



# Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

The grass calls out to be cut more than once a week, a sure sign we are at the height of spring in Seattle. So much has happened since the last printing of this newsletter, that I'm a bit hesitant to try and put it all together in a digestible format, but here goes.

In March, Bernie Glassman Roshi, the principal Dharma Heir of Maezumi Roshi, was in town to run a daylong workshop on "Living a Life that



Matters." Many of us attended along with about 200 other people. The day before the workshop, I picked Bernie up at the airport when he arrived in Seattle and was delighted to share some private time with him walking around Jefferson Park. I have enjoyed a deepening association with him and the organization he founded, [Zen Peacemakers](#). The founding three tenets are as follows: No Knowing (what can we really know?), Bearing Witness (deep inquiry and listening), Loving Action (caring attention and work that arises from true insight into what is needed). After a tour of Chobo-Ji and a short rest, Bernie met with our sangha in the lounge, which was stuffed with members. During this gathering, Bernie met Polly Trout, the Executive Director of [Patacara Community Services](#), for the



## Spring Sesshin 2014

first time. With the support of his counsel, I hope some direct action based on Buddhist ideals of respect and compassion will arise to serve disenfranchised neighbors in our city.

Spring Sesshin 2014 at the end of March was in my view a significant step forward in Chobo-Ji's development. There were 32 people in attendance, the majority full-time. Dee Seishun Endelman really showed how her talents in the kitchen have deepened in her post as Tenzo (Chief Cook). Steve Ganko Hanson served ably as our Shika (host/manager), keeping us all involved in the care and support of each other. Scott Ishin Stolnack was our Jikijitsu (time keeper) who assured we were all where we needed to be. The Densu (Chant Leader) post was held by Rev. Daitetsu Hull, who kept the beat going on. Lynn Hernandez and Mark Rinzan Pechovnik were our Jisha (tea servers) and they did a great job making sure we were well



supplied with tea, coffee and snacks. John Daikan Green held the post of Inji (Abbot Assistant) ably supported by Linda Muka Wehnes, without whom probably the whole building would collapse. Rick Muken Proctor organized the fence building samu (work meditation) project around our dumpsters. Genko Ni-Osho gave an inspiring Dharma Talk on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness on the second day, and provided us with a delectable serving of sweets and whisked green tea on middle day. Daitetsu Osho gave a Dharma Talk on Zen Master Dogen that was very well received. My Teisho from the sixth day is included in this issue along with my closing incense poem. On the last day of sesshin we held a tokudo (ordination ceremony) for Mark Rinzan Pechovnik. He has committed to coming to all of Chobo-Ji's sesshins for the indefinite future, and is starting a sitting group in Portland this summer; more on his ordination later in this issue.

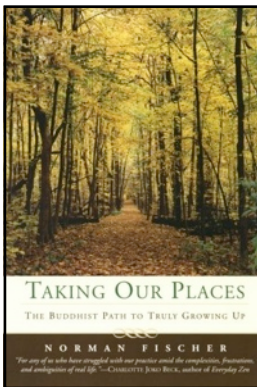
In mid April, Carolyn and I traveled with 28 others from around the globe to the East Africa city of Kigali in Rwanda. We were there to join with 30 East Africans for a weeklong Bearing Witness Retreat around the aftermath of the 100 days of genocide that took place there in 1994 where nearly a million people were slaughtered. It was a life-changing event for me. The trip put many things into perspective and I've included in this issue some thoughts about this experience.

The weekend after returning, I was in Walla Walla meeting with prisoners at the penitentiary, doing a daylong sit with 25 people associated with the [Walla Walla Dharma Sangha](#) and giving a talk on Rwanda at Whitman College. My primary hosts were Janaki and Chris Howard. The first weekend of May, I was in San Diego, at [North County Aikikai](#) to lead a three-day sesshin, which concluded with a Jukai (Buddhist Precept) ceremony for Steve Luis, who has attended many sesshins with us. In San Diego my primary hosts were Leslie Senko Cohen (who just started the [Scripps Ranch sitting group](#))

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and Coryl Keicho Crane. On Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, I sat with the Rai Un Zan Zen group in Ellensburg with people traveling from Seattle, Walla Walla, Yakima and Wenatchee to attend. At the conclusion of our time together, Merrily Warren did Jukai. You will hear from Steve and Merrily about what it means to do Jukai later in this issue.

Upcoming, Genko Ni-Osho is giving a class on the Buddhist Precepts this coming Thursday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, and then again on June 5<sup>th</sup>, July 10<sup>th</sup>, Aug. 7<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>. This class is open to anyone wanting to investigate the Ten Precepts, but attending at least one class is now a prerequisite to doing Jukai. The text being used for this class is [Taking Our Places](#) by Norman Fischer. Our second Odayaka Sesshin three-day sesshin happens this coming weekend; it is especially suited to new timers and Silver Dharma Dragons (60 and over). There will be a second Odayaka Sesshin August 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, which will be led by Genko Ni-Osho. I'll be in Florida for Kenshin's ordination by [Anshin Thomas Osho](#), from May 29<sup>th</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our Book Study Group meets Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, from 9-11am, continuing our examination of [Training in Compassion: Zen Teachings on the Practice of Lojong](#). Our Spring Intensive will conclude with Summer Sesshin, June 20-27<sup>th</sup>.



If you are in town the Fourth of July weekend, I highly encourage you to attend a workshop, to be held here at the temple, by my good friend Leonard Shaw, one of the finest psychotherapists in the region, on “this matter” of life and death. We all probably realize that only when death is carefully explored can life fully be lived. As the days are lengthening and warming, may we all have many walks in the sun.

With gassho,

Genjo

## Mumonkan

### Chapter 13

### Tokusan Carried His Bowls

Sixth Day Spring Sesshin, 2014

Koan: Tokusan one day came down to the dining room carrying his bowls. Seppo said, “Old Master, the bell has not yet rung and the drum has not yet been struck. Where are you going with your bowls?” Tokusan at once turned back to his room. Seppo told this incident to Ganto, who remarked, “Great Master though he is, Tokusan has not yet grasped the last word of Zen.” Hearing of it, Tokusan sent his attendant to call Ganto in and asked, “Do you not approve of me?” Ganto whispered his reply to him. Tokusan was satisfied and silent. The next day Tokusan appeared at the rostrum. Sure enough, his talk was different from the usual ones. Ganto came in front of the monastery, laughed heartily, clapping his hands, and said, “What a great joy it is! The Old Master has now grasped the last word of Zen. From now on nobody in the world can make light of him.”

Mumon's Commentary: As for the last word of Zen, neither Ganto nor Tokusan has ever heard of it, even in a dream. If I examine it carefully, they are like puppets set on a shelf.

#### Mumon's Poem

If you understand the first word of Zen  
You will know the first word  
The last word or the first word  
“It” is not a word.

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This is the final Teisho of Spring Sesshin 2014, the largest sesshin to date in our new space. During our first sesshin in this location in the fall of 2011, we also had a good number of people attending, but we were going through a lot of growing pains. The Abbot needed to mature, our relationship with the Zen Studies Society needed to disintegrate, the Board needed to mature, the Sangha needed to mature. The only thing that didn't need to mature was the Dharma. In my view, this Sesshin, which will conclude tomorrow with the ordination of Rinzan, is really the beginning of the flowering of Chobo-Ji.

Many elements have come together recently, allowing all of us to feel the flowering happening. The bud really was tight to begin with —nothing wrong with that, just tight— and it's now a blossom. So many components needed to come together to allow this flowering, the ones I've already named plus many others, including Daitetsu and Kojun moving on to the property, completing our residential component. We now have eight Zen residents living on the property, and other active members already living near by or moving close by. I believe we have learned how to dance together and not feel separated from each other. Now we have a blending of people and traditions. The Seattle Zen Center, which gave rise to Chobo-Ji, started with a blend of both the Soto and Rinzai styles. As we have seen, both Genko Ni-Osho and Daitetsu Osho are bringing additions that are enriching our practice. I was so pleased that Daitetsu took my hint to bring Zen Master Dogen into Chobo-Ji Dharma Talks.

This is the first sesshin where the whole property is reserved for Zen students. Looking at our property, inside and out, through our efforts over the last three years, we have made a beautiful space to practice and share with the community. In fact, we're about to hang signs! This means the “Chobo-Ji Zen Practice Center” is now deeply planted and here to stay. It only took three years to plant our signs (laughter). I



feel in my bones that we have made a fresh start. The practice that we are propagating is growing up, becoming more mature. It takes time, but the process is rich and coming together nicely. Of course, everything's temporary and never complete, but look at our progress so far, the many stepping-stones we have walked together!



This koan, case 13, is all about maturity, how long it takes and what it looks like when it blooms. Tokusan was known, in his youth, as Diamond *Shu* because he was a scholar of the Diamond Sutra. He carried it around in a backpack, and was very enamored with it. The Diamond Sutra is a wonderful Sutra that we read during every Summer Sesshin. It has a lot of advertisements, but concludes with four great lines (laughter). Tokusan would go around challenging various teachers, proclaiming the Diamond Sutra's veracity. He especially liked to challenge Zen teachers, because our first Chinese ancestor Bodhidharma extolled followers of the Way to have "no dependence on words and letters."

This is not to say that Zen students shouldn't study and admire the sutras and commentaries; however, we limit our own scope and depth if we become dependent on them. On what then are we to rely? We are in training to discern True Insight arising from our own heart connection, to *Shin*, heart-mind, *kokoro*. Our own *kokoro* is the real authority, not the Sutras or the Shastras (commentaries) or even the lessons put forth in the Mumonkan. The ultimate authority is our own connection or communion with heart-mind. On the other hand, if our *kokoro* conflicts with the Sutras, Shastras, precepts and vows then we must check and recheck to see if we are in some way fooling ourselves.

I won't go into the whole story about Tokusan's youth, but know that eventually he got around to burning the Diamond Sutra. You may recall that Zen Master Ryutan blew out the candle at the conclusion of his first interview with Tokusan leaving them both in utter darkness. There was something transformative about this moment of utter darkness that opened Tokusan's heart-mind to the infinite vastness beyond any scripture, even one as fine as the four lines of the Diamond Sutra! Therefore, he burned the Diamond Sutra, trying to show his emancipation from his attachment to something so limited, but also this action revealed his immaturity.

By the time the story of today's koan takes place, Tokusan had gone through a lot of honing and was now in his 80's, only 3 years before his death. He had two senior

students: Seppo, who was the Tenzo (Chief Cook), and Ganto, who likely held the post of Shika (manager/host). These are the highest temple posts, always held by senior students; at our sesshin Seishun and Ganko are ably filling these posts. In this case, Seppo was in his early 40's and Ganto was younger but more mature, in his late 30's.

Tokusan one day came down to the dining room, carrying his bowls. It was probably about time, perhaps past time for lunch. Traditionally, the Abbot doesn't sit that



much in the zendo. He might be sitting in his hermitage and then join the monks for meals. However, clearly the bell hadn't rung announcing, just as we do, that the meal was ready. Normally, no one moves or proceeds before the bells are rung. Seppo says, "Old Master, the bell has not yet rung and the drum has not yet been struck. Where are you going with your bowls?" You're early! If Tokusan had an ounce left of grandiosity or arrogance in his psyche, he would have said, "Hey! Lunch is late! Why haven't you rung the bell?" But Tokusan, without any hesitation, turned around, probably just nodded, and returned to his room.

Seppo thought he had bested the master. He knew this because he didn't get scolded! He told the Master off and the Master just turned around and went away (laughter)! Very unusual! He told about this encounter proudly to his younger Dharma brother. "Hey, Ganto! Know what just happened? Tokusan mistakenly came down for lunch before it was announced!" Ganto says, "Yes, great Master that he is, Tokusan must not yet have grasped the last word of Zen." In other words, he's not fully awake yet, because he's not totally mindful. Good god, if we wait for ourselves to be totally mindful [Genjo shakes his head]... (laughter).

Tokusan heard what Ganto had said, implying that he was not fully mature because he was still making errors. Tokusan called Ganto over and said, "Don't you approve of me?" If you think Tokusan was looking for reassurance, you've missed it. Tokusan suspected what Ganto thought, but wanted to check him out. "Don't you approve of me?" is a checking koan.

Ganto didn't want to be overheard by the other monks and whispered something in Tokusan's ear. We don't know and can't know what that was. But in the Dokusan room, I'll ask, "What did Ganto whisper in Tokusan's ear?" and I will know immediately if your guess is in the ballpark. I don't know what Ganto said, but I am confident I know the *flavor* of what Ganto said. When you see through this koan, you will whisper something in my ear that will have the same flavor. I have heard lots of different answers, rung the dokusan bell and said, "Not yet!" I've said, "yes" to many responses that never occurred to me, but did resonate clearly.

Let's imagine that a koan is pointing to the essence of an orange. If you bring an apple, I might say, "That's a fine apple but no" and, if you bring a pear, I might say, "That's a fine pear but no..." and if you bring a watermelon, I might say, "That's a wonderful watermelon! I didn't expect that at all! It's even delicious but no..." (laughter) On the other hand, there many different varieties of oranges -- Tangerines, clementines, navels, satsumas, and juice oranges to name a few. Likewise, there are many kinds of apples and bananas; however, if I ask for an orange you must bring a token of the flavor of orange, a banana flavor won't do.

Ganto whispered something in Tokusan's ear and Tokusan was satisfied. Tokusan said nothing, just nodded. "The next day Tokusan appeared at the rostrum. Sure enough, his talk was different from the usual ones." How was it different? No doubt it was a great Teisho! (laughter) Certainly it was chosen for the temple newsletter! (laughter) At the conclusion of the Teisho, Ganto got up in front of everyone, and laughing with great joy proclaimed, "Oh, our Old Master must have finally arrived, truly he found the last word

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of Zen. We can all be at peace now that he's fully mature and no one in the world can ever make light of him again!"

**Why** was Tokusan's Teisho so good? First, you have to understand something of the flavor that Ganto must have whispered into Tokusan's ear to understand why Tokusan was so joyous. I too am very joyous that collectively we have come through many difficulties and untangled many knots to be where we are at this Spring Sesshin 2014. Very happy indeed!

**"As** for the last word of Zen, neither Ganto nor Tokusan has ever heard of it, even in a dream." There are several levels to this statement, one of them is that perfection is not something that we're ever going to achieve unless we agree that we are all already perfectly imperfect. This is true and we are all wounded or disabled in various ways. Nevertheless, it is also true that we are all primarily Buddhas; every single one of us is a vessel of the Dharma. When we can really accept our psychological wounds and shortcomings, they often oddly become assets rather than liabilities, and we become more interesting and richer vessels of the Dharma. That's so amazing! Our very disabilities, whether psychological or physical, make us richer once we have learned to accept and accommodate them without delusion or self-deprecation. Without acceptance and accommodation, disabilities are just that.

**We** can never know the last word, even in a dream, because, indeed, there is no beginning or no end. But the text also says, "If you understand the first word of Zen, you will understand the last word of Zen." Everyone in this room probably is aware of the cardinal principle of Buddhism, and likewise the first word of Zen. This word points at Shunyata, the infinite, ineffable formlessness, and is vocalized as, Muuuuu... a vocalization of the inconceivable.

**If** you talk to a theist and ask, "What is God?" or "Where does God come from?" most get confused and say, "These are inappropriate questions." How ridiculous is that, there is no question that is inappropriate if framed well. And to such questions as these there can be no appropriate answer! No one can say! Anyone who says that they "get it" is

fooling himself or herself and is totally deluded. Coming from the Zen tradition we are fortunate that we are not so deluded! We just don't know anything!" We are the religion of "No Knowing." (laughter) We even offer salvation through acceptance of "No Knowing."



**"The** last word or the first word, 'It' is not a word." A better translation of "It", would be "This". "This" (pointing all around) is not contained by any word and we have only a partial idea how Nothing (slaps hands) becomes all of This! How weird and delightful!

**T**okusan's maturity is something we can aspire to. I wish to be so humble. Can we make ourselves humble? No! We can only grow into it with through many years of grace and practice. I've heard some Zen teachers suggest that Tokusan was consciously testing Seppo by coming down early for the meal. Yuck! That's such a bad taste! (laughter as Genjo makes a face) He came down early. He missed it! Likewise Tokusan was not testing Seppo when he responded by turning around, as if to say, "Oh, is that so? My bad, thanks." (laughter) If even 1% of the Zen Masters out there were at Tokusan's level, American Zen would be far more mature than it is today and be dealing with an entirely different set of problems!

**The** fact that we are all disabled in some ways, physically, psychologically or spiritually, means that no corporeal form can be a perfect vessel of the Dharma. On the other hand, no matter how corrupted, confused and deluded we are, even mass murderers are also vessels of the Dharma!

Kids, mass murderers and sages say and do the darndest things!

**I** have two friends who, at different times in their lives, —far earlier than I ever knew them— killed multiple people in cold blood. I can tell you that today they are two of the sweetest people on the planet! Wonderful parents and grandparents! Yet they are completely shaken by their own history. They tremble at the truth of their own earlier corruption, and have dedicated their lives to service. If they did not tremble, and devote their lives to service, they would still be deluded and caught in their inner crazy core. With acceptance, honesty, humility and service they have found some peace of mind.

**T**okusan died in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century. There's another fellow I was recently learning about by the name of Giordano Bruno. He was an astronomer who was burned at the stake in the year 1600. He accepted the Copernican idea that the sun was at the center of our solar system, not the earth, but he went further. Copernicus thought the sun was at the center of the Universe and Giordano Bruno said, "No, the sun is just one of millions and millions (he didn't know it was trillions) of stars and all of those stars are other suns with planets around them." This guy had true insight! A few years later, Galileo almost was burned at the stake, except that nobody could refute that Jupiter had moons, proving once and for all that the earth was not the center of everything! The Catholic Church relented and took small steps towards accepting reality as it is. Faith that conflicts with scientifically demonstrated evidence is at best mythology.

**From** all accounts, Bruno also pissed everybody off because of his arrogance. "I see the truth, why don't you? Dang it, you're all so stupid!" (laughter) Even though he was arrogant, he was also a Vessel of the Dharma. Murderers are also Vessels of the Dharma. So too we are all vessels of our own self-deluded crazy core.





Stephen Hawking is so crippled with ALS that he can only speak with the help of a computer. He has attendants 24 hours a day to take care of every bodily function including feeding and cleaning him. He can barely move his eyelashes. And yet he says, "You may be sorry for me that I'm trapped inside this disabled body, but my mind is free to fly throughout the Universe." Just as Bruno's did in 1600. Just as anyone in this room can do, assisted, as we are, by our deep zazen practice.



Genki Roshi, Eido Shimano Roshi, Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Maezumi Roshi, Katagiri Roshi, Baker Roshi, among other Zen leaders, have definitely revealed for all of us to see that they are flawed, psychologically damaged human beings. And each one has also demonstrated that they are vessels of the Dharma. I too am a psychologically damaged human being. Yet, this doesn't prevent me, from time to time, from being a vessel of the Dharma. Maturity, aided by acceptance, humility, service and practice, takes time! As sesshin draws to a close, let's take what time we can to ripen some more on the cushion, and prepare ourselves, as best we can, to enter ordinary life a bit more mature. Each sit and breath allows us to march on. Knowing Chobo-Ji is at a new beginning, we support this flowering step by step, and ready ourselves for a new ordination tomorrow.

With gassho,

Genjo

## Tokudo Ceremony for Mark Rinzan Pechovnik

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Genjo Osho ordained Mark Rinzan Pechovnik, of Portland, OR, an *unsui* (cloud and water person – Zen monk). As an *unsui*, Rinzan will have the authority to give introductory Dharma talks, lead zazen services, and even marry couples. As soon as I met Rinzan a couple of years ago, I assumed he was already an *unsui*. He has already trained many years at Great Vow Monastery, and carries himself in a way that makes all that training obvious. He has already done more than 30 weeklong sesshins. For me to consider someone for ordination they must be willing to dedicate their life to the propagation of Zen Buddhist practice for the benefit of all beings, do a minimum of four consecutive sesshins at Chobo-Ji following Jukai and be willing to do four sesshins a year, at least until the count of 40 sesshins is reached. Rinzan has exceeded these requirements and has made a deep commitment to his vows.

Rinzan writes in his tokudo application letter:

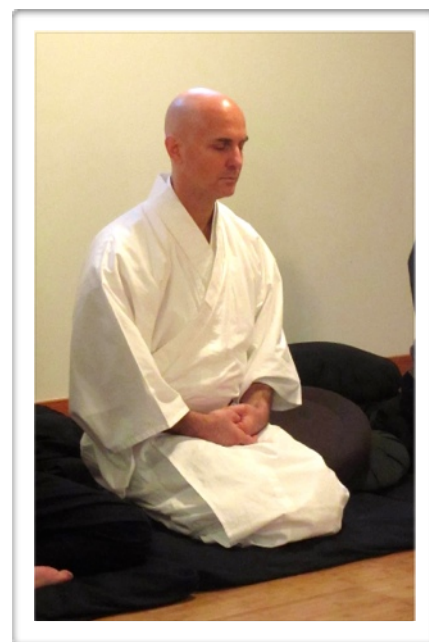
*The question of ordination has provided clarity and direction in my life in ways I had not expected... My determination to mature and to be of service to others has come into sharper focus... I told you how seriously I take hold of vows. Of course, it might better be stated, "how seriously vows take hold of me." ...*

*When I look over the past few months, it seems that both thought formations ("What is it to live a religious life, not merely spiritual?"), dreams and external events, have been preparing and positioning me for this great question about this Great Vow [to care for all beings]. Wrestling with it, chewing on it, unable to spit it out during sesshin (it had become the "hot iron ball"), I knew I had either to step into this or be content living a life wherein I had not actualized my life potential...*

*Regarding the question of "Why ordination now?," I am at a stage in my life, with family and in my profession that makes ordaining appropriate and ethical. My children are grown, and they need (and*

*indeed, want!) less and less from me. My wife is in full support. My profession is stable and, indeed, at a certain resting place. While I continue to develop as a therapist and take my work seriously, I've never felt that being a therapist was the natural endpoint of my life stream. In fact, several months ago, a dear friend and colleague, seeing that I had reached a certain level of development and success, asked me what was the next in my vocational path. Even then, I said, "I don't know but it will involve spirituality."*

*As for "Why Chobo-Ji, and why Genjo?," Chobo-Ji is clearly a place of mature and serious practice. I was not there even an hour before feeling at home – both because the sangha is welcoming and because it expresses the sort of practice that I value most: urban training of lay people. Also, I know that Chobo-Ji is coming out of a*



*period of ethical clarification, and the resolution of this process puts it in a place I am fully in accord with... I am impressed with your integrity, honesty, and skill as a teacher... I feel already a great karmic affinity for both you as Osho and for the message you put forth: this practice means nothing if it is not ethical, responsible and kind. Enlightenment means nothing without maturity.*

*I don't know where ordination will take me, but... I am amazed at its rightness. I have never*

*Continued on next page...*

*felt more in my own skin – even as I feel less and less the owner of it.*

*With many bows,*

*Rinzan*

During the ceremony, I led Rinzan and the assembly to embrace repentance, the three treasures, the ten precepts, the Rinzai/Hakuin lineage, and the four bodhisattva vows. When it came time to give Rinzan an extension to his dharma name, I chose GenShin. Gen (玄) “black before black”

also has the meaning of “deep and profound.” I once saw it translated as “heavenly silence.” It is the same Gen that is in Genki, Genko and Genjo. Shin (森) means a lush forest, like a rain forest.

Rin (倫) means Ethical, as in the sense of the ethics that arises from everyday wholesome human relationships. Etymologically, the two parts of the character mean a person (人) reflecting in self examination (侖).

As most of us know, Zan (山) means mountain. I firmly believe Genshin Rinzan will continue to manifest himself as an ethical mountain standing in a deep forest of silence. To conclude the ceremony, Rinzan then gave a brief dharma talk to sangha members, friends and family on his understanding of the Great Vow.



## Closing Incense Poem

Seattle Spring Sesshin, 2014

*Standing tall and well rooted,  
Mt Rainer peaks through the clouds.*

*Who hears the voice of the deep forest  
when there is no wind?*

*Bald eagle effortlessly circles overhead.*

## Bearing Witness in Rwanda

Recently I returned from a Bearing Witness Retreat in the small central East African nation of Rwanda during the 20th anniversary of the genocide there when nearly a million people were slaughtered in 100 days. The Zen Peacemakers, founded by Bernie Glassman Roshi, ran the retreat. For an excellent overview of this retreat please read Eve Marko's account at the [Zen Peacemakers web site](#). There were 60 participants for five days, 30 Africans and 30 International visitors, my wife and I among them.

This was the third five-day Bearing Witness Retreat I have attended with Bernie Glassman, his wife Eve, and many talented well-trained support staff. The first two were in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Bernie has been holding retreats in Auschwitz for twenty years. People from all over the world have attended these retreats. The format of a Bearing Witness retreat is to face the horrors that have happened in a particular location, through eyewitness testimony whenever possible, by visiting memorial museums, and most directly by

sitting in meditation for at least four hours a day at the site of the atrocities. At Birkenau we sat on the sorting tracks where tens of thousands of people were unloaded from cattle cars and sorted between slave labor, or directly dispatched to the gas chambers. In Rwanda, we did meditation next to a mass grave where 50,000 men, women and children were killed in the course of seven hours in a place called Murambi.

In the morning and evenings “council” is held where we process in a group what we have witnessed. The morning council is a small group of eight people, at the evening council the whole group gathers together. The rules for the council are: 1) Speak from the Heart, 2) Listen from the Heart, 3) Speak Spontaneously (no planned remarks), 4) Speak Leanly (no fat, straight to the heart of the matter), 5) Confidentiality. This process goes on for each of our days together.

In Rwanda, my small group included a rehabilitated perpetrator who had killed many during the genocide. He told how he first refused to kill his neighbors, but then



was shot in the leg for not doing so. After that, the next time he was told to kill, he did so. A young woman in our group who survived the genocide when she was a babe in arms become so distraught hearing the perpetrator's account that she broke down sobbing and had to leave our small group and join another. One woman, who had her baby cut in two, her hand cut off at her wrist and was left to die in a swamp, was also in attendance. The same man, who became a perpetrator, acknowledged that he had been the one to cut off this woman's hand. The two had reconciled through the



national reconciliation and redemption process called Gacaca. When the retreat concluded these two got off at the same bus stop together and, standing next to each other, waved goodbye to the rest of us. There was an awkward but real peace between them.

At night we stayed at a church conference center about a mile from the Murambi memorial site. Each morning and evening, most of us walked the steep mile along a narrow, non-paved, heavily rutted road through a small village to the memorial site. Some of the people we passed were curious, others skeptical, some perhaps astonished, but most seemed happy and honored that we were there to bear witness and reached out to hold our hands, as if to say, "Thank you for coming and being a witness to this horror even twenty years later. We very much appreciate your efforts to honor our dead."



As a Buddhist, I am devoted to seeing everyone as a blossoming Buddha, and everything as a manifestation of Buddha Nature. It is sometimes hard to reconcile these intentions with the fact that we are the only creature on the planet that is capable of slaughtering a whole group of people because they don't belong to "our" group. Perhaps activating this deeply seated potential to dehumanize our fellow beings and cruelly massacre them in the most cruel and sadistic way has had some survival value in our ancient past. In any case, if we fail to recognize and accept that we all have this potential to sink into a murderous mob hysteria, we are bound to globally repeat this awful pattern indefinitely.

Perhaps our species will prove itself to be an evolutionary dead-end, a non-viable Voice of the Dharma. Will our species outgrow our collective adolescence? Do we have the capacity to learn difficult truths about ourselves before it is too late? Fortunately, often out of great suffering come waves of awareness and seeds of deep

compassion. This is very evident in Rwanda, 20 years after the genocide, where they say, "Iyo Umenya Nawe Ukimenya Ntuba Waranyishe" (If you knew who I am, and you knew who you are, you wouldn't have killed me).

Here is the verse I wrote on the last night of the Rwanda retreat, April 19, 2014...

*Africa Reflections:  
Investigating the Inconceivable*

*Who maims, kills, rapes  
and tortures others?  
Who can bash the heads  
of children against a brick wall?  
The tropical rains wash away the blood  
but not the stains.*

*Within us must lie a beast that feeds  
on fear and hate.  
How did it get there?  
Has it been inside from the beginning?  
What purpose does it serve?  
Seen or unseen  
Mars shines brightly overhead.*

*Like a dormant virus  
the beast waits for opportunity.  
When it takes hold  
ANYONE can become violent.*

*In a pandemic, genocide can sweep like fire.*

*The fire may ignite a nation,  
a region or the world.  
The 50,000 dead of Murambi do not lie.*

*How do we keep the virus in check?  
Rwanda shows the way.*

*First put out the fire.*

*Don't seek revenge.*

*Offer a path for redemption  
and reconciliation.*

*Study our nature.*

*No denial of the past.*

*No denial of our potential for good or evil.*

*Above all strengthen love  
and understanding.*

*There is so much we can not know.*

*Who are we really?*

*Hawks and doves circle together  
over a thousand fertile hills.*

*Speaking from the heart reveals  
there is no "other."*

*Shu Jo Mun Hen Sei Gan Do  
(We vow to care for all.)*

Chobo-Ji, like all Zen temples, is a bit like a clubhouse for Zen training and practice. It can get a bit insular at times. There is nothing like having a good laboratory to explore our inner landscape, but if we can't bring what we learn effectively into our daily lives with compassionate loving action then it is just navel gazing. For me joining a Bearing Witness retreat once a year is one way that I can personally actualize my intention to care for all beings. Next August I hope to do a Bearing Witness retreat at Wounded Knee. Here in Seattle, I participate actively in the [Faith Action Network](http://FaithActionNetwork.org) ([fanwa.org](http://fanwa.org)), which gathers religious leaders and people of faith around workable social action goals. With this group, I talked to Governor Inslee about halting the death penalty in this state, and, among other things, we are actively working on gun control legislation. I also am working with a new group called [Patacara](http://Patacara.org) ([Patacara.org](http://Patacara.org)) that has as its mission to offer compassionate and respectful care to those who are suffering, providing services inspired by the principles and teachings of Buddhism. We hope to offer real services to disenfranchised neighbors later this year or early next. Chobo-Ji as an organization is helping as a non-profit contribution conduit, and it is my hope that many in our sangha will become actively engaged with us once services have begun.

Rwanda has changed me. I'm somehow happier now that I can more fully accept that I too could have been a perpetrator! The range of the human condition runs from cruel sadistic murderer to beneficent sage. If we don't realize that this whole spectrum is our real nature then we are living with blinders on. Knowing more concretely the reality of our nature puts a lot of things in perspective. With this perspective it is easier to relax into this life and death journey with a caring heart.



## Jukai Ceremonies

On the morning of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the final day of the three-day annual San Diego Sesshin, Steve Luis formally accepted the Buddhist precepts. A long time follower of the founder of San Diego Aikikai, Chiba Sensei, Steve has also been Follower of the Way for many years, but I'm not sure he was aware of this. However, after much reflection he writes:

*Zen practice has proven to be a transformative force in my life. I realized with some surprise that I am as much a Zen practitioner as an Aikido practitioner (I guess I haven't been paying attention!) The two practices are very much interwoven inside of me, something for which I owe a debt of gratitude to both Chiba Sensei and you [Genjo]. As I observe myself, I am sometimes surprised at the degree to which this is so...*



*Rank has never been a high priority for me... But I have also realized that the precepts don't have to be viewed in terms of rank. Indeed, shouldn't be. For me, the precepts would serve as a reminder of who I am and the path I have already been traveling on, albeit slowly, as well as a spur to continue down the path. But the precepts are more than that because the expressions of humility, gratitude, etc. provide a moral counterweight to all that Zen mumbo jumbo and endless sitting around doing nothing. I mean, even if I can't tell my true nature from a hole in the ground, I can treat those around me with kindness and respect. If the precepts encourage this aspect of*

*Zen practice and, frankly, basic human decency, then they are good stuff...*

*Although we may come to understand the nature of existence on a mountaintop, but one must come back down the mountain and rejoin humanity before becoming mature...*

*The vows provide us with some signposts in our constant journey from innate goodness to that always just-out-of-reach room for improvement...*

*It occurs to me that in the face of paradoxes such as separateness vs. seamless that we most need community to keep us rooted in the here-and-now of everyday life. Maybe with some physical labor thrown in for good measure!*

*As for nature, the feeling that comes to mind is that of a refreshing breeze blowing off of a forested mountainside felt on a sun-warmed face.*



After reading this correspondence I gave Steve the Dharma Name of Fu-Zan (Wind on Mountains).



In the afternoon of May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014, at the conclusion of a mini-Sesshin at Rai Un Zan Ji in Ellensburg, Merrily Warren formally accepted the Buddhist precepts. She began her Zen practice in this location 13 years ago. In her application letter she writes:

*Gradually I broke through the cultural and personal barriers to accepting the practice as my own. Over the years I burned through some of my physical distractions, long-held resentment, periods of inattention, and many personal koans. There was no explanation for it, but in a jagged trajectory I was moving toward something good...*



*I considered applying for Jukai after my second weeklong sesshin at Chobo-Ji, but felt the rakusu was worn as a kind of status symbol by some. I wanted to steer clear of any insincerity, to maintain the deeply personal, private quality in my search. Later I realized that the status perspective was a projection of my own discomfort. Now I see the rakusu as a beautiful symbol of commitment to a larger community. It's time to come out as a Buddhist...*

*In one of your teishos you mentioned that we are each on our own journey and simply helping each other along the way. Somehow the words you used hit home for me. I can make my own choices about how I proceed. I felt free to lay aside the expectations I was placing on myself and let my practice unfold more naturally in line with my personality and life.*

*At the same time, I feel my practice shifting away from self to encompass the large family network in which I operate as well as my circle of friends and acquaintances and then beyond. I feel the opening of my heart and a developing compassion – as promised*



*by so many writings and teishos. I know now that I am worthy of taking these vows. This commitment to use Buddhist truths and precepts to increase my awareness of universal connection will benefit a much larger community than myself. What joy!*

A few months later Merrily writes:

*Did a quick read of [Taking Our Places](#) and found it very helpful especially the chapters on persistence, vowing and conduct... This process of preparing for Jukai is having surprising results. I am going deeper into my motivation for this public commitment and striving to be rigorous in defining my vow. I want to refine my heart's expression of this vow so that it is specific and true in my life... I am committing to follow the precepts in my day-to-day spiritual and physical life – to use them as the foundation of action, the base that I can look to whenever confusion arises. Further, I have come to see much more clearly the way that this practice affects those around me and helps me to understand the most compassionate direction to take especially in relations with my family. I will focus on the study of the precepts and meditate on breaking through to a truly open heart.*

Considering Merrily's Great Vow I gave her the Dharma Name of Shin-Mei (Heart Vow).



Jukai candidates need to petition in writing at least one month prior to the ceremony. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-Ji for a minimum of six months (including at least two week-long sesshins), must be regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha).

## Annual Meeting

On Sunday, April 6th, 2014, the Chobo-Ji Sangha held its Annual Meeting. At the meeting, Sangha members approved the following members remaining on the Chobo-Ji Board:

Dee Seishun Endelman  
John Daikan Green  
Steve Ganko Hansen  
John Daijo Lowrance  
Sally Zenka Metcalf  
Emily HoU Ross  
Scott Ishin Stalnack  
Bob Daigan Timmer  
Justin Myozan Wadland

Tom Shodo DeGroot left the Board, and we thanked him for his many years of service. Long time Chobo-Ji member and financial supporter John Daijo Lowrance accepted an invitation to be nominated and was elected at the Annual meeting. Seishun stepped down as President of the Board after serving with great dedication for two years.

The Board voted also voted on new officers: Ishin is our new Board President; Ganko will now serve as Vice President; Myozan will be Secretary and Daikan will remain as Treasurer.

## Summer Sesshin

June 20<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a deposit with application by June 15<sup>th</sup>. Applications can be downloaded or found just outside the Zendo. Make your deposit check, \$50 or more, to Chobo-Ji and leave it the bowl by the zendo entrance or mail it to...

Attention: Carolyn Stevens  
Chobo-Ji  
1733 S. Horton St. #7  
Seattle, WA 98144

The cost of sesshin is \$250 (less dues). Sesshin will start Friday evening, 6/21, 5:30-9PM with informal supper, introductions and orientation. Sesshin concludes each evening thereafter

at 10PM. Sesshin ends 11AM, the morning of Friday, 6/28. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town, please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel.

For questions email: [zen@choboji.org](mailto:zen@choboji.org).

## Workshop On Death

"Death is the only wise advisor.."

July 5 -6,

9:30am to 5:00pm Saturday

10am to 1:00pm Sunday

With Leonard Shaw M.S.W., ACSW

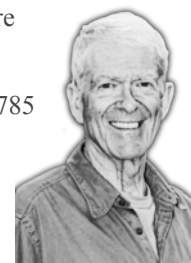
How you feel about death affects how you live your life. This experiential workshop will provide an opportunity for you to explore your feelings about death (or watch others do so while supporting their process). We will also touch on issues such as loss of loved ones, near death experiences and other deaths related themes.

In preparation for the workshop you can go online to read book reviews (or read the entire book): [Being with Dying](#) by Joan Halifax and/or [How We Die](#) by Sherwin B. Nuland. Also, you can make a rough draft of what you might like said at your memorial service or written on your headstone. This is all optional. Regardless, if you are in town, please attend for an unforgettable experience. (Leonard and Genjo are Dharma brothers that go way back.)

Fee: \$50 - \$250

(sliding scale - 80% goes to temple)

For more  
and  
contact  
206-322-5785



information  
registration  
Leonard at  
or visit

[leonard.shaw@comcast.net](mailto:leonard.shaw@comcast.net)

## Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat. 7-8:30 AM; M & W, 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun. 6:30-7:30 PM

Dharma Talks, Sundays: 6/1, 6/15, 7/6, 7/27, 8/3

Zen Intro: Tuesdays, 7:30-9PM, Except 6/25

<b>Precept Class with Genko Ni-Osho ...</b>	<b>May 22nd, 7:30-9pm</b>
<b>Spring Odayaka Sesshin ...</b>	<b>May 23rd - May 25th</b>
<b>Intro to Ten Precepts ...</b>	<b>May 27th, 7:30-9pm</b>
<b>Senior Student Talk/Dialogue (Carolyn Stevens)</b>	<b>May 29th, 7:30-9pm</b>
<b>Sunday Morning Practice ...</b>	<b>June 1st, 9am - noon</b>
<b>Intro to Four Great Vows ...</b>	<b>June 3rd, 7:30-9pm</b>
<b>Precept Class with Genko Ni-Osho ...</b>	<b>June 5th, 7:30-9pm</b>
<b>Book Study Group on Training in Compassion ...</b>	<b>June 7th, 9-11am</b>
<b>Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...</b>	<b>June 8th, 5am - 11:30am</b>
<b>Board Meeting ...</b>	<b>June 8th, 4:30pm</b>
<b>Dharma Interviews with Genjo Osho ...</b>	<b>June 15th, 8pm</b>
<b>Summer Dai Sesshin ...</b>	<b>June 20th - 27th</b>
<b>Death and Dying Workshop ...</b>	<b>July 5th &amp; 6th</b>
<b>Precept Class with Genko Ni-Osho ...</b>	<b>July 10th, 7:30-9pm</b>
<b>Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...</b>	<b>July 20th, 5am - 11:30am</b>
<b>Precept Class with Genko Ni-Osho ...</b>	<b>Aug. 7th, 7:30-9pm</b>



*Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji*

Plum Mountain News  
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