

IMCSF

The Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco (IMCSF) is dedicated to offering the teachings of the Buddha as they develop in the West. Our specific orientation is toward intensive lay (householder) practice. We offer a weekly meditation and dharma talk, classes, meditation retreats, and other events as a community of spirit devoted to the embodiment of awakening in our lives.

Meeting at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Francisco
1187 Franklin at Geary Blvd.

ABOUT THE TEACHER

Eugene Cash is the founding teacher of the Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco. He is a teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and leads intensive meditation retreats internationally. His teaching is influenced by both Burmese and Thai streams of the Theravada tradition as well as Zen and Tibetan Buddhist practice. He is also a teacher of the Diamond Approach with A. H. Almaas.



DANA PRACTICE

Dana means generosity. The Buddha's teachings are considered priceless but are given freely in a spirit of generosity. Offering dana (a donation) gives students an opportunity to express their gratitude for the teachings and to cultivate the joy of sharing. Generally, a basket or bowl is provided in which to place dana offerings for the teacher.

INSIGHT MEDITATION

COMMUNITY OF

SAN FRANCISCO

sangha news

JULY 2003 VOL 2 NO 2

**suffering,
joy, and
service**

BUDDHISM

PLACES A GOOD DEAL OF EMPHASIS ON SUFFERING—

recognizing it, engaging it, and becoming liberated from it. The Four Noble Truths state: there is suffering; there is a cause of suffering; there is the cessation of suffering; there is a path to the cessation of suffering.

We are asked to investigate these Truths directly in our own experience, in the experience of others, and in the world. Suffering is the root of the alchemical process that leads to freedom and liberation. By recognizing our suffering, distress, dis-ease, and the instability and ungraspable nature of life, we begin to incline toward a life of Dharma; a life characterized by a devotion to practice and liberation.

Suffering is also emphasized as the doorway to compassion. As we recognize suffering, personally and universally, it begins to melt the sense of separation between our self and others. Suffering ameliorates the (falsely) perceived boundaries we create based on gender, race, class, nationality, culture, intelligence, appearance, and other human variables. All humans suffer. All sentient beings suffer. As Longfellow stated so eloquently: "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find sorrow and suffering enough to dispel all hostilities."

But suffering is not enough. The Buddha's teaching also places great value on joy and happiness. The Buddha was known as "the happy one." The King of Kosala described that one could recognize the Buddha's followers because they were "joyful and elated, jubilant and exultant, enjoying the spiritual life, with faculties pleased, free

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this will be the last
mailed newsletter.
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from anxiety, serene, peaceful, and living with a gazelle's mind (light-hearted)."

In Buddhist teachings on the awakened heart, joy (*mudita*) is understood as an appropriate response to the beauty, delight, and mystery of life. *Mudita* is most often translated as "sympathetic joy." Other translations include *altruistic* or *empathic joy*. Thich Nhat Hanh finds these translations somewhat limiting, and offers the following for our consideration:

"Some commentators have said that *mudita* means sympathetic joy or altruistic joy, the happiness we feel when others are happy, but that is too limited. It discriminates between self and others. A deeper definition of *mudita* is a joy that is filled with peace and contentment. We rejoice when we see others happy, but we rejoice in our own well-being as well. How can we feel joy for another person when we do not feel joy for ourselves? Joy is for everyone!"

Joy is available because it is an expression of our Buddha nature, of our awakened heart. Opening to the difficulties and vicissitudes of life doesn't necessitate becoming depressed or morose. This was clear during the war in Iraq, when the manifestations of suffering brought on by military conflict were very much in the forefront of experience for many of us. During this time, our sangha produced a benefit for our Sister Sangha in South Africa to raise money for Woza Moya, a project that ministers to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. The benefit was a great success. Beyond financial success, the joy and happiness that came forth during the benefit was like a wave of blessing during the otherwise dark time of war.



Gayle Markow and Anita Kline, the Du-ddha Dharmettes

We experienced the joy of community and gladness of heart that comes with selfless service—and an appreciation for the good that is possible for humans to manifest, even in the face of war. It gladdened the hearts of all participants to recognize our interconnectedness and enact the goodness that we experience flowing from our dharma practice. This enactment is powerful in allowing the virtue of our practice to express itself, particularly in the face of suffering.

I want to offer my appreciation to all the people in the sangha here and in South Africa who made the benefit an evening of joy, delight, and dharma blessings. The words of Tagore sum up this enlightened activity:

"I slept and dreamt that life is joy.
I woke and saw that life is service.
I served and found that service is joy."

— EUGENE CASH



Three of thirty Travel Altars made by sangha members

To Eugene and our dear brothers and sisters at Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco, a big warm hello and hug from Kittisaro, Thanissara, Sioux, and all of us involved in Woza Moya in KwaZulu Natal, your sister sangha at Dharmagiri, on the night of your gala benefit.

Tonight you are focusing your efforts, generosity, kindness, and thoughtfulness on a community that is geographically, economically, politically, socially, and culturally different and distant from yourselves. Yet in coming together through the intention to confirm our interconnectedness, we meet in the one compassionate heart.

gala benefit fundraiser

held march 29
for our sister sangha in
south africa

Through your previous generosity, you are the community that got Woza Moya up and running and helped this fledgling project turn itself, within two years, into a strong force within its local community. It has trained 20 home-based care workers who directly deal with issues around HIV/AIDS, poverty alleviation, orphan support and placement within the community, crisis management, the provision of medicines, the accessing of grants, and counseling and care for the sick and terminally ill.

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Jennifer Scaff-King with raffle tickets

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Presently Woza Moya services about 500 households, altogether about 3,000 people.

This year we are looking at initiating and developing other areas within the general auspices of Woza Moya. These are projects that will support income-generating schemes to alleviate the crushing poverty we're in the midst of, including the

home growing of food. We are also looking at "Spiritual Warrior" programs for young people who are vulnerable to violence and HIV infection.

The area, however, that is most pressing that we are focusing on right now is the support of orphans and vulnerable children. On the death of parents through AIDS, these children are often left in impoverished and abusive situations and immediately need help with secure homes within the family or extended community, school fees, clothing, counseling, and food.

In response to this situation we have invited on board a wonderful local Zulu woman called TC (Tender Care!) Ngcobo (pronounced "Knowbo"). As one of our local schoolteachers, TC has already been deeply involved with Woza Moya and the welfare of the community children. We've asked TC to head our Orphan Crisis Project, which will identify children most in need and respond as fully and as immediately as possible. TC is gradually working towards becoming a full-time Woza Moya co-coordinator who will work closely with Sioux, our present co-coordinator, and Jane Nxsana, our ground manager.

Tonight in your gathering and fundraising activities, we'd like to respectfully



Pamela Edelstein singing cabaret tunes



Jürgen Möllers and Mindy Zlotnick selling tickets

request your support for the Orphan Crisis Project. To date we've been able to support 60 orphans, but the need grows daily. Every gesture of care really does translate into the energy of moral, economic, and compassionate strength here on the ground in a community suffering from post-colonial and post-apartheid wounds while struggling in the midst of the worst of the AIDS pandemic.

May your evening together be a true expression of the heart of sangha, may you all grow in Dharma, may we express our profound appreciation for your support, and may you have fun tonight!

Love, metta,
and every best wish,

Kittisaro, Thanissara,
and Sioux



Andrew Chaikin, MC and vocal percussionist



Shoshanah Dubiner painting "live"

NOTE: The leftover food from the fundraiser was donated to the Presbyterian Church down the street. There it provided lunch to 50 seniors on the following Monday and to 50 homeless people on Tuesday. Thanks to all who helped with the food donations.



Around the table: "Good food and conversation"

MARGE

PIERCY'S POEM "To Be of Use" became one of my favorites when I first read it about thirty years ago, and remains so today. It has always had a profound and truthful resonance for me, but when I came across it during the week preceding our March 29 benefit, I thought of Kittisaro, Thanissara, Sioux, and the volunteers of Woza Moya—"people who harness themselves...who pull...with massive patience...to move things forward, who do what has to be done, again and again." The poem seemed to be about them.



The last stanza has always been my favorite:

"Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
But you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
And a person for work that is real."

In this case, these lines reminded me of us – those of us who took on the work of the benefit in all the various ways we did, and in so doing reaped our very own real benefit – the enormous satisfaction of being of use, of doing work "that is real," that "has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident." Everyone felt it. There were challenges, difficulties, pleasure, and great joy in this work.

Of course, the poem is about all of us. "Work that is real" comes in many different forms-on and off the cushion: spiritual work, earning-a-living work, house-cleaning/home-making work, parenting work or taking-care-of-anyone work, creative/artistic work, political work, work for the community. And as unique beings, we must each find our own work. And as a unique sangha, we are also in the process of discovering and rediscovering what is our "work that is real."

What a gift that we can have the conversation, and practice on and off the cushion together, and share poetry, and even party down together – for what else would one do after a great period of satisfying work?

Now that the grand party is over (for this year) and the wonderful work leading up to it is completed, I find myself reflecting, "What is the work for me to do now? And what is the work of our sangha now?"

Rarely does poetry speak of work. And yet...to have "work that is real" is surely one of life's greatest gifts. In health, happiness, and peace, may all beings be blessed with work that is real.

– GAYLE MARKOW

to The people I love the best
Jump into work head first
Without dallying in the shallows
And swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
The black sleek heads of seals
Bouncing like half submerged balls.

be of I love people who harness themselves,
an ox to a heavy cart,
Who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
Who strain in the mud and the muck to
move things forward,
Who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
In the task, who go into the fields to harvest
And work in a row and pass the bags along,
Who are not parlor generals and field deserters
But move in a common rhythm
When the food must come in or the fire be put out.

use The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
But you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
And a person for work that is real.

– Marge Piercy

TRAVELER

*Interviews with Rachel Markowitz and Robin White
conducted by Jürgen Möllers.*

INTERVIEW WITH RACHEL:

JM: *How did you get into meditation?*

RM: I started by reading about it: Krishnamurti, Joko Beck, Suzuki Roshi, Pema Chödrön. Their books spoke to me and seemed to offer a way to struggle less in life. I felt like I “got” meditation, but the idea of sitting terrified me. It wasn’t until my therapist recommended I try meditating that I was willing to take the plunge. I took a one-day course through Berkeley Extension where we sat and walked for five minutes at a time. The following spring a friend introduced me to IMCSF sangha; that was five years ago.

JM: *What kind of struggle did you hope meditation could help with?*

RM: I’ve had a pattern of getting depressed where it seems my whole world comes crashing down. It’s very demoralizing. Self-judgment is a big part of it.

JM: *...and has meditation did it work?*

RM: Over time I have developed more awareness of my mind states. More and more I’m noticing when I’m caught up in my ideas or expectations or when I’m being hard on myself. I’m learning to catch things before they snowball. I’m deciding not to go down certain paths. It’s incredibly liberating.

JM: *What role has the sangha played in your practice?*

RM: Just showing up every Sunday night is a

ON

practice in itself! The regularity of our meetings is very powerful. I feel like I’m part of an extended family. It’s so refreshing to spend time with other people who are interested in this radical practice. Eugene’s talks really resonate with me; sometimes they’re just magical.

JM: *Is reading still an important part of your practice?*

RM: I still love to read about the dharma. There’s nothing really “new” in it, yet it seems to have a newness each time I read it in different phases of my life.

JM: *Any favorite recent quote?*

RM: “Letting the moment take over is the practice of great honesty.” (from an article by Shyalpa Rinpoche in the May 2003 issue of *Shambhala Sun*)

INTERVIEW WITH ROBIN:

JM: *You got in touch with the dharma some 20 years ago; after so many years, what is the edge of your practice?*

RW: I believe very strongly that practice needs to be based in the everyday world. Retreats—and I even think of meditation as a kind of retreat—are strengthening and help form habits of mind. But enlightenment is not the goal for me. What is important for me is deep involvement in the relative plane—the world of service, work, relationships.

JM: *...rather than the more abstract philosophical aspects of the dharma?*

RW: Yes. I look for practices that can be applied. Right Action and Right Speech have a direct impact in the world in which I live; contemplating abstract matters can lead me away from actually being here.

JM: *Do you also have a formal meditation practice?*

RW: For me, *metta* practice is more central than meditation. Part of it is that I need to manage my time very carefully, and I learned to do *metta* while riding my bicycle in the morning. I could not simultaneously meditate and exercise.

JM: *Finding the time is a challenge for you?*

RW: I think mastery of time is one of the most difficult challenges for us here in the U.S. There is so much pressure to prioritize everything else besides the simple act of being present—and quiet—in the moment. I try to manage my time so that I have enough for myself, enough to attend well to the people in my life, and enough to think openly and freely about ideas. It actually takes a lot of will, confidence, and independence to slow down.

JM: *What role does the sangha play for you?*

RW: Sangha, like that wave that carries me through life, is another manifestation of the dharma. For me, Sunday nights are not just about Eugene’s talks, it’s about something bigger, something that is unfolding in the sangha.

THE

PATH

An ongoing series of interviews with sangha members on how they came to practice the dharma

schedule of

upcoming

e v e n t s

at the first unitarian universalist church

Daylong Retreats

Saturday, July 19
Saturday, September 27

All daylongs 9:30 am to 5:00 pm
Teaching by dana (donation).

Suitable for beginning and experienced practitioners, the day includes: meditation instructions; sitting, walking, and standing meditation; loving-kindness practice; and a dharma talk.

To register for a daylong, send a \$10 check payable to IMCSF to IMCSF, PO Box 475536, San Francisco, CA 94147-5536. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Beginning Mindfulness Meditation Class

September 11, 18 & 25: October 2 & 9
Thursday evenings 7:00-9:00 pm
Teachers: Eugene Cash, Bill Weber, and Kris Bailey

This class will offer basic Buddhist meditation instructions as well as Buddhist teachings and practical ways to apply these teachings to our daily lives. Includes Sept 27 daylong retreat.

To register, send a check for \$35 to the Unitarian Church (see address on back page).

For more information about IMCSF's activities at the Unitarian Church, call Roxanne Worthington at 415.661.3030.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Every Sunday Evening

Meditation and Dharma Talk

6:30-7:00 pm Social Time
7:00-7:45 Silent Meditation
7:45 Break
7:55-8:55 Dharma Talk and Discussion
8:55 Announcements

Teacher: Eugene Cash
(unless otherwise announced, see below)

Eugene's Absences and Visiting Teachers

July 27 Sally Clough
August 3 Diana Winston
August 10 Pamela Weiss
August 17 Jurgen Möllers and Andrea Dindinger (will discuss their visit to our Sister Sangha in South Africa)
October 5 Sharda Rogell
October 12 Sharda Rogell
October 26 Howard Cohn or TBD
November 16, 23 TBD

Potluck

1st Sunday of the month, 5:00 pm
A time to socialize informally with your dharma friends. Vegetarian dishes, please.

Beginning Orientation

2nd Sunday of the month, 6:00 pm
A brief introduction for people who are new to Vipassana meditation practice and/or new to our sangha, led by a senior student.

at other locations

MEN'S DAYLONG

August 16
9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Lovingkindness and Compassion Practice for Men. Led by Larry Yang, psychotherapist and Community Dharma Leader, at the San Francisco Buddhist Center.
For more information, please call 415.515.2530 or email: mahasangha@aol.com

SPIRIT ROCK MEDITATION CENTER

Sept. 3-7, 2003
Residential Retreat. Eugene Cash

Sept. 13, 2003
Daylong of compassion/mindfulness with Eugene Cash.

Dec. 9-14, 2003
Residential Retreat. Eugene Cash

Dec. 26-Jan. 4, 2004
Residential Retreat. Eugene Cash

Jan. 31-March 28, 2004
Vipassana Two-Month Residential Retreat. Eugene Cash will be teaching the second month.

For more information on Spirit Rock events, call 415.488.0164 or visit www.spiritrock.org.

a call for articles

IMCSF's newsletter will soon add a column featuring articles by IMCSF sangha members. Add your voice to the ongoing discussion about Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Articles should be up to 400 words and based on personal experience. For example, how has a particular aspect of Buddhist practice – service, concentration, generosity – become particularly significant, challenging, or helpful in your own life?

All articles will be reviewed by the editorial staff and our teacher, Eugene Cash. Please submit articles in hard-copy format to Shoshanah Dubiner or Jürgen Möllers, c/o IMCSF (see address on back page).

This is the last issue of the IMCSF newsletter that will be mailed via the U.S. Postal Service.

In the future, the newsletter will be available via email, the IMCSF website www.sfinsight.org, or in hard copy at the Sunday night sittings at the church. If you wish to receive the newsletter via email, be sure to enter your email address on our Sunday night signup sheet.