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Jushoku's Meanderings

In August we commemorate the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I visited Hiroshima for the first time several years ago. This essay is taken from a journal entry at the time of the visit. Hiroshima - the word - the historical event - the city - bring a torrent of thoughts and images, into my awareness. Traveling to Japan for almost thirty years, a resident for six years; visiting far corners off the beaten path, a professor of Asian Studies specializing in Japan, I had somehow managed not to visit this historically important place. Was this conscious?

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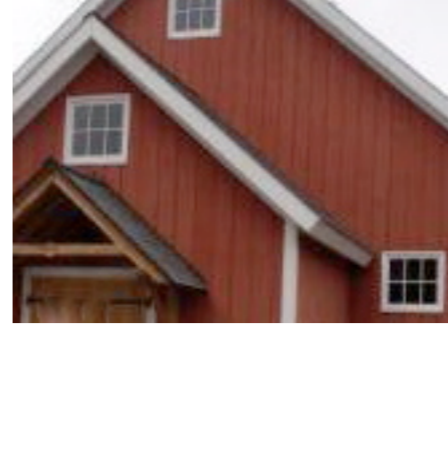
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August Events Calendar

Weekly Meditation Services (WMS)

are on Wednesday evenings. They begin at 6pm with a discussion or talk (see below for this month's discussion topics). At about 7pm there is a meditation service, followed at 8pm by a potluck supper. All of Wednesday evening's events are open to the public. There is no fee, and reservations are not required.



August Wednesday Meditations and Discussions

1 Ichinen Sanzen. - (Three Thousand Realms in One Moment) - An important Tientai doctrine established by Zhiyi in the 6th century. It is philosophically important, and no less, instructive as to how we live our daily lives.

8 Ritual in a Positive Light - A sangha member provided an article for discussion; In Defense of Ritual, by Richard Payne, in *Buddhadharma: The Practitioners Quarterly*; Summer 2018. Copies of the article will be made available in weeks before the discussion.

15 Rohingya and their Buddhist Oppression - This weekend we will be hosting Rohingya from Myanmar (Burma). We will discuss their plight and the role of Buddhists in Myanmar in their persecution. This discussion should provide a background to our People of Faith Picnic..

22 The Daoist - Buddhist Connection - the Buddhadharma is more than the Buddhist canon. Wherever Buddhism traveled it contributed to indigenous religions thoughts, practices and philosophies; and likewise, it absorbed the same. We will explore this important connection.

29 How to Talk to A Racist - Part of an ongoing series of discussion examining race in America. Tonight, we will use a short NYT article by Margaret Renkl that provides an interesting perspective on this issue. Copies of the article will be made available in weeks before the discussion.

Other Events in August :

4 Sutra Class and Morning Service, 8:30 - 10:30 AM - The *Maha Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra* (Heart Sutra) is the most often chanted, cited and best known sutra in the Mahayana canon. We will read and discuss two different translations and commentaries (Mu Soeng's and Red Pine's) as a set throughout the classes.

18 People of Faith Picnic - 2 - 6 PM at Tendai Buddhist Institute. This event is a gathering of Burmese Rohingya Muslim brothers and sisters with sangha members of Tendai Buddhist Institute. Children are especially welcome. Kanyu and Monshin will be leading the coordination committee. We will be asking people to contribute their time and effort to make this a true sharing. The 19th will be the rain date. **This will also be the designated Family Day in order to be part of this important event.**

Upcoming Events in September:

21-23 O-Higan Kokoro Retreat: - 7:30 PM Friday the 21st through 1 PM Sunday the 23rd. In Japanese, there are three words for "heart": *shinzou*, which refers to the anatomical organ, *ha-to*, which is the Anglicized word for a love heart, and *Kokoro* (心), for which there is no equivalent term in English. The closest I have come up with is (heart=mind=spirit - the three qualities in one entity). In Sanskrit this is *hridaya*, as in heart from the Heart Sutra. We will investigate this Buddhist concept (often translated as heart/mind) as an underpinning of much of Buddhist philosophy and practice. Please make reservations no later than Sept 14th.

NOTES:

Food Pantry at Junzan Tendai-ji - Gratitude is best shown by extending to others the thoughtfulness we have received. Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesday's. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)



Every August, around the 6th and 9th, the days in Japan when the atomic bombs were deployed, I struggle anew with the conflicting thoughts about Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Yes, it is a struggle.

I recall the estimated 130,000 people who died in the immediate explosions, and uncountable others who were forever crippled by the effects of the horrific legacy of Black Rain[i] and radiation.

The pictures and videos of the mushroom cloud are not just iconographic images of the destructive power of our species. The cloud is not just material rent into molecular chunks, it is life itself, an ethereal apparition. In it I see the life forces, the spirits of humans, animals, flora, and culture, vaporized in the blink of an eye. I wonder if through the transformative power of so great a disintegration rebirth is even possible. This disturbs my sleep every August.

It has been just over 70 years that the atomic bomb was detonated over the city of Hiroshima in Japan. Hiroshima is such a modern bustling city today that it is hard to imagine the absolute devastation which occurred on that fateful day. Of course, to put this into a larger context is been estimated that up to 200,000 people died in the Tokyo air raids during WW II, over a million families lost their homes and businesses. Yet somehow Hiroshima captures our imaginations in a way that the destruction of Tokyo does not.

It is has been calculated that the detonation of the atomic bomb was almost directly above the now iconic Genbaku Dome, one of the only surviving buildings of the explosion. My impression of visiting that site was the impact on the visitors who were visiting at the same as I. Schoolchildren and adult groups, families, and more non-Japanese visitors from around the world than I've ever seen in Japan at any one place. From a selfish perspective I would like to have been there by myself to experience the meaning of the bombing in solitude. Initially I was thinking of doing a brief memorial service for all of those who died in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Had I done so I would have been self-conscious. Thinking about it further, there probably had been more memorials for the deceased at Hiroshima and Nagasaki than anywhere else in the world, except perhaps the concentration camps in Europe.

Rather than performing the memorial service, I contented myself to walking around the dome nine times while quietly reciting Nembutsu. However, I could not shake the idea that even the very spirits of those who had died on that fateful day may have been vaporized - along with their bodies.

The context of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have always encompassed a complex set of ideas. There are many organizations and groups who observe the bombing of Hiroshima on or around every August 6th. I certainly understand the intent of these observances being a symbol for peace by witnessing the destruction of the atomic bombs, the ultimate weapon. What gets lost in this is that we view the result of the atomic bomb and its destruction as an end in and of itself. Why can we not equally observe the Rape of Nanking on December 13, at which it has been estimated that as many as 300,000 people were massacred one by one[ii], not by a singular mass explosion. Where is our concern that an estimated approximately 500,000 civilians[iii] died in Iraq from 2003 to 2013 as American forces deposed an authoritarian regime and occupied the country?

Specifically looking at Hiroshima I wonder the extent to which the Japanese people observed that horrific event as part of the victimization process in which they were the victims of a technological demon, as opposed to a result from a cause brought about by imperialist activities that stretched back the previous 50 years.

There are dozens if not hundreds of books examining the necessity, or not, of the atomic bombings. Some argue that it was necessary to save for the lives of American troops who would have to invade the mainland of Japan. Here, I have to say that I have a personal connection to that argument since my father was on a battleship that was one of the first of the American armada to enter Tokyo Bay after the surrender of Japan and he was in the first landing party to Yokosuka Naval Base. As this part of the argument it is also maintained that more civilians would have died during such a mass invasion of the Japanese mainland, then those who died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There are those who also argue that the bombing was intended to be a powerful symbol of American might and a warning in relation to the subsequent Cold War with the Soviet Union. However, it is not my intention here to examine those arguments.

Whether the bombing was necessary, expedient, or a wanton act of mass destruction, we should never lose sight that the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, one way or another, the result of Japanese aggression toward others in Asia. To put this another way, it was karma; karma in the context of cause and intent that led to a horrific result. Hate and violence only produces more hate and violence. Japan paid a high price to learn this lesson. Have we in America yet learned this lesson?

That said, my visit to Hiroshima was a deeply moving experience. It forced me to recognize the ramifications of human delusion that leads people to resolve disputes by force, by conflict, rather than mediation and discussion.

This August let us resolve to work and do our best to avoid another tragic series of events that we remember every year, as we do at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Love and Gassho Monshin

[i] The Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions yielded some 200 different kinds of radioactive isotopes, that is, nuclear fission particles of uranium and plutonium that escaped fission. Following the explosions, these and other materials irradiated by neutrons from the bomb, were carried high into the atmosphere.

The mixing of enormous amounts of airborne irradiated materials combined with heat and thermal currents from the freestorms led to rainfall in both cities within 30-40 minutes of the bombings. As the fallout particles were mixed with carbon residue from citywide fires, the result was the awesome-and injurious-"black rain." Taken from: <http://www.atomicbombmuseum.org>, accessed 8/1/18.

[ii] Chang, I (2012) The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II. Basic Books; Reprint edition.

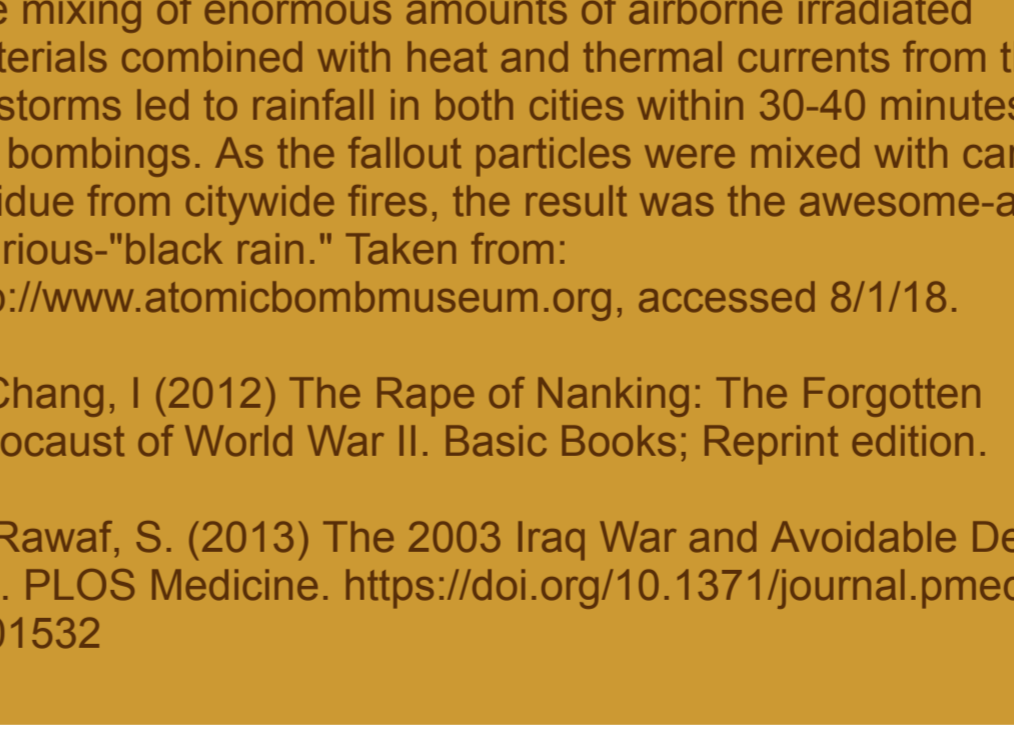
[iii] Rawaf, S. (2013) The 2003 Iraq War and Avoidable Death Toll. PLOS Medicine. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001532>

The Third Jewel- Where sangha members share ideas, poetry, and art to enrich everyone's Buddhist practice.

from
"Twelve Reckless Tanka"

*The humid mull
is neither salamander nor frog,
as midsummer begins to consider mulch.*

by Kimiko Hahn



Kimiko Hahn's latest book is Brain Fever. These unconventional tanka are printed here with her permission. She is Tomie Hahn's sister.

And as always, please do send us news from your sangha! Your poetry, your images, your suggestions! Gassho!