

Ordinary Dharma Manzanita and Village

A Buddhist-Inspired Community, based on Buddhist Mindfulness Practices,
Vipassana Meditation, Zen, Deep-Ecology, and Nonviolence
—for the Celebration and Healing of the Individual, Society and the Earth.

Winter–Spring 2003

You are the lamp to lighten the way. Hurry! Hurry! The Dhammapada

There is a creation story attributed to the Cahuilla people, whose land Palm Springs now sits on. It tells of two old women who were sharing a cigar one night. In a moment of clumsiness and hilarity one of them drops the cigar. Sparks fly everywhere. Suns and moons, planets and stars are born. The universe comes into being.

Those old women are probably still laughing, especially at anyone who takes their cosmology too seriously . . .

Indigenous cultures tend to take their own stories, not lightly, not seriously, but with an ethos entirely different from the literalism urban folks are accustomed to—we, who must be right; we, who seek the ‘truth.’ As though the truth were an entitlement by which we might dispel uncertainty, irony, ambiguity, complexity and contradiction.

The most important choices we make in life are seldom easy. Kindness and compassion involve taking risks that often stretch us beyond our familiar comfort zones. No matter how we describe our process—spiritual practice, morality, living with integrity, learning—it can never be merely mechanical.

The moments of greatest danger or despair often lead to our deepest insight. Yet, all too often we approach religious teachings, including Buddhist ones, with an unconscious expectation that they will affirm dualistic notions we already hold; such as, “mind is real, world is an illusion;” or “world is real, mind is an illusion.” “Government is real.” “Government is not real.”

It has been suggested that the Buddha was attempting to revive ancient ‘indigenous’ ways. He instinctively understood the pitfalls of hierarchical religions based on Sky Gods, and blind attachment to rituals and abstract doctrines.

Perhaps his intention is clearer than ever, as constructs derived from Sky Gods religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism) are exploited and distorted for the benefit of nationalistic agendas with unprecedented ruthlessness and violence.

What is uniquely valuable about Buddhist teaching is that it gives us—not just a theory, but a practice, a curriculum of embodiment—to experience everything as real. Reality lies within the relationship things have to each other. Everything is filled with, and echoes, the other. Everything reveals itself.

This pushes us to remain unrelentingly committed to our spiritual and moral practice, while at the same time being completely political. As Gandhi remarked (approximately), “to claim that spirituality and politics are separate is to demonstrate your lack of understanding, both of spirituality and of politics.”

Caitríona Reed

Even soldiers, trained for killing, under fire and threatened with death, are reluctant to kill other human beings. As a species, we have an inbuilt resistant to killing.* Understandably so—since the effect of war on nations as well as individuals is inevitably devastating. Domestic violence, addiction, and homelessness mirror the long-term environmental and economic destruction that warfare brings.

Nationalistic identity and fear perpetuate war in ways that are destructive even to the elite who has learned to manipulate populations into accepting war as inevitable and just.

When we engage in nonviolence we make the choice not only to abstain from violence but to refrain from acting out of fear. We examine whatever would make us afraid, but we ground ourselves in the understanding that we can choose how we respond. We may certainly be afraid, but we look for ways to check the habit of merely reacting in fear. Also, we remember that we are not alone, that we are part of a community of resistance. Throughout history, as now, there are those who have resisted the call of violence with their lives.

If war has any use, perhaps it is to show us how vitally important it is to apply the principles of non-violence, uncompromisingly, to all aspects of our lives.

Nonviolence *is* love. Like love, it emerges from the understanding that we are connected to each other and to our actions. It is not mere sentimentality. Like love, it is not based on denial of fear, but by something that lies beyond fear—a vision of possible peace. To see violence, oppression, exploitation for what they are, and then do everything in our power to prevent them is the practice of nonviolence, just as it is the practice of love.

As a martial artist, I study the nature of war; obviously, not to advocate or practice it, but to cultivate peaceful means to resist it. This is love in action, the antidote to fear. I see no separation between the practice of meditation and the practice of the martial arts. Both complement and mirror each other.

A passing driver once challenged a friend, who was participating in a vigil at the Los Angeles Federal Building, on the eve of an execution. “How would you feel if it was your wife who had been murdered?”

He replied, “I would rely on you to restrain me.”

We cannot rely on leaders to speak for us. We are wired for community. Especially now, we must look to community process to support whatever it takes to create change in these saber-rattling times.

Michele Benzamin-Miki

* On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Killing in War and Society
by LT. Col. Dave Grossman

Calendar of Retreats in 2003

Meditation Retreats at Manzanita Village with Michele Benzamin-Miki and Caitriona Reed are open to all. They weave together the teachings and practices of the Buddhist Traditions with the timeless themes of Peace-Making and Non-Violence, Social-Justice, Deep-ecology, Personal Integration and Creativity. Days are conducted in an atmosphere of silence and include Meditation, Dharma talks, Discussion, and Movement. Interactive exercises and dialog. There is also unstructured time for hiking, reading, resting.

January 18-19 San Francisco
Retreat for People of Color, and Allies
with Caitriona Reed and Michele Benzamin-Miki
contact-mmorohoshi@yahoo.com

Other people of color and diversity retreats in 2003 in the San Francisco Bay Area to be announced

Bay Area contacts:

S.F. Marie Morohoshi mmorohoshi@yahoo.com
East Bay Amiko Mayeno, amikoM@aol.com

February 14-17 Manzanita Village
Three Day Vipassana Meditation Retreat
Mindfulness and the Heart Sutra \$208
Caitriona Reed and Michele Benzamin-Miki

March 21-23 Manzanita Village
Dreams, Images, Intuition \$165
Joy Butler jebutler12@yahoo.com 760-782-3604
A weekend of creativity in the exploration of dreams, images and intuitive promptings. Sleeping dreams, conscious dreams, artistic expression and movement. Visualizations and dialogue using personal symbolic language.

Joy Butler has a background in psychotherapy, shamanism, storytelling and medical intuition. She has been teaching workshops since 1991.

April 6-12 Manzanita Village
Life as Theater, Theater as Life \$400
with Scott Kelman, Michele Benzamin-Miki, Caitriona Reed.
Meditation in Movement and Stillness, Sound and Silence. No previous experience necessary. Work that is energizing, playful, creative, and insistent that you stay in the present moment, in an entirely natural and self-sustaining way. It relates to theater in the same way that our lives reflect tragedy and comedy, suspense, timing and awareness. Limited space. Register now.

Scott Kelman is a recipient of Los Angeles Theater's most prestigious honor, The Margaret Harford Award, as well as numerous other awards for his lifelong work in theater. His innovative workshops have inspired countless artists, performers, and many others, who have sought to bring more creativity into their work and life. Through his unique exercises, using techniques of body, movement, mindfulness, and the creative process, Scott has developed a form of awareness training that is accessible and deeply effective in it's own right, and also

hugely complimentary to any discipline that benefits from creativity, authenticity, and awareness. For information on-line on Scott's work see <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/bob.lockwood/>

"Magic in theater, as in life, is related to a period of time, or a moment, when everything is right. And you haven't got the slightest idea why. And you can't begin to put it into words. And you understand so little about this place that you're in. You can't take hold of it with language-that's why it's magic. It's the one thing that is utterly inexpressible. I often suggest that if you have a good idea, don't do it. Now see where you're left. That is your introduction to the unknown which allows the moment to inform you, unfettered by habit and shtick. Before you become mindful it's playing you: after you become mindful, you're playing it." Scott Kelman

April 18-20 Manzanita Village
Continuing Circles \$220
with Elise Turnin, Michele Benzamin-Miki, Caitriona Reed
A playful, irreverent, politically incorrect weekend Retreat & Conference for all gay, intersexed, transgendered, and straight women.

Elise Turen is a psychotherapist with twenty years experience in the field of gender identity. With a sense of humor, creativity, and generosity of spirit she encourages us all to find authenticity and ease. She will be joined by Michele and Caitriona to continue in the spirit of LACGS's Full Circle of Women Conference, which was held at Manzanita for several years.

May 23-31 or May 23-26 Manzanita Village
Eight and Three Day Vipassana Retreat \$208-\$400
Celebrating Mindfulness: Buddha's Birthday Retreat
Michele Benzamin-Miki and Caitriona Reed

June 13-18 Spirit Rock, Woodacre
Retreat for People of Color
Michele Benzamin-Miki with others. 415-488-0164

July 3-6 Manzanita Village
Playing the Edge \$208
Meditation, Mindfulness and Martial Arts
with Caitriona Reed and Michele Benzamin-Miki
Meditation, Aikido and Yoga. Movement and Improvisation
No previous Martial Arts experience required.

August 29 - September 1 Manzanita Village
Four Brahmaviharas: Meditation Retreat \$208
Caitriona Reed and Michele Benzamin-Miki
The Four Boundless States are innate capacities already present within us:
LOVINGKINDNESS—Connection, Gratitude, Celebration
COMPASSION—Action, Clarity, Energy
JOY—Ease, Release, Strength
EQUANIMITY—Creativity, Vision, Peace, Ecstasy

Meditations and Interactions.

September 19-2 Manzanita Village
Yoga and Meditation retreat \$220
Chad Hamrin

Chad Hamrin has been practicing and teaching yoga for over thirty years. Grounded in Iyengar style yoga he has synthesized many styles of yoga, movement, and bodywork into a uniquely integrated whole. One of the most outstanding yoga teachers teaching today.

September 26-28 Manzanita Village
Continuing Circles \$220
with Michele Benzamin-Miki, Caitríona Reed, Elise Turnin.
A playful, irreverent, politically incorrect weekend Retreat & Conference for all gay, intersexed, transgendered, and straight women.

October 3-5 Manzanita Village
Writing and Painting: Meditation Retreat \$220
Sue Moon, Michele Benzamin-Miki, Caitríona Reed
Open to all.

Susan Moon is editor of the award winning of Turning Wheel, the journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. She is author of the celebrated Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi. A longtime Zen student, she has also been teaching creative writing for many years.

October 9-12 Manzanita Village
Warrior Heart Path \$260
Hard and Soft Martial Arts and Meditation and Mindfulness with Sifu Koré Grate and Michele Benzamin-Miki

Koré Grate is founder and head instructor of FEMA (Female Eclectic Martial Arts) in Minneapolis. She has been studying and teaching Martial Arts since 1971. She has a 4th degree black belt in Wu Chien Pai and a 2nd degree black belt in Iaido. She is an artist and a horsewoman.

October 24-26 Manzanita Village
What Would Buddha Do? \$220
Principles and Practices for a Socially Engaged Buddhism Retreat with Donald Rothberg and Diana Winston

How might the Buddha act in these difficult times, guided by wisdom and compassion? How can we develop a spiritual practice that resonates in all the interconnected parts of our lives? What unique gifts can we each offer to alleviate suffering and promote transformation in the world?

In this retreat, we will explore these questions by focusing on a number of key guiding principles for socially engaged Buddhism that can inform our day-to-day lives and our sense of engaged practice. Through periods of silent practice, talks, individual and group reflection and inquiry, and interactive exercises, this retreat will explore aspects of socially engaged Buddhism.

Donald Rothberg has practiced Insight Meditation since 1976 and has written and taught widely on socially engaged Buddhism and transpersonal studies.

He is on the faculty of the Saybrook Graduate School, and has been an organizer, educator, and board member for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, particularly as a mentor for its Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement (BASE).

Diana Winston is founder of the BASE program, America's first socially engaged Buddhist training program. She has practiced Insight Meditation since 1989 and recently spent a year as a Buddhist nun in Burma. She teaches meditation to adults and teens in India and America and now serves as the associate director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Her forthcoming book about Buddhism, Wide Awake, is written for teens.

November 26 - January 2 Manzanita Village
Thirty-five Day Retreat \$600
A time to deepen and sweeten your practice. Under the guidance of Caitríona and Michele you will be able to structure your own personal retreat, meeting with the teachers every two or three days. The retreat culminates with participation in the end of year retreat.

December 26 - January 2 Manzanita Village
End of Year Holiday Retreat \$400
Michele Benzamin-Miki and Caitríona Reed
partial attendance is okay. Suggested minimum attendance four days (\$200)

RESIDENT TEACHERS: Michele Benzamin Miki and Caitríona Reed have been leading Retreats and teaching Practices for awakening to the spiritual and global emergency of our times for over twenty years. They have studied with Buddhist Teachers in Europe, the US and Asia, as well as teachers in other related disciplines. They were students and teachers in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh for fourteen years. They are rooted in traditional approaches to Meditation and also communicate their love of the Dharma in ways that are innovative, always practical, engaging, humorous, and alive. They integrate the timeless practice of meditation and truth-telling, with contemporary environmental and social realities. They also bring their sensibilities and creativity as artists into their teaching, to make it engaging and vital—Michele is a painter, Caitríona is a poet. Michele also holds fifth degree black belts in both Aikido and Iaido and is guiding Sensei to several martial arts school around the country.

SCHOLARSHIPS and DANA: We have scholarships and work exchange programs available. Please call for more info. We invite you to contribute to the scholarship fund to assist people on limited income, and make scholarships available.

MEMBERSHIP: Members tithe to support Manzanita Village and reduced rates apply to retreats.

REGISTRATION: For all events. Please send your nonrefundable deposit of \$100 to:

**Ordinary Dharma, Manzanita Village,
PO Box 67, Warner Springs CA 92086.**

**760-782-9223
www.manzanitavillage.org
cr@fivechanges.org**

Reflections by a participant at several retreats at Manzanita Village

What I loved about the Retreat

- The classical Buddhist forms of practice
- Wonderful mix of Classical Dharma and Engaged Dharma.
- The non-Buddhist Dharma practices that deepened mindfulness, insight, compassion, interconnectedness:
- Deep Ecology walks at the intersection point of chaparral forest and desert.
- Council practice with Talking Stick.
- The "Elm Dance", a simple yet deeply moving circle dance adapted in the aftermath of Chernobyl, allows us to embody the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, bearing witness to the suffering of the world, to the degree we are able.
- Many other practices. Some interactive, others contemplative; some of them improvised, some ancient.
- Diversity. Last year about 25 people participated in the retreat: 1/3 or more of them were People of Color, 1/3 or more were Queer (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered), differences of age, spiritual/religious background, physical abilities. I loved the easy blending of cultures, essences, sensibilities, energies. There was effortless "deep diversity" in a way that surpassed anything I'd previously experienced in a Buddhist, or Buddhist-inspired retreat. It is not insignificant that each year on the midwinter retreat an altar is made to honor Ramadan, Hanukkah, Solstice, Christmas, Kwanzaa.
- The teachers are deeply seasoned in classical Buddhist practices, on the leading-edge of engaged spiritual practices, affirming of classical Buddhism and also appropriately critiquing of it (in the best spirit of the Buddha), deeply "real".
- How they wove various of their life-practices (poetry, martial arts, activism, etc.) into the retreat in ways that enriched the retreat experience and modeled "what's possible" in terms of bringing all of oneself into the service of the Dharma.
- The land. The chaparral forest, on desert's edge, beneath countless stars is itself a teacher. **Deep Peace, Lawrence Ellis**



Ordinary Dharma

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Warner Springs, CA 92086
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cr@fivechanges.org

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Introduction to Meditation

with Caitriona Reed in Venice. \$130
Six week Class Series starts January 22, 2003. 7:30-9:30 PM.

Instruction, discussion and guidance in:

- *Vipassana Meditation and Mindfulness.
 - *Principles of Buddhist and Sacred Psychology.
 - *Trusting the Body and Mind.
 - *Needs or compulsions?
 - *Meditation in daily-life.
 - *Social, political, environmental, ethical implications of Spiritual Practice.
- REGISTRATION send payment in full to:
Ordinary Dharma, PO Box 67, Warner Springs CA 92086
If you have questions call Caitriona at 310/470-8443
Next class will start in late March in the Silverlake area.

Study Group

with Caitriona Reed in Westwood. Starts January 23, 2003
7:30-9:30 PM alternate Thursday evenings \$130

Mahasatipattana Sutta and the Prajñāparamitta Sutra

Aikido and Iaido Schedule

Monday Manzanita Village

Aikido and Iaido 5:30-7:30

Tuesday Santa Monica

Iaido Sword 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Aikido 8:30 PM - 10:00 PM

(Beginners 8:30-9:15)

(Advance 9:15-10:00)

Thursday Santa Monica

Young Aikido Warriors 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Meditation for Martial Artists 6:00 PM - 6:45 PM

Beginners Aikido 6:45 PM - 8:00 PM

Advanced Aikido 8:00 PM - 9:30 PM

Tuesday and Thursday classes are at 2432 Lincoln (at Cedar, between Pico and Ocean Park on the West side of the street)

Hypnotherapy, Counseling, Consultation and

Teachings with Caitriona Reed or Michele Benzamin-Miki

in Los Angeles. 310-470-8443 or e-mail: Caitriona

cr@fivechanges.org Michele mbm@fivechanges.org

Email. In an effort to conserve resources we will be using e-mail increasingly in the future for announcements. If you would like to receive the **weekly e-mail** which includes relevant quotations, links, political actions, items of interest as well as our calendar please let us know at
cr@fivechanges.org