up, provides a benchmark for the qualities actively cultivated as a basis for sangha practice. Whenever I talk about the Buddha's Teachings on Love, usually at our Christmas gatherings, the sangha revisits this benchmark. 🌕

Water in the Wave Day of Mindfulness

by Jim Ebaugh

On the weekend of November before American Thanksgiving, Ian and Carolyn travelled down to York, Pa to conduct a Day of Mindfulness for the Water in the Wave and related sanghas. It was held in the Unitarian church, where Ian was a guest speaker for the Unitarian Youth Group on the day following.

On November 23rd, 2013, Water in the Wave Sangha hosted a Day of Mindfulness in York, Pa. with Dr Ian Prattis and his wife Carolyn Hill. The 18 month old Sangha has been utilizing the resources and teachings of the Pine Gate Sangha You Tube site and postings on our Facebook Page by Dr. Prattis. As a Sangha Cultivator, I can't tell you how wonderful it is to be linked to a Dharma teacher in our practice through technology in a collaborative and consultative manner. From the outset, I have wondered if this could not be a skillful model for Sanghas nationwide, it is interbeing at its best. This

kind of linkage may become more critically important in coming years if we as a movement of engaged Buddhism are to survive. The linkage of diverse, independent and small Sanghas to a core of teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh is the transformation of Thich Nhat Hanh. If our continuation is our words and our actions, then our collective karma is tied to the collective Sangha body. Urban Sanghas like ours, often have many unemployed or under-employed members. Even a 250 dollar weekend retreat is a stretch for many of our people. Thus, the great gratitude we feel for Dr. Prattis and Pine Gate Sangha. When TNH touched Ian, he touched Ian deeply. And Ian has now touched us deeply.

So our city of York, known for its violence, had its first Dharma teacher in the Plum Village tradition of our practice. Ian engaged about 45 people in walking meditation. Thirteen people, virtually an entire Sangha, stood for the Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission. On the Sunday morning, prior to departure, Ian gave a talk to the youth group at the Unitarian church, which was packed with youngsters and their parents. They benefited greatly from the practical mindfulness exercises that Ian taught and got the gist of the Two Arrows teaching.

Over the past year our Sangha body insisted on virtually continuous study of both the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the 14 Mindfulness Trainings. We leaned heavily on Pine Gate resources, free and in accord with our low cost dharma commitment. Pine Gate Sangha in Ottawa has a long reach indeed. See the gratitude in this photo of the thirteen members of the



Water in the Wave Sangha who committed to the Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission. Each person received the perfect dharma name and a dried Bodhi leaf along with their certificate. Ian's dharma talk on Engaged Buddhism placed the Sangha on fire with respect to forming subsequent action groups in our city. The Sangha took Ian's teachings on Cornerstones to heart and made it so!! We now have the confidence to transform the teachings into our engagement with ourselves and society.



You Are Just a Man

by Dave Kot

"You are just a man." Marcus Aurelius employed a servant to whisper this humbling phrase behind him as they walked Rome. Whenever a citizen bowed or offered praise, this helper reminded Aurelius of his own dedication to mindfulness. Many world leaders still refer to Marcus Aurelius' book, "Meditations," for its modest wisdom.

I am just a man. Some days, this phrase helps curb arrogance. Other days, I find sanctuary in its stark reality. Everyone fails sometimes. Two choices lay before me: 1) risk, and fail; or 2) risk, and succeed. Perhaps another, easier option exists: do nothing, and be nothing. This idea frightens me more than the first two possibilities. Everyone I know does one or more of these three things each day. What choices can I make to feel safer, loved, and more successful?

In November 2013, Dharmacharya Ian Prattis invited members of the York, PA community to participate in a Day of Mindfulness. We spent the day devoted to learning more about Thich Nhat Hanh's Five Mindfulness Trainings. My friends from Water in the Wave Sangha participated, including my loving wife, Angela. For me, the Transmission Ceremony was not just another tool in a



toolbox: my good experiences create a toolbox into which I place compatible truths. Here is a short list of how I try to apply the Five Mindfulness Trainings:

- 1) A reverence for life helps me savor foods. Meals can be tasty! Even yummy garlic bread becomes more enjoyable, once I recognize the many sacrifices made to bring food to the table. Recently, Autism at Face Value was invited to speak about holistic approaches to behavior modifications. We included mindful eating as a part of self-monitoring and self-regulation practices—two empirically-proven coping strategies.
- 2) I dislike labels. Groups tend to use labels as excuses to pigeonhole other groups. A commitment towards true happiness means more compassion and patience. In business, we've aligned ourselves with great partners who stand for social education and justice. In a fantasy comic book, our aliens acknowledge mankind as one race: human. Bad guys get their comeuppance. Good people win without vulgarity or gratuitous violence. People can choose to be happy and respectful.
- 3) I sat beside my wife during the Day of Mindfulness. We "spoke" during Noble Silence, using subtle glances and gentle hand-holding. Communication includes

more than words. Ours is one of the very few husband-and-wife comic book teams anywhere. We practice mindfulness together, too. Her compassionate spirit is one of her most attractive qualities, and I love her. Angie wraps simple gestures with kindness. I appreciate a neck massage or a poem more than any store-bought card or gift.

- 4) As a professional helper, I listen more than I talk. At least, I think I do! Seeking to be understood builds a bridge between two or more people. "Trust" provides the railings along the bridge, so our journeys are safer. Regarding honest speech behavior and speech, little distinction should occur between this personal commitment and business practices.
- 5) Reading and research absorbs most of my time. Popular entertainment numbs and underwhelms audiences with sensation

and frequently graphic content. Angie and I look for ways we can share activities with the kids. Together, we cry or laugh or sing. Together, we grow. These experiences helped us make a family-friendly comic book. I use what I know about empathy and real-world problems, and write one story.

I'd be lying if I said writing comic books isn't fun. Insightful readers can see The Five Mindfulness Trainings interwoven through our comic book; they are a good guide for living now AND in 2072 AD, even with aliens and robots! I believe we can end world hunger, stop wars, cure diseases, and heal our planet. I took a risk by trying these hopeful ideas in comics. Will I fail? Will I succeed? At least, I tried. I am just a man. Thankfully, my wife whispers how great she thinks I am to her with every step. Will you walk with us? 🌱

Peace—The Exhibition

by the Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

It is a long and winding road that led to the peace exhibition at the Canadian War Museum, which will run to January 5, 2014. The initial conversation opened a decade ago with Physicians for Global Survival, the Quakers—supported by Friends for Peace—pitching to the museum director the idea of Canadian soldiers going to war to enable peace for their families. The conversation continued with the Canadian Department of Peace group taking a lead role. They found support in a historian who liked the basic idea. The curator of "Peace—The Exhibition" is Dr. Amber Lloydlangsten and she and her team did a terrific job putting it together with very diverse themes.

The exhibition is impressive and extensive with many surprises. A clock from the destruction of Hiroshima, a blue beret from the first UN peacekeeping mission, a World War I Victoria Cross medal awarded to a Canadian stretcher bearer to mention only a few.

There is a station where you can make your own Peace Button—great attraction for kids. Also an art gallery of peace with a tour to see how art reflects the themes of the exhibit. A highlight is

the attention paid to the Great Peace Law of the Iroquois Confederacy. How it came about and how it is relevant to the present day negotiation between aboriginal peoples and Canadian Institutions. Treaty 7 provides an elaborate case study. The debate is opened up about Canada's role as a peace keeping nation with a chart showing different options and outcomes. The mantle that Canada has worn since Lester Pearson's days has been diminished since Mr. Harper became Prime Minister of Canada. Do we want a change? That is the question raised in a very challenging way. War is not sanitized, neither is the protest movement nor the peace keeping role. We see how Canadians throughout their history have negotiated, organized and intervened for peace. Interactive stations about Haiti, Afghanistan, the Sudan and more, plus play stations for children to grasp the issues are there to encourage them to think and reflect what they wish to see in a future Canada.



Canadian War Museum, Ottawa

Teachers are encouraged to make this exhibit a must see locale for school trips. The Peace Exhibition is very well put together. No War Museum in the world has such an emphasis on peace processes. Peace is a vital part of the story of Canada and it is still evolving and diverse. Do pay a visit - and take children. A Peace Button awaits them! 🕒

Engaged Practice and the Order of Interbeing

by Ian Prattis

My understanding of the Order of Interbeing charter and the transmission ceremonies is that they presented me with the heart of the Buddha and the heart of Thay. In my experience of the transmission ceremonies with Thay—the 14 Mindfulness Trainings and the Dharma Lamp—I certainly felt Thay's love and encouragement but also felt his steel. For me, this was never an invitation. My direct experience was that I was authorized

by Thay to teach the dharma, build sangha and skillfully engage with the wider society and environment. In engaging with creativity, experimentation and skillfulness, I felt that I was actualizing the spirit and the letter of the OI charter. Thay gave me a driver's license and the keys to the car and I drove it as far and as fast as I could. There was plenty of creativity and experimentation though I was initially lacking in skillfulness. In my sense of

urgency I kept the gas pedal to the floor and went flat out at high speed—this was not wise. I quickly learned that action followed consciousness, not the other way round and so I eased up on the gas pedal—a little bit anyway!

My grounding was in Pine Gate Mindfulness Community, founded by my wife Carolyn and I in 1997 after my return from teaching meditation in India. Practice was a subtle ebb and flow through a series of concentric circles. At the core was the practice of Carolyn and I, the next circle was senior OI members, then a circle of members committed to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, then a circle of members young and old, and then extending to a vast circle beyond the boundaries of Pine Gate to the wider community. The ebb and flow between concentric circles breathed us in and out and the energy generated became the basis of action. A good alternative to keeping the pedal to the floor!

An unusual set of circumstances led to a particular form of engaged action. This is not a blueprint or a formula—just what arose from the depth of practice in the midst of global crisis—the international war against terrorism and Global Warming. The beginnings of Friends for Peace, with Pine Gate as the nucleus, began with the outbreak of the Iraq war in 2003. We gathered friends from across the city of Ottawa and organized

candlelit vigils all across the city prior to the outbreak of war. Over 3,000 people responded to this hastily put together initiative. We also organized a Peace Song Circle on Parliament Hill, the seat of Canadian government, to send a strong message that mindful living was an alternative to the warlike alternative. Pine Gate was the hub for this nascent movement. On a cold, wet March day in 2003 a sea of

multi-colored umbrellas adorned the grounds of Parliament Hill. Choirs from all over the National Capital Region were there to give their hearts for peace.

The incessant rain symbolised the tears of Iraqi children, your tears, my tears. Young, old, multi faith and diverse—the faces in the rain moved me deeply as people sang, danced and stood up for peace. The NOWAR group was due on Parliament Hill after us and they had a more violent agenda. I had talked to their leaders and requested that they

join us on the Hill but without noisemakers and slogans. They came with anger after burning effigies of George Bush and Tony Blair outside the US embassy. We felt the anger of their demonstration as they joined us, then it suddenly calmed and dissipated as they sang and danced with us in the downpour. The Sufi Universal Dances of Peace group organized 5,000 people to do a dance, chanting “May Peace be With You and



With You be Peace” in English, French, Hebrew and Arabic. When the rain came down like a monsoon—nobody ran for cover. We danced and sang for peace together. The NOWAR group meditated with us in silence at the end.

From the response to these events Friends for Peace was created and registered as a non profit organization with a mandate for peace, planetary care and social justice. It has a charter and a mandate. All parts of the mandate are active with respect to outreach, support and action. The first thing put into motion was an annual Friends for Peace Day every Fall, which was a celebration of all that we stood for. It had the feeling of a country fair with lunch kitchen, activist tables, Silent Auction, great entertainment and Peace Awards to prominent citizens who delivered their often very edgy Visions for planetary care, social justice and peace. This day has now grown into the final bookend of a two week Peace Festival we inspired for our city of Ottawa. The growth and enthusiasm is there because there are tangible results from each area of the mandate. There is a new six storey apartment building for low income families downtown that we supported, there is a pristine watershed—the Dumoine River—that we helped to get protection for, there are direct results from our support of aboriginal rights in the apology from the Government of Canada to First Nations, there is the annual Peace Camp Canada bringing Palestinian and Israeli teens to Ottawa for a peace camp. We also gave Peace Grants each year to organizations making a real difference internationally and to our city.

The consequences of engaged practice for Pine Gate are confidence, clarity and

skillfulness. Friends for Peace now comprises a loose coalition of over 50 groups throughout the city—activist, environmental, peace, business, faith, cultural, schools, government—and they are a force to be reckoned with in a good way. A former Mayor of Ottawa has described Friends for Peace as the face of the city he wants to see in the future. The present Mayor, Jim Watson, had this to say in 2011: “Friends for Peace is an outstanding organization that does very important work, promoting, strengthening and maintaining peace, planetary care and social justice within our communities and the environment.” That future is now!

The confidence from doing all this has led to the sangha body jumping into the river of the Buddhadharma and kindly carrying me along with them. This is all due to deep internal practice and intelligent engaged practice. There are many ripe fruits in our mindfulness community tree, especially young people. They are storming the barricades, transcending boundaries and breaking down barriers. I ask only one thing, that they hold out their hand and wait for me—because I am going with them. ●

Quotes

If you hit a Talib, then there would be no difference between you and the Talib. You must not treat others with cruelty...You must fight others through peace and through dialogue and through education. I would tell him how important education is and that I would even want education for his children as well. That's what I want to tell you, now do what you want.

Malala Yousafazi



Thay warns that civilization is at risk of collapse from the environmental and social damage caused by the voraciousness of our economic system....Pointing to our addiction to consumption as a clear sign we are trying to paper over our suffering, Thay suggests we should go in the opposite direction, to the very heart of our pain, in order to transform it....For that to happen, the corporate world needs to undergo a fundamental shift in consciousness by recognizing the importance of integrating spiritual principles into its daily life.

Jo Confino

All manner of darkness offers our species an extraordinary opportunity for remaking itself.

Carolyn Baker

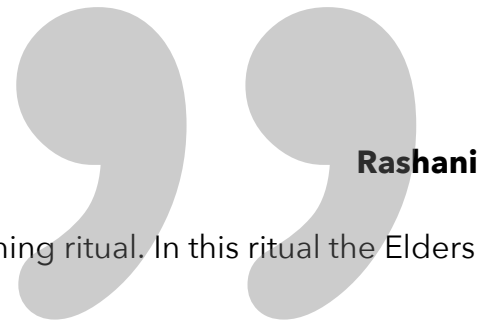
The needs of the natural world are more important than the needs of any economic system... Any economic system that does not benefit the natural communities on which it is based is unsustainable, immoral and really stupid.

Derrick Jensen

The study investigated the effects of intensive mindfulness practice in a group of experienced meditators, compared to a group of untrained control subjects. After 8 hours, the meditators showed a range of genetic and molecular difference, which in turn correlated with faster physical recovery from a stressful situation. First study to show rapid alteration in gene expression within subjects associated with mindfulness meditative practice.....There was no difference in the tested genes between the two groups of people at the start of the study.

Richard J. Davidson

There is a brokenness out of which comes the unbroken
A shatteredness out of which blooms the unshatterable.
There is sorrow beyond all belief which leads to joy,
And a fragility out of whose depth emerges strength.



When a woman is pregnant a ritual is performed, called the listening ritual. In this ritual the Elders of the village ask the unborn child:

Who are you?

Where do you come from?

Why are you taking the trouble to come into this messed up world?

What can we do to make your journey easier?

Sobonfu Some

Pine Gate Mindfulness Community

At Pine Gate the resident teacher is Ian Prattis—True Body of Wisdom. Ian is a poet, scholar, peace and environmental activist. He encourages people to find their true nature so that humanity and the world may be renewed. He has trained with masters in Buddhist, Vedic and Shamanic traditions and maintains that:

Our engagement with society and the environment rests on our quality of being. When that quality is rooted in stillness there is a different ground for subsequent actions and so events take a different course. We simply go home to our true nature. We are very active in this way and bring harmony to those we interact with. The most significant interaction is with our true nature. To connect to its boundless quality in daily life, and then to connect to others and the world in the same way is surely the ticket to ride!

There are regular meetings for meditation and study every Thursday evening from 7.00pm – 9.00pm. The first Saturday of every month has a Mindfulness Gathering from 5.00pm – 8.00pm for dharma and a mindful meal. Duong Sinh—Bamboo Stick Qi-gong classes, known as the Life Sustaining Way of the Heart, are offered in addition to regular qi-gong classes throughout the year. Potluck vegetarian suppers, Hikes, Sweat Lodges, Pilgrimages, Days of Mindfulness, and Meditation Retreats are organized on a regular basis. There are three seasons at Pine Gate—Fall Study Session from September to December; Winter Study Session from January to May; Lazy Days of Summer Session from July to August.

DIRECTIONS TO THE PINE GATE MEDITATION HALL:

In Ottawa, take Queensway to Woodroffe South exit; go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (2nd lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the Crescent round to 1252, which is always lit up with Christmas lights in the winter and full of flowers in the summer.

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Special Thanks

A deep bow of gratitude to Reverend Adrienne Baksa and Brother Bo Gak Sunim for their support, inspiration and guidance. We couldn't have created the new format without you!

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