

Primary Point



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Kwan Um School of Zen
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Winter Kyol Che 2015/16

NOVEMBER 26, 2015 ~ FEBRUARY 22, 2016
AT SEUNG SAHN INT'L ZEN CENTER MU SANG SA

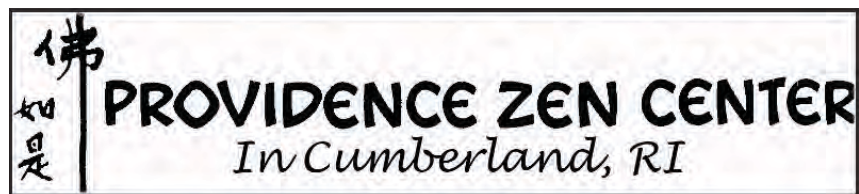
Mu Sang Sa is located on an energy point of Gye Ryong Mountain which is renowned in Korea for its strong mystical energy .

Zen Master Dae Bong Sunim and Hye Tong Sunim will be the Guiding Teachers for the Kyol Che. Also Zen Master Bon Shim and many teachers of Kwan Um School of Zen will join the retreat.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
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Summer Kyol Che 2015
July 6 - July 31
Winter Kyol Che 2016
January 4 - April 1
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practice.
Dharma talks and Kong An
interviews.



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The Kwan Um School of Zen supports the worldwide teaching schedule of the Zen Masters and Ji Do Poep Sas, assists the member Zen centers and groups in their growth, issues publications on contemporary Zen practice, and supports dialogue among religions. If you would like to become a member of the School and receive *Primary Point*, see page 31. The circulation is 2,200 copies.

The views expressed in *Primary Point* are not necessarily those of this journal or the Kwan Um School of Zen.

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Cover: Misty early morning rain at Un Mun Sa Bhikkuni Temple, South Korea. Photo by Jerry Botha.

Kyol Che Man Cham—1982

Zen Master Seung Sahn

Editor’s Note: Much of this issue is devoted to the practice of Kyol Che, the traditional 90-day retreat. Our school is able to offer these retreats in Europe, America and Asia at a number of centers. Students have the unique opportunity of practicing intensively during this period with a teacher’s guidance and with a sangha. Some of our teachers and students have offered their perspective on this practice, which we are grateful to share. We begin with a traditional Man Cham speech by Zen Master Seung Sahn from 1982, to start the Winter Kyol Che at Diamond Hill Monastery at Providence Zen Center. Man Cham is a lengthy formal speech that was part of the Korean and Chinese tradition in the past. The speech is too long to include in its entirety here, so we left out gates 7–9. You may find the full text here: <http://www.kwanumzen.org/?teaching=kyol-che-man-cham-1982>.

[Soen Sa Nim ascended the high stand and sat down. Holding the Zen stick and hitting the rostrum:]

Is it Buddha?

[Holding up the Zen stick and hitting the rostrum:]

Is it dharma?

[Holding up the Zen stick and hitting the rostrum:]

Is it the true way?

Everybody already has Buddha, dharma and the true way, but some people understand, some don’t understand. A long time ago someone asked Zen Master Lin Chi, “What is Buddha?” He only shouted, “KATZ!” Someone asked Zen Master Dok Sahn. He only hit. Someone asked Zen Master Gu Ji. He only held up one finger. All three Zen masters made a big mistake. But when someone asked Zen Master Un Mun, “What is Buddha?” he answered, “Dry shit on a stick.” Not bad! When someone asked Zen Master Dong Sahn, he said, “Three pounds of flax.” Also not bad.

Next, what is dharma?

Zen Master Lin Chi again shouted, “KATZ!” Zen Master Dok Sahn hit the floor. Zen Master Gu Ji held up one finger. These answers are OK, but one more step is necessary.

Someone asked Zen Master Joju, “The ten thousand dharmas return to the one. Where does the one return?” Joju said, “When I was in Ch’ing Chou I made a robe. It weighed seven pounds.” That answer is OK, but we must find Joju’s mistake.

[Holding up the Zen stick and hitting the rostrum:]

Next, what is the true way?

Zen Master Lin Chi again shouted, “KATZ!” Zen Master Dok Sahn only hit the floor. Zen Master Gu Ji only held up one finger.

But once Joju asked Zen Master Nam Cheon, “What is the true way?”

Zen Master Nam Cheon replied, “Everyday mind is the true way.” What is everyday mind? When you are hungry, eat. When you are tired, sleep. If someone is hungry, give them some food. If someone is thirsty, give them something to drink. That is everyday mind.

Then Joju asked him, “Then shall I try to keep it or not?”

Nam Cheon replied, “If you try to keep it, you’re already making a mistake.”

Joju asked again, “If I do not try to keep it, how can I understand the true way?”

Then Zen Master Nam Cheon said, “The true way is not dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion. Not understanding is blankness. If you



Photo: Josette LeBlanc

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completely attain the true way, it is clear like space. So why do you make right and wrong?" When Joju heard that, he got enlightenment. So I ask you, what did Joju attain?

Today is Kyol Che Day, the first day of our 90-day retreat, Sam Dong Kyol Che. Sam Dong means winter: Winter Kyol Che. We have 90 days to find our mind, the dharma, and the true way—Buddha, dharma, and the true way. Buddha is not special. What is Buddha? Buddha is clear mind. Mind-light is dharma. Mind without hindrance is the true way. But Buddha, dharma, and the true way—where do they come from? They come from our mind. But where does our mind come from?

If someone says, "I have already found my mind," then he has already become blind; he cannot see anything. Someone else says, "I don't know my mind." But you cannot hide your body. Then where can you find your mind? If you find your mind, you have a problem. If you don't find your mind, you also have a problem. What can you do?

KATZ!

1 + 89 = 90.

[At this point, Soen Sa Nim chanted a four-line poem in Korean. After each two lines, the Sangha joined him in strongly chanting, once, "Namu Amitabul," bowing together to the sound of the moktak. Soen Sa Nim then read the poem in English.]

*The Great Way is not difficult;
Only do not make distinctions.
If you want to understand that
There are many cars on Highway 95.*

So, for 90 days, what will you do? The great work of life and death. Shakyamuni was born in Kapila Palace. He was a prince and it was possible for him to become a king. But he had a big question: "What is a human being? What are birth, old age, sickness and death?" He wanted to understand those questions. The human route is coming empty-handed, going empty-handed. When you are born, where do you come from? When you die, where do you go? If you understand that, you understand the true way. So where are you coming from? Where do you go? That's a very important point.

The true way is not difficult. Don't make distinctions; then everything is the true way. When you see, when you hear, when you smell, when you taste, when you touch, when you are thinking—everything is the true way. But if you are checking your mind, checking outside, checking something—then you have already lost the true way. So don't make anything. For 90 days we do the great work of life and death. What is life? What is death? An eminent teacher said,

*Life is like a floating cloud which appears.
Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.
Originally the floating cloud does not exist.
Life and death, coming and going are also like that.*

That is our life; that is our death. If you understand that, then you have no problem. Your body is like a floating cloud. But there is one thing that always remains clear, that is not dependent on life and death. What is that one pure and clear thing? If you attain that, then you will get freedom from life and death.

We have three kinds of freedom from life and death: first, wisdom of freedom from life and death; next, attainment of freedom from life and death; next, correct function of freedom from life and death.

First, wisdom of freedom from life and death—what does this mean? Our body is like a floating cloud: it appears and disappears, appears and disappears. But there is one thing that always remains clear and is not dependent on life and death. If you understand that, then you will get wisdom of freedom from life and death. When you go for an interview, the master dharma teacher [now called a Ji Do Poep Sa Nim] will ask you, "Where are you coming from? When you die, where will you go?"

Everybody who has sat one Yong Maeng Jong Jin already understands. It is necessary to digest this understanding and make it yours. After one year, two years, three years, four years, seven years, slowly, slowly you digest this understanding and it becomes yours. Then you can control your feeling, your condition, your situation. And your center will not move. There is no life, no death—you are very strong. Any kind of condition, any kind of situation, any kind of feeling can appear, coming and going, and your center won't move. At that time, you attain freedom from life and death. This means life and death without hindrance; no matter what kind of situation, condition or feeling is coming, going, your center is not moving. That is a very important point! So more practicing is necessary—only go straight, more practicing, practicing, practicing. Then your unmoving center can function correctly in every situation and relationship.

Some people try a mantra—only, "Kwan Seum Bosal," or "Gate, Gate," or "Om Mani Padme Hum"—and try to attain samadhi. Samadhi is not-moving mind. Not-moving mind is the absolute—there are no opposites. No opposites means there is no life, no death. No matter what kind of condition comes, only "Kwan Seum Bosal." Whatever kind of bad feeling comes, you don't care—only "Kwan Seum Bosal." So your situation and condi-

tion and feeling are no hindrance. This samadhi mind is the attainment of freedom from life and death. But you still don't understand correct function. It is necessary to go straight, go straight, more and more. Samadhi mind means no mind, so you have no direction.

Next, to attain no-hindrance mind control, more practicing is necessary. No hindrance means you don't care—any kind of feeling, any kind of condition, any kind of situation is no hindrance. And controlling your mind means that when your feelings come and go and your condition changes, you can control your feeling, condition and situation; then correct action is possible. So then, moment to moment, correct function, correct situation, correct relationship are possible. When somebody is hungry, give them food; when somebody is thirsty, give them something to drink. If somebody is sad, be sad with them; if somebody is happy, be happy together—that is correct function. Correct function means your correct situation and correct relationship. That is the function of freedom from life and death.

For 90 days we are practicing, which means doing the great work of life and death. We make life and death correct; to make them correct means to completely understand what life is and completely understand what death is. To completely understand means that there is no life, no death. If somebody has a bad feeling, I have a bad feeling. That means together you live and die.

There are three kinds of freedom from life and death. First, understand the wisdom of freedom from life and death. Life is death; death is life. Next, no life, no death. Next, freedom from life and death. If somebody cries, I cry. If somebody is sad, I am sad. That is using life and death to save all beings. So, after 90 days, you can completely understand life and death.

How can you understand life and death? How can you understand this kind of practicing mind?

Our school has ten gates. Today, I will talk about these ten gates. Then everybody will practice for 90 days and include the ten gates in your practicing. Then your practice and the ten gates will make wisdom of freedom from life and death, then attainment of freedom of life and death, and then the complete functioning of freedom from life and death.

First Gate: Someone asked Zen Master Joju, “Does a dog have Buddha nature?” Joju said, “Mu.” (“No”).

The first question is this: Buddha said all things have Buddha nature. Buddha nature means substance. All things have this substance or Buddha nature. But Joju said the dog has no Buddha nature. Which one is correct?

The second question is: Joju said “Mu.” What does “Mu” mean?

The next question: I ask you, does a dog have Buddha nature? What can you do? Older students all understand that, but understanding cannot help you. The understanding must become yours. You must attain the correct function of freedom from life and death—only understanding the wisdom of freedom from life and death cannot help you.

Second Gate: A monk once asked Joju, “I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me, Master.”

Joju said, “Did you have breakfast?” “Yes,” replied the monk. “Then,” said Joju, “wash your bowls.” The monk was enlightened.

What did the monk attain? This is very simple. “Please teach me.” “Did you have breakfast?” “Yes, I have.” “Then wash your bowls.” That's the correct function, correct relationship. That is everyday mind. This is an everyday-mind kong-an.



Photo: Josette LeBlanc

The first gate has three kong-ans. The first is called attached-like-this kong-an. The second two are just-like-this kong-ans. The second gate kong-an is a just-like-this kong-an. What did the monk attain? If you attain that point, you understand moment to moment correct situation, correct function, correct relationship. This monk attained his correct situation.

Third Gate: Zen Master Seong Am used to sit every day in the dharma room facing the blue mountain. He used to call to himself every day, “Master!” And he would answer, “Yes?” “You must keep clear!” “Yes!” “Never be deceived by others, any day, any time!” “Yes! Yes!”

Seong Am used to call to himself and answer himself—two minds. Which one is the correct master? Some people have not only two minds, but three minds, four minds, five

minds, or eighty minds, many, many minds—pain mind, sad mind, sex mind, money mind—many kinds of mind. Seong Am has only two minds: “Master!” “Yes!” “Keep a clear mind!”—two minds. Which one is the correct master? Two minds become one. If you become one, there is no mind, no master. If you attain no mind, no master, then you attain your true master. To attain this, first your master and your mind must disappear; then you are nothing. If you are nothing, then your eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body can work correctly and you can see your master—everything is your master. At interview time, the teacher will ask you this kong-an, and you must give a good answer.

Fourth Gate: Zen Master Hok Am said, “Why does Bodhidharma have no beard?” What is Bodhidharma’s original face?

I ask you, why does Bodhidharma have no beard? This is an attack kong-an. Here is an example: There is a very famous painter, and everybody wants him to draw their face. They will pay him much money to do this. “Please, will you draw my face? Make a picture of me?”

So he makes a portrait of you, and when he is finished with it, there is your finished portrait. Look at that! No hair! It is like a monk! You are very surprised. He is a famous painter! Why no hair? So what can you do? Already you have paid much money, and he is a famous painter! Maybe there is some meaning! Then what do you ask him?

In the same way, Bodhidharma has a beard. Then why does Zen Master Hok Am ask, “Why does Bodhidharma have no beard?” That, we say, is an attack kong-an. There are many kinds of attack kong-ans. Another example is this: You clean your body in the Zen center’s shower room. But where do you clean your mind? That’s an attack kong-an. Here is another example: This world is complete stillness. Where do the sun, the moon and the stars come from? These are all attack kong-ans. So, again I ask you, “Why does Bodhidharma have no beard?” Tell me! Tell me!

Fifth Gate: Next is a famous kong-an: Hyang Eom’s “Up a tree.” Master Hyang Eom said, “It is like a man up a tree who is hanging from a branch by his teeth; his hands cannot grasp a bough, his feet cannot touch the tree. (He is tied and bound.) Another man under the tree asks him, “Why did Bodhidharma come to China?” If he does not answer, he evades his duty (and will be killed). If he answers, he will fall and lose his life. If you were in the tree, how could you stay alive?”

You are hanging by your teeth, so you cannot open your mouth. Also, you cannot move your hands; you cannot move your body. You cannot do anything. That, we

say is a Kyung Chul Mun kong-an. Everything is stopped. Nothing is possible, but one thing is possible. What is the one thing? Only one way. Not two ways—you only have one way. If you find that, then a good answer is possible. The question is, “Why did Bodhidharma come to China?” If you open your mouth to answer, you are already dead! If you do not answer, you evade your duty as a bodhisattva and will be killed. If you were in the tree, how could you stay alive? That is the big question.

If you pass this gate, you have finished half of the kong-ans. We have about 1,700 kong-ans. If you pass this gate, you will have passed the equivalent of 850 kong-ans. So this is a difficult kong-an. If you only pass the kong-an, it’s not interesting. If it becomes yours, then OK—your mind and your body and your world become one and function correctly. At that time you attain freedom, correct function, and freedom from life and death is possible. So attain freedom from life and death. That means there is no life, no death. But if you only have that, you have a problem, so we will check the next kong-an.

Sixth Gate: Dropping ashes on the Buddha. Somebody comes to the Zen center, smoking a cigarette. He blows smoke and drops ashes on the Buddha. If you are standing there at that time, what could you do?

This is a famous kong-an. Students of one year and even older students still don’t understand this kong-an. Maybe after three or four years they still don’t understand. But if you only go straight—don’t know, try, try, try, then maybe after three years it is possible to pass this gate. In this kong-an, this cigarette man thinks, “I already have enlightenment. I already have this Buddha or dharma, or true way.” He is very attached to his idea that he has attained universal substance; he has attained freedom from life and death. No life, no death—he has attained one point. But he still has a problem because he is attached to one point, attached to emptiness—substance, everything is the same.

An eminent teacher said, “One by one, each thing is complete and each thing has it.” For example, this is a stick. The stick’s substance and your substance—are they the same substance? When you are thinking, your mind and my mind are different. When you cut off all your thinking, then your mind and my mind are the same. If you keep don’t-know mind 100 percent, only go straight—don’t know—then your don’t-know mind, my don’t-know mind, everybody’s don’t-know mind are all the same don’t-know mind. This same don’t-know mind has already cut off all our thinking. To stop thinking is no thinking. No thinking is empty mind. Empty mind is before thinking. Your before-thinking mind is your substance; my before-thinking mind is my substance—then

everybody's substance is all the same substance. When you keep don't-know mind 100 percent, only go straight—don't know, then already you are the universe and the universe is you. You and everything already have become one. That, we say, is primary point. So don't know is not don't know; don't know is primary point. Primary point's name is don't know. Somebody said primary point is mind, or Buddha, or God, or nature, or substance, or the absolute, or energy, or holiness, or consciousness. But the true primary point has no name, no form. There is no speech, no word, because the primary point is before thinking. Only keep don't-know mind 100 percent and then you and everything have already become one.

Then if you keep this don't-know, this stick and you—are they the same or different?

[Soen Sa Nim hits the Zen stick on the rostrum.]

Do you understand this point? If you are only attached to this point, there is no you, no I, no mind, no Buddha, nothing at all. So you think, "Oh, I am already enlightened!" So it is possible for you to come to the temple smoking a cigarette and drop ashes on the Buddha—no problem. But you don't understand your correct situation, correct function, correct relationship moment to moment. Everyday mind is Zen mind. But this man has only attained freedom from life and death. He doesn't understand his correct function. So one more step is necessary. When he is dropping ashes on the Buddha, at that moment what can you do? How can you teach him?

So, during the 90 days of hard training, passing this kong-an is very important—not only for people on Kyol Che, but for outside working people. Sometimes the people outside Kyol Che do better than the people who sit Kyol Che. Who is better? After the 90 days, we will check, OK?

[As noted, we are not including gates 7–9, for purposes of length.—Ed.]

Tenth Gate: The mouse eats cat food, but the cat bowl is broken.

What does this mean? Does everybody understand? Some may understand, but understanding cannot help you. You must attain, and then this kong-an becomes yours. That kong-an, we say, is subject just-like-this. Mouse, cat food,

bowl, broken. So the cat bowl is broken. This kong-an. This kong-an is very easy, too simple. Can you see your nose? Yes, I can see my nose. Can you see your eyes? Not possible! If you want to see your eyes, you must put down your want-to-see mind. Then you can attain your eyes. It is the same as if you want to understand your mind—it is not possible. You must attain your mind. Someone may say, "I have already attained my mind." That is not possible—that is crazy! That is a clever mind. To become stupid means, for example, some day your stomach is not feeling very good, and you want ice cream. Then, "Oh, I have a quarter—I can get some ice cream." Then you go to the ice cream store and buy cream for 25 cents. Then you eat it, and then you feel very good! Wonderful! So a quarter is 25 cents; 25 cents buys ice cream; ice cream is gone. Then—wonderful! So the quarter is changing, changing, changing—wonderful. Mouse, cat food, cat bowl, broken, then what? Everybody is very clever. Very clever

means they don't understand. You must become stupid—then you can get the point of having a simple mind. Thinking mind becomes don't-know mind, becomes simple. Become simple, become simple. Stupid people only do it! The clever mind is checking, checking, checking all the time, or holding something, attached to something. If you want to understand this kong-an, then you must become stupid.

So for 90 days, do stupid practicing, OK? Also, outside working people must become stupid. How can you become stupid? Always take don't-know medicine. Don't-know medicine is very strong. You can digest any kind of understanding and become simple. Also, don't-know medicine

is a wonderful kind of medicine. For any sickness, any kind of problem, any kind of want, don't-know medicine can fix it and make it correct. Number one medicine! So only go straight—don't know. Then you can pass the ten gates—try, try, try. If you pass all ten gates, then this world will almost become yours. Becoming yours means you will attain the function of freedom from life and death. Then correct function, correct relationship, correct situation is possible. This is a very important point! If you pass these ten gates, I will give you a present of an eleventh gate!

Eleventh Gate: Three men are walking. The first man makes a sword sound; the next man takes out a handkerchief; the third man waves his hand.

What does it mean? You don't understand this? Then only go straight—don't-know, and you can attain this gate.



Photo: Josette LeBlanc

This kong-an is object just-like-this. Subject just-like-this means when you are hungry, what? Eat! That is subject just-like-this. If somebody is hungry, what? Give them food! That is object just-like-this. These three men have different actions, but the situation is the same. The function is different, the condition is different, but it is the same situation. So, what is the relationship? What is the function? What is the situation? Same situation, same condition, same relationship, but the function is different: one makes a sword sound, one takes out a handkerchief, one waves his hand—different action, but the meaning is the same. For example, you go to a theater where somebody is doing a one-man show. He tells a very funny story, he acts funny, talks funny, and then everybody laughs. Everybody is happy. Many different people are laughing with different styles. Somebody is laughing, “Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!” Somebody else is laughing, “Hu, Hu, Hu, Hu!” Somebody else is laughing, “Ho, Ho, Ho, Ho!”—different laughing styles. The action is different, but the condition and the situation are the same. So what kind of condition, what kind of situation, what kind of relationship? You must attain that. That, we say, is object just-like-this.

Today we are checking all the ten gates and the eleventh gate—the three men walking kong-an. Why are we checking this? Because if you don’t understand them, you must keep don’t-know mind to become stronger. If you don’t understand, don’t understand, don’t understand, then your don’t-know mind becomes very strong and a big don’t-know is possible, which means great question or great doubt. Completely don’t-know, then you will get complete enlightenment. If you have a small question, only small enlightenment is possible. There are many kinds of enlightenment—small enlightenment, middle enlightenment, big enlightenment, then finally, no enlightenment. No enlightenment is complete enlightenment. The Heart Sutra says, “No attainment with nothing to attain.”

George is teaching the 90-day Kyol Che people; Linc and Bobby are teaching the members working outside of Kyol Che, so we will have strong outside practicing and strong inside practicing.¹ Only go straight—don’t-know. Don’t make anything, OK? Don’t check anything, don’t hold anything, don’t want anything, don’t attach to anything. If you want something, then you have a problem; if you want enlightenment, then you have a number-one

big problem. Then you will have a headache, an energy-up headache. Don’t want anything; don’t attach to anything. “I want to sit correctly,” “I want to be a correct Zen student,” “I want correct practicing.” If you are attached to any kong-an, then you have a problem. So don’t check, don’t hold, don’t want, don’t attach—which means don’t make anything. Then your mind is already complete.

Enlightenment is not special. Put it all down, everything! Only don’t know. Then don’t know will open by itself. In the springtime, all flowers open up by themselves. If you go to a greenhouse in the wintertime, you will find many flowers—only hothouse flowers. That’s OK, but they are not correct, not strong. Outside, spring comes, the grass grows by itself. Flowers are blooming. That is the true way.

So I hope you only go straight, don’t know, for 90 days, and don’t make anything. Then your center will become stronger, stronger, stronger. Then you will be able to control your feeling, your condition, and your situation.

Then first, attain the wisdom of freedom from life and death. Next, attain freedom from life and death. Finally, attain the correct function of freedom from life and death.

So I ask you: First, the wisdom of freedom from life and death; next, the attainment of freedom from life and death; finally, the correct function of freedom from life and death: Which one is best?

If you find which one is best, then the dog is laughing, “Ho, Ho! You are just like me.” That is wonderful. If you cannot find the best one, then the Stone Tiger is laughing, “Ha, Ha, Ha! You are stupid.” More practicing is necessary! If you want to know which one is best, then go outside and ask the snow, “Why are you white?” Then the snow will give you a good answer.

[Soen Sa Nim’s penetrating Korean chanting again filled the dharma room, and again, after each pair of lines, the sangha joined him wholeheartedly in chanting, once, strongly, “Namu Amitabul,” to the sound of the moktak. During the chanting Soen Sa Nim hit the rostrum three times with his stick, the final time just as the chanting finished. He then descended from the high stand.] ♦

Note

1. This refers to George Bowman, now Zen Master Bo Mun; Bobby Rhodes, now Zen Master Seong Hyang; and Linc Rhodes JDPSN.



Photo: Josette LeBlanc

Just Show Up

Zen Master Soeng Hyang

Where does the inspiration and strength to do an extended retreat come from? How do we arrange our life so it can accommodate time spent nurturing our commitment to deepening our practice? Perhaps the first barrier will be thinking we don't have the time or the money. (I'm not a monk, I don't have a sponsor.) Before even looking at the practicalities of time and money, it is far more important to look at the tremendous pain and confusion going on all around us, and perhaps even in our own family. How do we break through the walls of our ignorance? How do we begin to see our habits and fears as mere illusions, ego formations that we can let go of? How do we open up to compassion and wisdom so we can begin to perceive how to help others?

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Most of us already have quite a bit of faith, courage and questions. We wouldn't be reading these Kyol Che pep talks if we didn't. I wouldn't have met my teacher if I didn't already have respect for the Buddhist teaching pointing out that human beings are already buddhas, just waiting to hatch out of our thin shells of delusion. Zen Master Seung Sahn gave me the instructions on how to question and showed me the potential for the courage needed to enter long retreats. He was a walking and talking advertisement for what we in the Kwan Um school like to call "Just Do It" mind. He also gave me the encouragement and instruction that I needed to go into my first long retreat. The fact that he had done this kind of training and strongly advocated it was what I needed to have enough trust to try it myself.

Whenever I have set time aside to do a retreat, there is a part of me—the checking, holding and making backseat driver—that says, "Wouldn't you rather stay home? It's going to be hard! I'm not even sure this practice actually works." I mean, every time there is at least a little of that kind of thinking! One would guess that after over 40 years of doing retreats my "faith" mind would rule, but no, it still gets slightly stuck with little pieces of that thin and tenacious ego shell. It's all so very interesting!

The process of committing to and showing up for a retreat is a glorious and marvelous feat! From the perspective of

the *big* picture, it is the ultimate manifestation of believing in one's self. Once the retreat has started, all we have to do is follow the schedule. Following the schedule is the most important thing, whether it's a solo retreat or Kyol Che. The second most important thing is to diligently let go of all thoughts that are not of this moment. Now that is of course difficult, but because you have already done the hardest thing, which was showing up for the retreat in the first place, of course you can chip away at letting go of uncreative mind formations. Just keep following the schedule and making an effort to continuously drop into this moment.

It's pretty easy to understand how prostrations and chanting help replace the egocentric mind habits, and that is why every time I've done a 100-day solo retreat I have scheduled these two activities for the majority of the practice. We

have the opportunity to tailor a solo retreat to meet our specific strengths and needs. How does gazing at the floor for periods of 30 to 40 minutes help bring us to clarity? How can we manage to stay on the cushion when we're bored, frustrated, falling asleep, in physical and mental anguish after perhaps only 10 minutes? If our vow and direction are clear, we will manage to unconditionally keep showing up.



Photo: Sven Mahr

As I write this I am fresh out of doing two weeks of Providence Zen Center's winter Kyol Che. I entered with my usual trepidations and left feeling more open, more intuitive, more grateful, more patient with myself and others, and of course more compassionate. These are the huge benefits received after surrendering myself—that thin tenacious shell—to the schedule, the chants, the prostrations, the floor and the simple soups and oatmeal. The Buddha and all teachers who followed after him are our inspiration and our great teachers. Let us thank them by embracing the practice. Let us have the courage and wisdom to find ways to find the time and support needed to do extended retreats. We are all sentient beings and all sentient beings are us. Liberation is in the doing; the doing is in just this moment. Never underestimate the tremendous gift that is this moment. Respect our need to rein in our everyday habits and arrive at the place of diligent training. ♦

If You Hold the Eye's Opinion, You Get Eye Suffering

Zen Master Dae Bong on Sutra Study and Zen

Excerpt from a dharma talk during Winter Kyol Che 2014–2015 at Mu Sang Sa Temple

Student: How do I make Buddhist studies balance with my practice? Could it become a hindrance, if I am going to prepare to go to school?

Zen Master Dae Bong: When you are studying, just study. That's all. The sutras are written to be meditation. That's why they are chanted. If you are paying attention, they become meditation themselves.

I don't read the sutras often, but for example, the sutras read something like this:

"If you hold the eye's opinion, you get eye suffering. If you hold the ear's opinion, you get ear suffering. If you hold the nose's opinion, you get nose suffering. If you hold the mouth's opinion, you get mouth suffering. If you hold the body's opinion, you get body suffering. If you hold the mind's opinion, you get mind suffering. If you put down the eye's opinion, then correct eye appears. If you put down the ear's opinion, then the correct ear appears."

That is how Buddha teaches. If you were to study classical Western music from Mozart or Beethoven, they come up with an interesting theme, a melody. Then they repeat it three or four times. Then they make variations on it. Then they repeat it again, and then finish. Back then, nobody had a tape recorder, nobody had an iPod, so maybe they were never going to hear it again. So the composers repeat it, repeat it, repeat it, do some interesting variations and repeat it, repeat it, repeat it. Then it's in your consciousness. You don't think about other things.

You become one with the music.

It is the same with the sutras. When I started reading the sutras, I was amazed. There are six sense realms. So Buddha teaches about each one. Then he changes something, and teaches about each one. Then he changes again, and teaches about each one. After a while, you are on a ride somewhere, and it's not where your desire, anger and ignorance mind takes you. It's taking you into "clear," a clear view of the universe. This clear view is already the path to enlightenment, the road to enlightenment. So when you are reading, just read. Look at it as music and pay attention. Just do it. Otherwise, as Zen Master Seung Sahn used to say, "The book is reading you." That's all. You don't need to think about it. That is why the sutras are chanted over and over.

We chant the Heart Sutra in Korean and English every day, every day, every day, and I have done it now for 38 years, twice a day. But still sometimes when we are chanting the Heart Sutra, I feel, "Wow! What the sutra says is amazing." It's so much better than some crap on television about somebody and somebody else. So you are lucky: instead of watching soap operas and gossiping with your friends about your relationships, you are reading the sutras over and over and over again! You don't need to think about it. Then it will start to hit you if you pay attention, OK? Then you add that to correct bowing, chanting and sitting, and *Boom!* Get enlightenment. OK? So don't spend a lot of time thinking in school. Just do it. ♦

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Kyol Che Is Three Great Things

Zen Master Dae Bong

Excerpt from the Hae Jae dharma talk at Mu Sang Sa Temple, Winter Kyol Che 2013–2014

Zen Master Seung Sahn always taught that Kyol Che is three things. First, Kyol Che is a dry cleaning machine. Our brain and body are the number-one best computer in the world but they have lots of dust. Desire, anger and ignorance dust; also many opinions dust. So during retreat we only go straight don't know. We use this "don't-know"

soap, put down our opinions, desire, anger and ignorance, only follow the situation together and keep a big question, just don't-know mind. Then this don't-know soap is cleaning, cleaning, cleaning our consciousness. After Kyol Che our consciousness is much cleaner. We can keep the correct situation, correct function and correct relationship

(Continued on page 15)

Student Reflections on Kyol Che

From Wu Bong Sa Kyol Che, Poland

“Basic Logic”

Wieneke Olthof

1. Every day I see my wrists,
throughout my stay they have become thinner.
Every day I am surprised:
are these wrists really mine?
2. The tap in my apartment does not really get warm.
And most of the time I need cold water anyways.
Instead of turning it from hot to cold,
Why not always leave it on hot?

“Why We Sit”

Katrin Hahn

Once, there was a woman. Her name was Sylvia Plath.
She asked a big question:
“Is there a way out of mind?”
Suffering mind. Desperately looking for the exit.
How can I help?

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Photo: Barry Briggs

From Diamond Hill Zen Monastery, Providence Zen Center, USA

“5:15 a.m.”

Monica Glennon

The bell rings. Its sound reverberates long after it's struck.
We chant. Our voices vibrate all that's around us,
As the rising sun rouses everything it touches,
Calling every living thing to
Wake Up!

From Mu Sang Sa, Korea

“Got to Have Faith”—excerpts

Michelle Kaufmann

During a dharma talk that was being given by Zen Master Dae Bong, I asked if a song which is “stuck in your head,” could be a sort of mantra. I never knew that this was going to be a question for much discussion during a time of relaxed silence.

After the intensive week of a retreat is finished, we are given a break and generally this entails that silence does not need to be kept. We began sharing the various songs that were stuck in our heads. Kathy Park mentioned the true story of a man who was stuck in a crevice in the ice and lay waiting to die. This man had “The Rivers of Babylon” stuck in his head as he lay there with a broken leg. Eventually he ended up hearing the sounds of a river and crawled to it, where he was rescued. Kathy said that that song stuck in his head was his true nature guiding him.

After our time of rest the retreat began again with the full schedule. I found that after the intensive week I had a lot of intense negative emotions coming up. I was starting to question what the point of these retreats was; perhaps the meditating wasn't working; perhaps I wasn't doing it correctly; perhaps it wasn't for me; perhaps I should leave—these questions and more pervaded my mind as a deep doubt settled in. Then in one moment I paid some attention to a song that had been stuck in my head at the time, George Michael's “Got to Have Faith,” and all of a sudden my doubt disappeared. I felt like I was listening to my true nature for the first time. I understood that this was a process and that my added judgment that these “bad” emotions shouldn't be there was only causing myself suffering. It suddenly clicked: There was a clarity; I wasn't fighting myself anymore, and I just let the uprising emotions be. By the end of the retreat the highs and lows had settled, and I now have this tool for dealing with them. That was one of the unexpected gems of the winter Kyol Che that will always be with me. ♦

INKA CEREMONY FOR Jason Quinn

March 28, 2015, at the Providence Zen Center

DHARMA COMBAT

Zen Master Bon Hae: So what do I understand? If you say “you already understand,” you’re dead.

Quinn PSN: You already understand.

ZMBH: You’re dead!

Quinn PSN: The dog runs after the bone.

ZMBH: [*Holds hands like paws.*] Arf! Arf!

Quinn PSN: You’re barking up the wrong tree!

Question: So, Zen is about here and now. But we have tradition, we have lineages, so what does Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, have to do with right now?

Quinn PSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

Quinn PSN: What color is the floor?

Q: The floor is brown.

Quinn PSN: Hui Neng just appeared.

Question: At the beginning of the ceremony it’s not already decided, but first we have questions before we know if there’s a teacher or not. So there are 30 questions. So my question to you is, how many more questions until you become a teacher?

Quinn PSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

Quinn PSN: Keep counting!

Q: That’s not really enough.

Quinn PSN: The dog runs after the bone.

DHARMA SPEECH

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Everything in this universe is appearing and disappearing. This is the realm of opposites.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra says that when both appearing and disappearing disappear, then this stillness is bliss. This is the realm of before thinking.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Take another step and enter into moment world, where appearing is appearing, disappearing is disappearing.

But all these statements are false.

Why?

KATZ!

Outside it is snowing, inside the candles are burning bright.

First I would like to thank everyone for coming and supporting the school. Without sangha, this school would not exist. I would also like to thank Zen Master Dae Kwang for all of his teaching over the years and still to this day. Thank you to Zen Master Bon Soeng for believing in me and knowing when to pick the fruit. And of course, thank you to my family for your endless support and strong encouragement.

In the main entryway here at the Providence Zen Center, there is a calligraphy on the wall just to the right as you enter. The English translation states, “Three days looking into the self, a thousand-year treasure. Whole life chasing power and things is gone in an instant.” When I first read this several years ago, I was reminded of a period in my life just before I started practicing where everything was falling apart. My job was disappearing, my relationship was disappearing and money was disappearing. As I looked around, I saw many people who were spending so much time and energy chas-

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Photo: Paul Brymer

ing something outside of themselves. When this thing changed or disappeared, they were deeply dissatisfied. We can see this happening in our own lives. We either don't get what we want, then end up dissatisfied, or we get what we want, but we can't keep it. There is not one thing in this world we can keep. Or, we get what we want but it is not enough or maybe we wish it could be just a little bit different.

The Buddha said the reason we are dissatisfied is because we don't understand our original nature and we don't see the nature of cause and effect. We create this "I," which means there is a "you." Then we fall into the realm of opposites, the realm of good and bad, right and wrong, like and dislike, white and black. We get pulled around and around by name and form. Out of this appears greed, anger, fear, jealousy, discrimination. This clouds our view, which then creates many problems in the world.

The good news is that there is another way. As the calligraphy states, "Three days of looking into self, a thousand-year treasure." Three days of looking into the self means right now in this moment, what is this? What am I doing right now? What is this "I"? If we look at that with sincerity, honesty and openness, it is possible to return to the mind before thinking. Before thinking is our original nature. In our school we call it "don't know."

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

Did you hear that?



Photo: Paul Brymer

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

That doesn't have good and bad, right and wrong, like and dislike, white and black.

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

That doesn't have greed, anger, fear, jealousy or discrimination.

[Hits the table with the Zen stick.]

That doesn't have "I" or "you." It doesn't even have Buddhism or Zen. It's before thinking. It's even before *[hits the table with the Zen stick].*

Now listen. *[Long pause.]*

Look. *[Long pause.]*

Everything is already clear. It's pretty simple. From here it is very easy to see how everything in this universe is connected. It's not just some spiritual idea. If you look at a bicycle closely, you see that there are many parts. Each part is connected and functioning according to its nature. Just as the sun, moon, stars, trees, rivers, ocean and animals, everything in this universe is connected and functioning according to its nature. It's just that sometimes human beings do not see this connection. Because of this attachment to "I," we separate ourselves from everything else. Then we do not know how to respond to this universe, which causes problems for ourselves and everything around us. So it is very important that we practice. We actually have to do it. We cannot think our way out of suffering. Just talking about our original nature it is not enough. We have to do it. It is not that difficult. Just recently someone said to me, "That is very difficult, I can't do that!" So it's important to let go of "difficult." Let go of "I can't." Even let go of "I can."

In 2006 I did a 90-day solo retreat. Before the retreat I had asked Zen Master Dae Kwang to create a schedule for me. When I looked at the retreat schedule he gave me, right away I noticed that it included five sets of 200 bows a day. That's 1,000 bows a day! I was surprised and a little nervous to see this. I had never done more than 500 bows a day, and three months of 1000 bows a day is quite a lot. On day number three of the retreat, I was bowing, bowing and bowing. My legs were sore, knees were sore, back was sore. Then a little checking ap-

peared. “Ahhhhh, day number three. There are 87 more days to go. Let’s see, 87 days times 1,000 bows, that’s eighty seven THOUSAND more bows to do! I can’t do that! Not possible!” Then the opposite mind appeared. “I can do it. I have sat so many long retreats and lived in Zen centers for a long time. I can do it! No, I can’t do it. I can do it! No, I can’t do it! I can! I can’t!” Then at some point, “I can” and “I can’t” disappeared. What appeared was “don’t know if this is possible or not but . . . this bow.” Bow down and get up. This bow. Bow down and get up. This bow. Bow down and get up.

So, “don’t know” plus action is human being’s function. When we return to this moment, we also return to the realm of name and form. Here we can use name and form in a clear and helpful way, rather than name and form pulling us around and around. That even means using this “I.” Attachment to “I” results in “I like” and “I don’t like.” Using this “I” results in “How may I help?” Every moment. Every breath. How may I help? The name for that is Great Love, Great Compassion, the Great Bodhisattva Way. And that is a thousand-year treasure for the whole universe.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

I is universe, universe is I. If you get stuck here, then you lose your life.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Kyol Che Is Three Great Things *(Continued from page 11)*

moment to moment. So Kyol Che is a big dry cleaning machine.

Second, Kyol Che is a dharma gasoline station. Our life has energy. This is our karma energy. We run on our karma gasoline. But karma means I, my, me. When you put down I, my, me, then you and the universe become one. Then dharma energy, universal energy, comes into you. So when we do Kyol Che together, we put down my opinion, my situation, my condition. Then the correct opinion, correct situation, correct condition appears. We and the universe are one, and then dharma gasoline comes in. So you get dharma energy. Dharma energy means being in harmony with the universe; you can follow the correct way moment to moment. So we come to Kyol Che with lots of karma gasoline. We take out this karma gasoline, then dharma gasoline comes in. So Kyol Che is also a dharma gasoline station.

No I, no universe. Attach to this point, then you will fall into emptiness and become a rock.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

I is I. Universe is universe. This is a good idea, but the Buddhas and bodhisattvas don’t believe it and turn away. The cries of this universe become louder and louder.

So, can any of these statements help right now in this moment?

KATZ!

May I help you? ♦

Jason Quinn JDPSN grew up in California and began practicing with the Kwan Um School in 1997, with the Dharma Sound Zen Center in Seattle. In 1999 he moved to the Providence Zen Center (PZC) where he held various staff positions. He trained as a monk for nine years, during which time he sat many long summer and winter retreats, and participated in retreats around the world, including in Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Mexico. In 2008 Jason relocated to Berkeley, California, where he became abbot of the Empty Gate Zen Center and returned to lay life. He spent a brief time back at PZC (2012–2013) to serve as abbot, and then he returned to California. He now lives in Santa Clara with his wife and son and leads the Empty Gate Zen Center’s Santa Clara group with Bodhisattva Teacher Juan Velasco. He is currently the vice abbot of the Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley.

Carlos Montero

March 28, 2015, at the Providence Zen Center

DHARMA COMBAT

Question: I have a question. Let's say you get inka. We have a good time, we chant, we eat more cake, I get less sick, a whole bunch of cool stuff goes on. I go back home. A month later, I hook up with the wrong people and I decide, "You know what, to hell with this! To hell with the teachers! To hell with all the dharma, everything! And I decide to become a terrorist. Before I go, I think to myself, "You know what, I gotta tell my friend Carlos what I'm going to do." So I tell you, "You know what Carlos? To hell with everything, everyone's an infidel, I want everybody to die." What do you tell me?

Montero PSN: Are you sure?

Q: Yes, I'm very sure.

Montero PSN: Have a good trip.

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Question: So Carlos, although I'm up in Maine right now, I lived probably the majority of my life in Florida. I still have family and friends there, so I'm very concerned about how the sangha in Florida is going to go. I know you've kept your direction there for fifteen years now, but there are a lot of distractions in Florida. There are neon lights and all sorts of tempting pleasures and so on: fast cars and beautiful women. So how are you going to keep your direction clear?

Montero PSN: You already understand.

Q: No, I don't. I'm easily distracted.

Montero PSN: First, meditation. Then, party at South Beach! *[Mimes dancing.]*

Question: When I was younger, I didn't think much about death. But now that I'm older, I think about death every day. So my question is, How can I practice with that?

Montero PSN: You already understand.

Q: Please teach me.

Montero PSN: When you die, where do you go?

Q: *[Hits the floor.]*

Montero PSN: Keep that mind.

DHARMA SPEECH

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

White light becomes a rainbow. A rainbow returns to white light.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Originally no white light and no rainbow.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

White light is just white light. And a rainbow is just a rainbow. When you open your eyes, which one is clear?

KATZ!

Smiling faces of many colors, revealing their white teeth.

First, I want to thank everybody, because this whole thing could not happen without each one of you. So, thank you. Thank you to my teachers, all of you who have helped for so many years. And a great thank you to my sangha, who have really been there, and without them this could not have happened. And that doesn't just mean everybody in Florida; that means everybody here as well.

So when I was young I was a very curious child. I really wanted to know things. So I naturally gravitated toward science. On top of that, people always praised me for my curiosity and intelligence, so it felt good to know things. "Oh, he's smart, that's good, I like that." So, oh boy, I wanted to know everything. I was fascinated by knowing things. For example, light comes from the sun. It's bright, then it goes through tiny little droplets of water and becomes this beautiful rainbow. That's amazing.

Then, one time I was in the fourth grade and the teacher had us make a wheel and we split the wheel into seven equal slices, like a pie, and we colored each one a color



Photo: Paul Brymer

Summer Retreat Program 2015

Europe. June 22 - September 13



Kwan Um School of Zen
Europe

Seon Mun Sa, Vrážné, Moravia, Czech Republic

Zen Master Dae Kwang : June 22 to 28
Jo Potter JDPSN : June 29 - July 5
Barry Briggs JDPSN : July 6 to 12

Wu Bong Sa, Warsaw, Poland

Jo Potter JDPSN : August 2 to 8
Zen Master Bon Shim : August 9 to 15
Muchak JDPSN : August 16 to 22
Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN : August 23 to 29

Sufi Kanka, Vepriai, Ukmerge district, Lithuania

Zen Master Ji Kwang : July 11 to 17
Andrzej Piotrowski JDPSN : July 19 to 25

Ku Bong Sa, The Peak, England

Igor Piniński JDPSN : September 1 to 5

Surya Centrum, Mor. Lieskové, Slovakia

Oleg Šuk JDPSN : July 26 - August 1

Bori Sa, Garrotxa, Catalunya, Spain

Zen Master Soeng Hyang : September 5 to 13



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of the rainbow. And we spun the wheel really fast and guess what? It was white! Wow, amazing! So there were all these explanations for this: “Well, light goes through the droplets with different wavelengths, they split, there’s diffraction, and so on.” OK, but why? So, at the point of deep questioning, science fell short. There was only “Don’t know, but we’ll keep trying, OK?”

For me, religion was like this too. I grew up a Catholic boy in South America, in Venezuela. My parents loved me very much and they were devout Catholics, so I grew up in that environment. Given my science mind, I was always asking questions, “OK, but wait a minute—we’re talking about God this and God that, but how does that *really* happen?” The answer always was, “Well, it’s a *great* mystery.”

What’s happening there is that both science and religion consistently gave me—gave all of us—this wonderful invitation to just wonder. To just stay there, to just—“Oh! If God made everything, what made God?” But that’s uncomfortable, so most of the time we decline that invitation and we stick to what we know. We stick to what makes sense to us, what we can regurgitate it. And we stick to what we can impress other people with. So growing up I used my intellect as a badge of look-how-cool-I-am. But being smart and good at school got a little boring, and I started playing sports. Actually, it was not swimming or basketball; it was golf that I really devoted myself to for a long time. Now, talk about a good teacher! The interesting thing about golf is that you can’t think and analyze while you’re hitting the ball, or else really bad things happen. So at one point, my golf teacher said, “You understand golf 100 percent, but you can’t do it!” He was very wonderful; I also thank him from the bottom of my heart because he said, “You should try Zen meditation.” And he gave me five books, some which I’m sure you have read. None of them are from our school, but they’re classic Zen books. At that time, I was 20 years old and I really devoured these books. This was like, “Ahh!” It was like this questioning and my current situation, everything was kind of becoming one, opening up. But everything was still only thinking: “Oh I get this, this makes sense, I get it, I understand it!”

So I was lucky enough to be spending the summer here in Rhode Island, and at that time, I searched the Internet for “Zen” and what came up was the Providence Zen Center. I said, “That’s kind of fortuitous. I’ll check this place out.” So I came, and I’m still here. And I’ll tell you two stories about why.

The first one is about my first kong-an interview. By the time I had my first interview, I had read a lot of books, including those written by Zen Master Seung Sahn, so I had

a lot of ideas about what my first kong-an encounter would be like, and about how well I would do. Zen Master Seung Sahn got enlightenment when he was 22. I’m like, “Well, I’m 20. OK, 2 years off . . . What do I do, what do I bring?”

This first interview was actually with Zen Master Wu Bong (Jacob Perl). It was the only interview I ever had with him. He was just visiting, and he happened to be the guest teacher. So I entered the room, I did my prostration, and I didn’t know who this man was. I had only seen him in pictures. So it was completely normal when he asked me, “Oh, what’s your name?” So I said, “I’m Carlos.” And he goes, “That’s your body’s name. What’s your true name?” “Uhh oh huh?” [*I was*] completely stuck. Completely stuck. Couldn’t answer. But I kind of brushed that off. Instead of just becoming one with that moment of 100 percent complete doubt, I returned to the more familiar world of thinking. “So I have a question.” I wanted to bring something up, so I started explaining how much I understood and talking and talking and he’s listening, he’s listening, then without my even noticing he grabs the stick and—BOOM—hits me, quite firmly! And I stopped, and asked “What?”

“Too much thinking!” For the second time I was completely stuck. So that was very powerful because it was not just reading about don’t know, it was in my face: “Get it? Get it? There it is! Not because I said so. *You* experienced it.”

Some time passed and the second story has to do with my first Kyol Che. I spent that summer of my first interview in Rhode Island, went back to school in the fall, and I was determined to do Kyol Che in the winter. This retreat just happened to be during my senior year in college. So I had a week off for spring break. Now, all my friends were saying, “We’re going to Miami, and we’re going to enjoy our very last semester in college. Yo, party! What are you doing?” “Well, I’m going to sit a retreat.” “What?”

The truth was, even though I had already read a lot about Zen, and I had read a lot about how when you don’t know, all your likes and dislikes disappear, and it’s OK, you can be free and enter nirvana and then help this world—you can read all of that—but at that time I was suffering greatly. Great suffering. Even if I understood Zen logically, it wasn’t helping, because it’s not just about understanding it, or even getting a small taste of it when the teacher hits you. That’s a little sample of it but how do you cultivate that? So I said, “I’m going to try this practice. It sounds really hard and it’s crazy, but I’m going to do it.”

The reason I was suffering so greatly, apart from not understanding myself, is because I wanted something. At that time I was madly in love. I had one of those mind-

blowing crushes that just shakes you up, and of course I wasn't getting what I wanted. On top of not getting that, there was cultural insult added to injury. It was perfectly OK for a Latin Catholic boy like me to be madly in love with a woman, as long as she was a woman. But that was not the case for me. So that was very hard, because of my own ideas about how I would disappoint my parents if they found out. How would I fit in society, after growing up believing that this was wrong? I thought there was a problem, that I had a problem. So I kept it quiet, all inside. So, love, confusion, potential failure, all these ideas just weighed heavily on my heart. I was carrying a very, very heavy burden. And I had never told a soul about it.

So I went to Kyol Che and it was Zen Master Dae Kwang, whom I wish were here today so I could thank him, because during the first interview, I finally felt comfortable enough to tell somebody about my situation. "Hey, this guy's supposed to have enlightenment, which means that he doesn't judge, meaning that he's somebody that probably I could just tell him what's going on." It was not easy, but I did. So during the interview he was trying to get it out of me, because it really wasn't flowing. I was like, "Well, I'm in love, but it's the wrong person, and . . ." He goes, "Well, what's so wrong? What's wrong with her? Is she your cousin?" I was able to say, "It's not really a *she*." And then he turned red and he was like, "I'm so sorry!" First he apologized to me. I just told him this awful thing—I thought it was awful—and he was apologizing to me. He goes, "I'm very sorry for thinking that." "No problem!" "No problem? You sure, no problem?" "Yeah, no problem." And he goes, "Do you know what barnacles are?" Zen style, right? I grew up in South America, right near the beach, so it took a little explanation for me to understand that he was talking about those pesky crustaceans that stick to the bottom of the boat if you leave it in the water too long. You have to keep cleaning them off. So finally I agreed, "Yes, I know what barnacles are." He said, "Human beings are like barnacles. We don't choose what boat we stick to." [*Loud laughter from the audience.*] That may be funny to you, but to me, it was like somebody took a ten-thousand pound weight off my shoulders and put it to the side. I remember walking out of that interview smiling. I just couldn't help but smile. It's like, "Ah! It's not my fault! I am not this karma. I am not gay or straight or a man or a woman or Latin or anything. It's just—ahh!—that's not who we are."

But one more important thing became clear: How did the teacher know to say that? Just at that moment, just when I really needed to hear something like that, so unexpected and spontaneous. I don't think he had turned to the "Zen Master's Guide to Answering Questions," question number 25. No, he just perceived something and—boom! I said to

myself, if practice is able to do that, if practice unlocks this innate wisdom to just say something when someone needs to hear it, and help them put that burden down—wow! That is something that I need to invest time into.

Those two stories really cemented and forged a commitment to practice. And I'm sure that everybody here has had some type of personal story, and that's why you keep coming. Sometimes we make excuses. "I'm too busy. I have a job. I have to take care of my kids." All of that is fine, but how do you do something about it? How do you first attain that we are not our thinking, that we're not our karma, that we're not the things that come and go, and cultivate that realization so that by itself some great love, compassion and wisdom can appear? Then perhaps if we encounter somebody in need we can give ourselves to them and help them to be free. Then they in turn can pursue their own path and attain themselves.

So, if you're here, what do you do from now on? How do you use all of your colors, all of your uniqueness to first pursue and attain your mind and then help this world? We have a great opportunity in this lifetime, so let's do it.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

All colors are one color. One color is all colors.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Originally, no colors. Also, no eyes to see them, or mouths to speak of them.

[Raises the Zen stick over his head, then hits the table with the stick.]

Actually, all colors are just colors. The snow outside is white. The Buddha behind me is gold. But which one is your true color?

KATZ!

How may I help you? ♦

Carlos Montero JDPSN is the abbot of the South Florida Zen Group, which he founded in 2000. He has been a student of the Kwan Um School of Zen since 1997. Carlos left his native country of Venezuela to study chemical engineering at Penn State University. After earning his bachelor's degree, he pursued a six-year career as a professional golfer. He is currently a high school chemistry teacher focused on modern methods of instruction and chemical education research. Montero PSN holds a first-degree black belt in the martial art of Nihon Goshin Aikido and is an avid masters swimmer.

How Can We Make Our Practice Relevant in Society?

Panel from the Whole World Is a Single Flower Conference, October 2014, South Korea

Moderator: *Zen Master Bon Soeng*

Speakers: *Gary Sprague, Susi Childress, Professor Seung Hwan Park, Zen Master Wu Kwang*

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Zen Master Bon Soeng: Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming. The topic for our session is “How can we make our practice relevant to society?” When I was told that this was our topic, I laughed and I said, “How could our practice *not* be relevant to society?” Our teaching is very clear: understand our true self and help this world. Every moment, every choice we make creates the world we live in. So we’re always interacting with society, in our work, in our art, in our politics, in our conservation and ecology, always, everywhere.

So, to my left is Zen Master Wu Kwang. He is the guiding teacher at Chogye International Zen Center in New York. He’s been practicing meditation since 1967, he met Zen Master Seung Sahn in 1975, and he received transmission in 1992. To my right is Seung Hwan Park. He has been practicing Buddhism for 30 years and is a member of the lay Buddhist group called Seeking the Path Association. The aim of this association is to seek the path of the bodhisattva. He is a principal research scientist in biotechnology. To the far left is Susi Childress. She is a bodhisattva teacher and her Buddhist name is Do Shim. She’s been a student in the Kwan Um School of Zen for 18 and a half years. She’s been married for 41 years, has a daughter and son and three grandchildren. She is now a retired special education teacher, having taught every grade but mostly in the high school. Finally, to my far right is Gary Sprague. Gary is a dharma teacher whose name is Poep Kwang and he lives in Oakland, California, and I’m fortunate that he practices at Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley, where I teach. He began practicing at the Brown Zen

Group and lived at the Cambridge Zen Center. For his work, he is a small-business consultant, focusing on business with a social or environmental mission.

Each of our panelists will speak for maybe five or six minutes, and hopefully we’ll have about half the time for questions. First, we’ll begin with Zen Master Wu Kwang.

Zen Master Wu Kwang: Good morning everyone. I work as a psychotherapist in New York City. And I have a client who likes to pay attention to the news. In fact, he likes to pay *a lot* of attention to the news. So besides reading the newspaper every day, he makes many searches on the computer during the day, because he is obsessed with the news. Herein lies his problem. Because, in paying that much attention to the current news, he finds himself quite hopeless, especially because he was a young person during the 1960s in the United States, when everything



Photo: Jerry Botha

seemed extremely hopeful. One day he told me how hopeless he was about everything, that the rich were getting richer, that the middle class was getting poorer, that global warming was happening, and so on and on, and that he was not hopeful at all. This man also has some experience with Buddhism and has practiced meditation at times, although not steadily. He had also heard Dae Soen Sa Nim speak a few times in New York. In response to his hopelessness, I shared this interchange that I had with Dae Soen Sa Nim quite a few years ago.

At that time, we had a Zen center located in Lexington, Kentucky. The guiding teacher there, Dae Gak, had bought some land about two hours from Lexington. The land was way up in the mountains in a poor, rural area where very simple people lived. Initially his plan had been to have a small retreat hut on this property, but when Zen Master Seung Sahn came to visit, they took him out to see this land. When Dae Soen Sa Nim saw the positioning of the mountains around where this particular property was, he said that the geomancy there was excellent and that Dae Gak should give him this land. He didn't mean that literally he should sign the deed of the property over to him, but that we should build a larger retreat center there where many people could come, because it was a power point spot.

At first they built one small building, which was called the tea house. It did not have an Asian appearance at all and did not look like a Buddhist temple. Then they started a second building, which supposedly was right in the center of where the power point was. This building did look like a traditional Asian temple building with a blue tile roof and the whole deal.

Around the same time that they were building this second building, up in Massachusetts there was a Japanese Nichiren temple where they only chanted the name of the Lotus Sutra for world peace. One night, some Vietnam vets, maybe suffering from some post-traumatic stress disorder or something, got quite drunk and went and burned that temple down. This made the newspapers in the northeast, so I saw it in New York. Shortly after that, I was up at Providence Zen Center and Dae Soen Sa Nim was there. I went to have a private meeting with him, because I had a concern about this place down in Kentucky.

I said, "Dae Soen Sa Nim, in that area of Kentucky, those people are very simple fundamentalist Christians. Maybe they will burn this building down." He looked at me and said, "Oh, burn down? No problem." He could see I was puzzled by his response, so he said, "They've been burning temples down in Korea for hundreds of years now. The Chinese came through; the Mongols came through; the Japanese came through several times. They burned down everything!" He said, "That's no problem; we just build them up again." When I finished telling this client of mine this story, he said, "I feel much better."

I've thought about that story many times over the years, and first of all, one teaching embedded in that is that we have to take a very broad view, a very big view. When he said to me, "They've been burning them down for hundreds of years; we just build them up again," I knew he understood something that I had no idea about. But embedded in that very broad, wide view is our teaching about patience and acceptance and activism.

Professor Seung Hwan

Park: I'm very happy to see you all here. I would like to thank all of you who come from far away to make this one flower possible. It is a pleasure to sit here as part of the single flower. I heard that I would be given 15 minutes yesterday so I wrote it down all night long. But the moderator just told me I only have five or six minutes, so I have to put it away.

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Photo: Jan Sendzimir

I received much guidance and help from Zen Master Dae Bong and Zen Master Dae Jin and other venerables in Mu Sang Sa Temple. But I cannot claim that I am a teacher; I am just one of the lay Buddhists. I felt very shy about accepting the invitation, but I decided to come so I can repay just a little bit of all I got from these Zen masters. I would like to share how I was introduced to Buddhism and how I was able to come all the way here.

My grandma always took me to the temple when she visited one of them; however, I actually studied and practiced Buddhism in earnest only after I started my graduate program. I got into the master's of science program at KRIBB (Korea Research Institute of Bioscience & Biotechnology). It is similar to MIT in the United States, and it's very difficult to get into. But I was not such a good student throughout college, so I had to work twice as hard as my friends to get into the master's program there. Be-

cause of that, I truly understand how students feel when they are under much pressure to perform well but can't really produce. So I have the know-how to actually produce results when under enormous pressure. So when I got into KRIBB, a lot of people offered me congratulations. Yesterday one of the panelists, one of our dharma friends working at Harvard University, said that once they got into Harvard they went through lots of inner conflict and questions. When I heard that, I felt like, "Well this is really my story."

So although others were offering congratulations, I started getting worried, wondering, "Am I confining myself to this narrow path of science and thus condemning myself to be a narrower person?" So I searched for the answer, and that's how I found this lay Buddhist group called Seeking the Path of Bodhisattva. That was in 1980, so that's over 30 years ago. I was indescribably joyful when I was first exposed to Buddhism, and I still continue with this lay group to this day. I cannot go into all the details about what we do, so let me change my direction a little bit and let me tell you a little bit about my area of study, bio-engineering.

As we all know, science established a complete genome map in 2003. It revealed lots of information about human beings. One thing we learned is that a human cell contains about 3 billion base pairs, the basic genetic information of humans. These contain about 3,000 genes. Would you raise your right hand please? You can put it down now. After studying what's going on in the human body, in the human cell, I realized this simple movement is actually a miracle. All of you just performed a miracle. So in each cell at every moment, these genes manifest themselves and do their function. And the 6 billion components of these base pairs have to function meticulously for you to be able to raise your hand—just that simple action. I cannot tell you all the story, all the drama, going on within our body and cells; however, your body itself is just comprised of numerous miracles. I would like to share this with as many people as possible, especially young people. Once you understand that having this body is a miracle, that this body is itself a miracle, you will never think light of yourself, and you will never think light of others.

While I'm studying my specific field, bioengineering, I

realized that Buddha was telling the truth. The Buddhist truth, that we all have Buddha nature. I would like to share that with the young people of Korea, if I'm given the opportunity.

Susi Childress: When I was asked to talk today, I was intimidated. I related to Zen Master Soeng Hyang's story: "Oh no, don't speak in front of the group." But oh, yes, great bodhisattva vow, so just do it.

When I taught in high school, I worked with special education students. These were students who were not good students, and I typically had a small group. I found that practicing Zen was invaluable when I was in a classroom and working with these students. I would like to tell you a story that is an example of this.

In particular, this story is about how to live your life sincerely, keeping precepts and using that to help others. We all know that teenagers will see right through any attempt to fool them into believing that you are sincere when you're not. I had this group of boys, about five or six boys, and I'd had them for five years, attempting to help improve their reading ability and to improve their English language.

We knew each other very well after four years. One student, Nick, had a relationship with me where we liked to tease each other. But I was about to take ten precepts and one of those precepts is, "I vow to abstain from putting others down and building myself up." I think, "I'm going to have a big problem with Nick." So, on the Friday before I went to the retreat, I told the kids, I'm going to take these precepts. I explained what it was, and as soon as I told them about the abstaining from putting others down precept, they immediately laughed. Nick was very happy. He thought that now he could keep teasing me, but I can't do anything back.

So I go to the retreat and I asked my guiding teacher, Zen Master Dae Kwang, what happens if I break my precept. You know Zen Master Seung Sahn always said, "Know when to keep them and when to break them." Maybe I should break it with Nick! Zen Master Dae Kwang, with very clear teaching said, "If you break your precept, how can you use it to help?"

I went back to school on Monday, and Nick says, "Did



Photo: Jan Sendzimir

you do it?” I said, “Yes, I did.” So, then it begins. He kept trying to get me to engage with him. Monday went OK, and Tuesday went OK. Then on Wednesday the students were all misbehaving, and Nick kept pushing my buttons and pushing my buttons. Pretty soon, I broke my precept, and I let him have it. There was dead silence in the room. “Oh! She broke her precept!” My response was, “Sorry, Nick.” I wasn’t really sorry.

I went home that night and sat in meditation and felt terrible. “I’m a terrible Zen student, I can’t even keep a precept for more than three days.” But then I remember what Dae Kwang Sunim said: “If you break it, how can you use it to help?” And then it became clear what I needed to do. I went back to school the next day and I said to the students, “I want to talk about what happened yesterday. When I broke my precept and then I said, ‘Sorry Nick,’ I didn’t really mean it. What I should have said to you, Nick, was, ‘Thank you for your teaching.’ Because you are very important in helping me learn to keep this precept, that means you are my teacher. In our Buddhist practice, we show respect to our teachers by bowing to them.” I dropped and gave him a full prostration bow and thanked him. Nick said, “I never thought I’d have a teacher bow to me before. I never thought I would be a teacher’s teacher.”

So if you break your precepts—and I guarantee most of you will break your precepts—I hope you will always remember Dae Kwang Sunim’s clear teaching: “How can you use it to help?”

Gary Sprague: Good morning everyone. It’s wonderful to be here with you. When I thought about the topic of this panel, two things came to mind. As laypeople, we generally spend most of our lives in two places: When we’re young, we spend most of our time in school. And

when we’re older, we spend most of our time working. So I think those are the two places where we can start making practice more relevant to society, and I thought I would just share a couple stories about how that’s happened to me in my life.

When I started university, I actually delayed starting for a year because I didn’t know why I was going and what I would do there. And even when I arrived a year later, I still didn’t know what I would do or really why I was there. But I had become interested in Buddhism and Zen, and I was reading lots of books about Zen. But all of these books said the same thing: “Just reading this book, just understanding this speech, won’t help your life.” They said, “You have to do it!” So I thought, “Where can I practice this? Where can I practice Zen? Where can I practice meditation?” And luckily for me, I went to Brown University. So I started going to the Brown Zen Group, and that’s how I began practicing. I really feel that if I didn’t have that practice through college, I wouldn’t have finished. And I made some very good friends through that group, some of my good friends started coming to that group, and all of us, to this day, still practice.

Another story I thought I would share about meditation and school is not my own experience, but it’s from a school in San Francisco, where I now live. In one of the worst schools in San Francisco, they started something called “quiet time.” At the beginning of the day, every single day, all of the students go to the auditorium and sit quietly for five minutes or ten minutes. This practice isn’t called Zen or even meditation. It’s just called, “Sit quietly, be with yourself, breathe in, breathe out, be aware.” After four years of this program, the school completely transformed. Suspensions—that is, when kids do something bad and they get sent home—fell by 98 percent. And 20 percent of the students are now getting into the best high school in San Francisco, where previously none went to the best high school. Maybe most important, this school reports the highest satisfaction of any school. That’s only five minutes in the morning, with really no teaching, and it completely changed the lives of these students. That’s the school part.

Then, for the working part, we all have to make money to support ourselves to live. As a practitioner, I know that my livelihood is not just about me. It affects the people around me, the world around me, my environment. I really enjoy busi-

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Photo: Jerry Botha

ness, the problem solving, the creativity, the organization of building a business. But if this business is just about making money, then I know that its direction is not clear. So I try to make an effort in my life to find businesses and entrepreneurs to work with who have clear, strong, social or environmental values to what they're doing. This is a whole movement that's growing in the world, which has many different names, but in the United States we often call it social enterprise. I think this kind of approach to work, and specifically business, is important because we all know that we have more and more people on the planet, fewer resources, climate change, public health—all very big problems we have to solve. So I try to find a way to bring together my personal passion, my personal interest, with helping this world and helping to solve some of these problems. Thank you very much for listening.

Zen Master Bon Soeng: Gary, you gave us a good jumping-off point. Our teaching says that suffering in the world comes from greed, anger and ignorance. All of us know the inequality, the violence, the consumerism and all of the larger social problems in the world, and I wondered if you on the panel could talk about how your practice helps you deal with those things. Zen Master Wu Kwang talked about hopelessness, and I think many of us meet this world's problems with hopelessness, so I wonder if any of you have some thoughts on how practice helps you deal with these larger social forces in the world.

Gary: What comes to mind for me is also something that Zen Master Wu Kwang said, which was that when we practice, we gain a wider view, and we try to keep as wide a view as possible. Things may seem hopeless now in this moment, but I try to return to that place of not knowing what will come, recognize how vast our world is in time and space and realize that I'm occupying this small part of it. So it can seem hopeless from my little vantage point, but I can also remember there is a much wider world and universe out there.

Susi: I have two things, both from Zen Master Dae Kwang, because there have been times when I felt hopeless. One time I asked him this very question and his response to me was, "I don't know how being depressed helps anyone." I know this isn't an answer for everyone, but for me it was helpful. It helped me to remember my bodhisattva vow. The other thing is, I was at a talk in Chicago where Dae Kwang Sunim was speaking with a Ko-

rean community. One of the ladies in the audience said that when she sees someone like Mother Teresa doing such wonderful things in India, she feels sad about herself because she doesn't go out and do such great works. Dae Kwang Sunim said to her, "Maybe what the world needs is more good mothers, and not so many Mother Teresas. It already has a Mother Teresa." So it helps me to remember to focus on taking care of what's right in front of me: Just now, what can I do?

ZMWK: I was once with Dae Soen Sa Nim, and I said to him, "I've been practicing for many years now, and have had some wonderful experiences through practice, but there still remains a deep sorrow and sadness in me." He said, "Sadness is OK. Sadness becomes great compassion. Happiness or joy becomes great love. These two are the bodhisattva way, *dae ja, dae bi*." Then he said one more thing to me: "But your sadness is not just your sadness. Your sadness is part of universal sorrow." I think when we see it in that perspective, then we get a wider view.

Question: I am working with Professor Park, and I am also practicing with him. In terms of Buddhist contributions to society in the 21st century, I would like to talk about the importance of the environment, the environmental bodhisattva. We are using too much energy just for our convenience. Also we are eating too much meat just out of greed. That is what is causing environmental problems these days. I think the answer is Buddhism, and the answer will be realized when we practice it. I study plants. Professor Park mentioned that a human has about 23,000 genes but plants such as rice have more than 38,000 genes. That means we have a lot to learn from nature. So nature and I are not two. That's Buddha's teaching, and it has the wisdom we need to solve 21st-century problems. So the UN for the past 20 years has had three



Photo: Jerry Botha

environmental conventions, which solve environmental problems such as biodiversity, climate change and desertification. But it's just words, words, words. Twenty years hasn't seen much progress. That means, as someone who has a solution, if the world gets worse, it's our responsibility, it's our fault. So we all need to be reborn as environmental bodhisattvas. I would like to hear your opinion about my suggestion. Thank you.

Professor Park: So, Dr. Kwak, we work at the same research center, and as colleagues, we talk a lot together. I'll just tell you the one thing that he's practicing. There are about a thousand researchers and staff working in our center. They all eat lunch at the same huge cafeteria, and anyone who has any leftovers will get scolded by Dr. Kwak. I am his really good friend, but he will not make any exceptions for me for the scolding, so now it has become my habit not to leave any food behind. I tell you this to emphasize the importance of doing it, practicing it. A lot of people, when they serve themselves food on their plate, they know it is more than they can consume. Still, they do it, and they produce a lot of leftovers. But it just doesn't stop at food. If we look at our 24-hour-life day, there are so many things we do that way. We call ourselves Buddhists, and this is one of the things, as Buddhists, we have to be aware of and practice. I would like to ask you to work together to apply Buddha's teaching to the saving of this planet. Thank you.

Question: Gary, you brought up an interesting example of quiet time, which is something that Transcendental Meditation does. They've taken their meditation practice and made it very accessible, so that it can be used in any type of school. I'm wondering with our practice, given this topic, how do we make it relevant for society. Is there insight into how can we make our practice work in the

schools or in the workplace or in the culture in a way that's more accessible? Jon Kabat-Zinn was a student of Dae Soen Sa Nim, and he left the school to go make this practice more accessible. A lot of people really love that, and then some people say, "It gets so watered down that the bone isn't there." So my question is how to take this teaching and this practice and bring it into the schools in a way that is accessible? Thank you.

Susi: At our high school, I started two meditation groups that met after school. I had one for students and one for teachers. I didn't think there was a need for two groups, but the teachers did. They said they couldn't relax with the students there. Because I was in a public school in the United States, I couldn't make it a Buddhist practice, so I just called it meditation. But I taught them all of our forms. No chanting, just meditation. But it was interesting because they would have questions, and as questions came up, it gave me an opportunity to give them some teachings without calling them Buddhist teachings. It was interesting to me which students would choose to show up for the practice. I got a lot of the high achieving students, the ones we've all talked about at this conference who're stressed out about going on to college. Then I got a lot of the low achieving students who had hyperactivity, attention disorders. It was a very interesting group. But what I saw was, each person was able to get from the practice what they needed. Including the teachers.

My classroom was across the hall from a girls' locker room, and after school it could be quite noisy in the hallway. My favorite story about the teachers' group is about one teacher who got up from meditation, opened the door and went out and yelled at the students to be quiet, "because we're trying to meditate!" Then she suggested we find a quieter place to meditate. I told her, "No, this is exactly where you need to be able to find a strong center." It's easy to feel calm in the mountains and in a beautiful place like this, but can you do that in a high school? That's my experience.

ZMWK: Coming back to your point one more time, I don't think it's important whether something gets watered down or not. If some kind of awareness or mindfulness or "be present" practice is helpful to people, then we should be able to do that. But some of us have the temperament to go out and be able to do that with larger groups, and some of us do not necessarily have that temperament or skill. So if that's your interest, I look forward to hearing what you're going to do.



Photo: Lubor Kosut

I wanted to say one thing connected to Dr. Kwak, the scientist. You said something like, “We’ve been having these conferences and talking for something like 20 years or more but nothing is really changing.” My experience as a psycho-therapist is that, many times, after working with someone for a long period of time, they suddenly wake up to some point, something about themselves. But from the therapist’s point of view, I had been bringing that person toward that point many, many hundreds of times over many months or even years, before suddenly they said, “Oh I never thought of it that way. I never felt that before.” So I think social activism is also like that in many ways. Although I’ve never been a social activist at all, many of my heroes remain some of the great social activists: Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and others. If you study what they were able to do, certainly they had to keep coming back to the same thing over and over again for a long time, and they also trained people that were working with them, as Gandhi did, in being able to not flare up and lose themselves in anger prematurely but instead to learn how to keep their center and then use that energy of anger and indignation in skillful and constructive ways. So I think we need to all practice repeatedly to master, to whatever degree we can, that kind of pacing and centeredness.

I just want to say one more thing: I was born during World War II, and as a child I remember seeing on television—which was a new invention in my childhood—scenes of the Korean War. And then there was the Vietnam War, and then there was fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in between those, probably many other places. So in my lifetime I’ve never seen anything called world peace. And yet, aspiring to world peace is not a useless thing. Probably, it is the most useful thing.

Question: I’m from Mu Sang Sa Temple. I would like to ask a question related to Dr. Kwak’s comments, and also it’s related to Zen Master Wu Kwang. Professor Park mentioned that our body is made of miracles, but we use only a small fraction of our brain before we die. Historically, Korea is known as the country of morning calm. However, in modern times, we are overexposed to the so-called world news. They tell us a lot of stories where people who think their bodies are too important, so they don’t give a second thought to harming other people’s bodies. I was lucky enough to be exposed even to just a small amount of Buddhist teaching, and as I look at the



Photo: Barry Briggs

teachings of other religions, especially religions with God, I can see how important Buddhism is in modern society. It’s important to deliver this message to young people. So to make Buddhism more relevant to society, one of the most important things we can do is to make this teaching available to young people, and I wonder what we can do as a school to achieve that goal.

Professor Park: Thank you for your great question. I think if we have all the time we need, that really this deserves a very long discussion. So let me just offer you my opinion, briefly. I think one of the best things we can do for young people is to give them hope. I just told you that our bodies perform miracles, and I said that I want to share this with young people, because I believe it’s one of the ways that we can give hope to young people. One of the reasons I found Buddhism attractive is because

its goal is to lead everyone, with no exception, to be the winner. If they understand this, they are less likely to fall victim to disappointment, or they may feel less stressed because of the competition. There may be more specific, detailed proposals, but let me mention just one. The sad thing is that people don’t come to us to learn this wonderful teaching. So maybe we can lure them by giving them what they want first. For instance, if we say we’ll teach you how to be the top of the class, then they will come. I think it’s important for

them to come to us, and once we have their foot in the door, then we step up our teaching and teach them what’s really important. I think we are almost out of time here, but I hope that we can meet together after this, one on one, and continue this discussion.

ZMBS: So it’s time now that we must finish. First I’d like to thank the panel very much for your wonderful contributions. I’d like to thank you, the audience, for your participation. And I’d like to tell a very short story from Zen Master Seung Sahn.

One day at a ceremony at the Providence Zen Center, he came out and he told us this story. One of his students said to him, “Zen Master, when you die, I will follow you.” And Dae Soen Sa Nim replied, “Oh, no. You don’t want to follow me. Because when I die, I dive straight into hell. Because that’s where they need a Zen center the most.” So everything we talked about today is to that point. Thank you all very much. ♦

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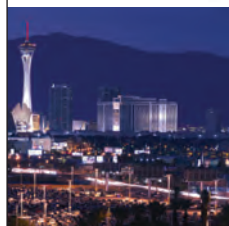
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