

# INSIDE DHARMA

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together."

Lilla Watson, Aboriginal activist

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September-October 2008



## It's That Time Again!

### The Third Annual *Art from Inside* Prison Art Auction and Fundraiser:

Saturday, December 6

by Kalen

Our show this year is really growing! We are adding a wonderful "vendors" market. Suttonwood Antiques, a company which imports Chinese antiques, including hand carved Buddhas, will have a booth and will donate 20% of all proceeds to our efforts at Inside Dharma! WOW!

But we are also excited to announce that Karmic Klutter (the best organic soaps and other body products around) will be present as well as Tim Smith, the St. Louis famous caricature artist. The fundraiser will also include nature cards from up north and a whole card selection, non-processed honey, and potentially a few other handmade products.

The prison art is all matted and framed this year and includes wonderful bead works by the Native American group at Bowling Green prison. We also have some of those wonderful bird houses!

The show will open mid-day this time, with the sales floor opening at noon. The main event will still be in the evening. At 7:30 p.m. we will have an old fashion pie auction. There will be lots of fun and good eats also.

This is a great time for folks to purchase to wonderful artwork for themselves or for gifts for the holidays.

The show would not be possible without the amazing response from incarcerated artists, who have donated generously in order to support their own community, especially those coming up on release.

## *Investing in Change* Is Meeting with Success

Inside Dharma's first ever fundraising campaign, *Investing in Change*, has met with tremendous success thanks to the generous support of our extended sangha and dear friends. By the end of October over \$4000 was raised, and the donations are still coming. The campaign is on its way to meeting its December 31 goal of \$10,000.

This campaign is an important step in the development of Inside Dharma as an agent of change and support for incarcerated and recently released individuals in the spirit of the Dharma. By raising funds, our organization will be able to address the following important needs and plans:

*continued*

A gift of just \$20 will help toward the purchase of reading and practice materials for inmates looking for inspiration along their paths of change and growth.

Every \$60 will fund a “coming out” set of clothing and basic items for a recently released inmate, which Inside Dharma ships to correctional centers for men and women without immediate access to such essentials.

Every \$80 can be used to help defray the fuel costs of prison visits by Inside Dharma volunteers, who have been covering such expenses out of their own pockets.

Every \$300 will fund the printing and mailing of an issue of the Inside Dharma newsletter.

Other needs occur on a less regular basis, but can be urgent. For example, Inside Dharma has helped recently released inmates by providing food baskets and grocery store gift certificates, loans and gifts to assist with utility bills, and bus passes for those seeking employment.



Inside Dharma operates with almost no overhead, but with very few regular income sources and year-round requests for assistance, a more sustainable method of funding is being sought.

Thanks to the generous participation of so many supporters who have provided gifts both large and small, Inside Dharma can look with confidence toward continuing its important work.

## Mu

By Walter Elkins - Bonne Terre, MO

A monk asked Joshu, a Chinese Zen master, “Has a dog Buddha-nature or not?” Joshu answered, “Mu.”

Theoretically, it can be said that *mu* is a negation of the question as to the ability of a dog to have buddha-nature. Joshu could neither affirm nor negate the buddha-nature of a dog. Either answer relegated buddha-nature to dualistic concepts. It places buddha-nature into a class with haves and have-nots. Every sentient being has a buddha within. This leaves the idea of the monk’s question moot. Mu is in response to this, not an affirmation of buddha-nature, nor a negation. Mu is the perfect response to get the monk to understand that it is not the answer, it is the question. The question is important. The answer is only part of the realization. What we should strive for is the appropriate question to guide us toward this realization.

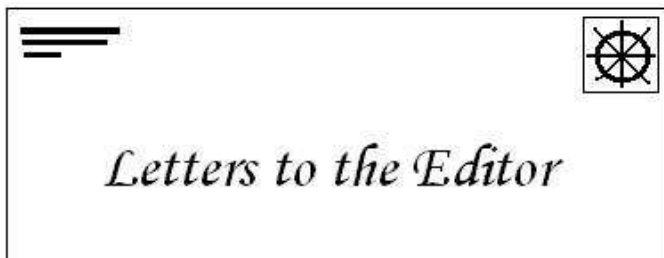
Mu. To understand mu, understand what mu is. Mu is looking into the mirror and smiling, to see that mu is everything and at once nothing. You have to see mu in its entirety. It is buddha-nature, the light that comes on suddenly when you have dwelled on something. It is the rain drops that fill the rivers that run to the ocean, where the sun warms the water and forms clouds. It is part of everything.

How much does it weigh? Spread your arms as wide as you can, look to the cosmos, and dare to imagine its size, and you will still fall short.

What does it look like? Again, smile into the mirror. This is the face of mu. As you encounter others, this is also the face of mu. But to understand all of this is only part of it.

Mu cannot be conceptualized. It transcends this. Understand that this is seen through the eye of the mind and is described in terms that can be conceptualized. We still must understand that all that is perceived by the senses is false, an illusion, but this is the only way to convey in words what I realized. I could show you, but the others in my group would think me insane as I dance around in circles. Ha ha! Yeah, the visual! But that's the way I would describe it.

All the time I spent straining night after night for months, when it was right in front of my face. Ah! There was never anything to get. I am finished struggling. I get it now. Thank you for your patience, and for pushing me to understanding. Thank you.



SEND your letters to the editor at:

Letters to the Editor  
Inside Dharma  
PO Box 20721  
Kirkwood, MO 63122

Dear Friends,

The article by Scott from Menard, Illinois, "What Buddhism Brings", is profound. What he described as the distortion of truth that occurred in his youth happens to every human being. Our mind in childhood is innocent. It is comparable to the hardware of a computer. Society then programs the software [and hence the saying] "garbage in,

garbage out." The human mind accepts as truth and then lives all of those lies, helplessly. This is the human condition.

To take refuge in the Buddha is the only way out of social conditioning.

The Hitler Youth, programmed by Goebbels, became a force for evil living out the software of lies. An opportunity to unlearn these lies is a gift beyond human comprehension. All things go together for good for those who love good and the truth of existence.

Sincerely,  
Dedie

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Dear Dharma Friends,

Below are two of my monthly Buddhist columns, which appear in the Kansas City Star newspaper in the Faith Section. As always, comments are welcome.

Your Friend In The Dharma,  
Lama Chuck Stanford

**Question:** "How should a person of faith handle marriage to a skeptic?"

**Answer:** Generally a skeptic is one who is doubtful about things or refuses to believe something until they are given proof. Most religions view skeptics as a bad thing - as one who is lacking faith. However, Buddhism actually encourages skepticism. In one of the famous Buddhist sutras (teachings) the Buddha after giving a teaching concludes by saying, "Don't accept these teachings just because I say they are true. Don't accept them out of respect for me. But examine them like a goldsmith would examine gold, and only when you know they are true, or that there is some

value to them - only then accept them."

Of course it is usually more rewarding when a married couple can share their faith, but that isn't always possible. There have been many successful interfaith marriages. Examples include Albert Einstein, Carl Jung and Irving Berlin. And even if one member of the marriage is skeptical about the other's faith that doesn't need to be an impediment to the marriage as long as there is mutual respect and love. After all a married couple are not going to agree on everything. Even their politics may differ.

So, the more important factor to a successful marriage isn't agreement on every issue but the practice of loving-kindness and compassion, not just to one another but extended outward toward everyone.

**Question:** "Many religions claim to be the one true religion. Is there one true religion?"

**Answer:** It does seem paradoxical that so many religions claim to be the only one true religion. However, Buddhism is unique in that it does not make such a claim - in fact Buddhism believes that truth can be found in many spiritual traditions. In the Buddhist teachings it is said that the Buddha gave 84,000 different types of teachings, for different kinds of minds. Likewise, different minds or personalities respond more positively to one religion more than another. Our Hindu brothers and sisters have a wonderful saying that "All rivers lead to the same ocean." Likewise all religions encourage good actions, moral virtues, personal responsibility and see the world and our lives as sacred and meaningful. But what is the sacred? The sacred is contrasted with the profane, the secular and the incomplete. The sacred, is that which it is seen as whole, perfect, of supreme value,

and of utmost concern.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said on many occasions that he believes all major religions have the same potential to transform us into better human beings. Therefore, if a particular religion is accomplishing this objective by helping its practitioners to become better, kinder, more compassionate beings, then why should it matter which religion one practices? What is most important is that we are making this world we live in a better place for everyone.

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Dear friends,

Today after our morning service, I headed out to Bonne Terre prison. After sitting, we talked and discussed many things but it seemed I couldn't get the conversation away from the presidential election.

Karma became voter outcome. Insight turned to the stock market and economy. And so on. Suddenly I realized something.

It seems all our hopes of a recovered economy depend on the person we believe in and are voting for. We are laying a big job on just one person. We are also laying a lot of blame on another person. How much power does the president actually have?

Will this become an "if only \_\_\_\_\_ is elected, then we will have peace and economic stability?" It's like a placebo. Yes, if we all believe, there will be change, but where is the change really coming from? And can't we stop things that are really not good for the world? Have you ever noticed when you are leaving for a vacation, it's suddenly easier to get up early to catch a plane than it's ever been to get up to go to work? Where does that energy come from?

Last night I watched the move "The Bucket List" which is about two men who are dying. They make a list of all the things they wish to do before they kick the bucket. Since one of the men has loads of money, they head out to do the list.

However, in Egypt as they are watching the pyramids, one of the men who has all this historical trivia information turns to the other man and says that ancient Egyptians believed that to get into their heaven you had to answer two questions first. The first question was "Did you find joy in your life?" The second question was "Did you help someone else find joy in their life?" The two men in the movie stand there and contemplate these questions.

So, ask yourself these same questions. Look for joy in your life. And then help someone else find joy. If we can do just these simple two things, wouldn't the world turn around?

Aren't our current problems larger than electing one man over another? How can we solve the education problem when some parents are addicted to drugs and have no money and are simply existing? Economic problems are caused by greed. What is greed but an attempt to achieve security and happiness? War is caused by misunderstanding and mistrust. One man can make a big difference, but he can't do it alone.

Just a thought! Life is so rich!

Kalen

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Dear Inside Dharma,

I am thanking you and your organization for the generosity that it has shown me [in providing dress-out clothes].

I am humbled. This is really an embarrassing situation for me as it is the first time in my life that I have ever been homeless or in need of assistance.

It is truly a blessing to find anyone who is willing to assist ex-cons, although many groups are calling themselves "faith based program", some still discriminate towards certain classes of convicts. Therefore I feel strongly that they are not, because Jesus didn't discriminate. All are One in the eyesight of God.

I will indeed perpetuate the gift of kindness.

You have restored my faith in humanity.

Let me end this one for now, but once again, thank you all for the assistance that you have given me.

Sincerely,

Anonymous



**A Selection of  
Poems  
by our Dharma  
Brother,  
Rick Miller**

**Just About**

when you figure  
it's all figured out, how  
to recycle pen-tips,  
where the paper is hidden,  
the names of your children,  
why you are here,

just about  
when you suspect  
it's no longer about you,  
how recycled breath is,  
where the keys are hidden,  
the faces on the page,  
who wrote them there,

just about  
then you flip  
a cracked spine, find  
old friends moved to Hawaii,  
your kids have kids,  
pitter-patter, wonder  
why you ever hid the paper.

Mike

From where wells this upheaval, this  
feeling rising from long-cut nerves,  
this aching where no tooth remains,  
this pressure pushing ductless eyes,  
this odd, not quite burning burning,  
this squeezing, like a small hand  
around the apple of Adam; wonder

what the hell are these feelings?  
Where do they come from, Sister?  
Who put them there, Brother?

Why is it nose, neck, ears, eyes,  
bone below cheeks feel a-jumble?  
cinder-block lungs sloshing  
their 25-gallons of tar, and gravity,  
usually more subtle,  
rounding the shoulder's edges.

Mike in a smoking Cadillac, the top down,  
his wispy-white hair streaming backward,  
trunk filled with stolen pharmaceuticals,  
dirty socks and a hand-crafted chess board,  
Audry and her cacti somewhere grieving,  
the highway shooting beyond all laws.



Big brother

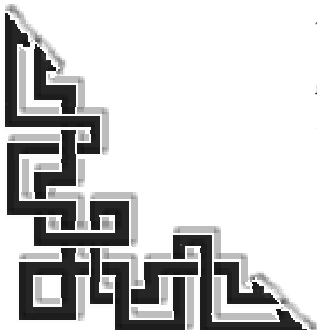
"learn to swim"  
--Tool, Aenima

In darkness, left to their own  
nature, angel-fish believed well  
tended in modest aquariums, eat  
each others's tails, nibble nibble  
nibble till, torpedo-like, they become  
directionless stumps, shades of  
once streaming glory.  
Hunger.

In absence of a sane coach,  
in theory, the team being trounced,  
the Captain steps-up, huddles  
the weak, the quarrelsome, each  
not lacking in subtler strengths,  
binds and then builds a plan,  
wherewith truncated defense, even  
victory might be gained, together.  
Might.

When Francisca, with her flamenco curls  
and mouth tasting of pistachio nuts,  
faced the barrel the cop's gun,  
naked, catholic, baby in arms,  
her steaming Mexican blood faltered.  
The picture-speakers crackled the walls.  
The sound of your tires exiting the drive.  
Conviction.

We, the city-born, carrying quirks  
in our pockets, do not kill  
chickens ourselves, rather get ugly  
factory jobs, pay the butcher solid  
money to keep his aprons clean,  
drink White Russians for breakfast,  
buy hydrogen-peroxide and designer  
band-aids, learn new ways  
to patch our torn, lonely,  
misguided bleeding asses.  
Blood.





**This issue is dedicated to**

**All of the generous prison  
artists who donated their work  
to the Art from Inside  
Prison Art Auction  
and Fundraiser.**

**Thank you!**

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