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**August 2015**

# SHINGI

Newsletter of the Tendai Buddhist Institute



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## Jushoku's Meanderings

As mentioned in a previous Shingi, Tendai Buddhist Institute is examining racism in North America and especially how we as Buddhists might contribute to an unprejudiced, just, more equal, society. Each Buddhist in North America carries the historical

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**

**5 Ritual's Role in Buddhism** - There are differences of opinion among practitioners and scholars as to the contemporary efficacy and meaning in ritual practices in religion. While considering some of these theories we will focus on ritualism contrasted with rituals for a post-modern practitioner.

**12 Practicing the Six Paramitas** - First presented in early Buddhism, Mahayana adopted the 'Six Perfections' as the central practice for the Bodhisattva Path to awakening. Mushin Sam Press will be presenting.

**19 Shadowing the Ephemeral-Embodied Emptiness Through Form in Art** - How can an examination of art offer insights into form, formlessness, and practice? Junren (Tomie Hahn) will share examples of music and movement to offer a



baggage of their own race and ethnicity with them, whether European, Asian, African-American, Latino, Native American, or mixed race and heritage. (cont.)



### **Quicklinks**

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**Our Other Sangha:**

[Blue Mountain Tendai Sangha--Denver, CO](#)

[Celestial Drum Sangha--Indian Lake, NY](#)

glimpse of how form can provide moments of flow, moments of embodied consciousness.

### **26 Butsudo and Caste in Modern Society -**

Shakyamuni Buddha rejected a caste structure in his sangha, and there many sutra tracts that affirm the equality of Bhiksu and bhiksuni. However, the story is more nuanced. We will examine Buddhist' philosophy and practices and how they bear upon our postmodern Buddhist experience in North America.

### **Other Events in August:**

#### **1 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 sutras in the Mahayana canon. We will read and discuss two different translations and commentaries (Mu Soeng's and Red Pine's) as set throughout the classes.

**21 - 23 Jodo Shin-shu Retreat -** Shinran, a disciple of Honen, founded Jōdo Shin-shu (True Pure Land School) in 1175. Both Hōnen and Shinran were Tendai monks before leaving Hiei-zan. While Tendai monks they were exposed to Pure Land Teachings and practices. This retreat will explore the practices in Tendai at the time of these two masters. Several members of Jodo Shin-shu in America will join us for this very special retreat. We will begin Friday evening at 7:30 and finish about 1 PM on Sunday. Please reserve a spot early.

### **Notes and Announcements:**

**Flowers -** No one has signed up for flowers for October, November or December. You can bring flowers or provide the money and Tendai Buddhist Institute will purchase them. This is an excellent way to make a contribution to our services and the Dharma center as a whole.

**Food Pantry at Jiunzan Tendai-ji -** Please bring non-perishable food items to the Tendai Buddhist Institute on Wednesdays. We contribute these items to the Chatham Silent Food Pantry.

Meanderings (cont. from side bar at left)

For those of us in the majority culture it is not so obvious as to how this racism affects each of us and our families personally. For those of minority status, underlying racism and discrimination is explicit every day of our lives.

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Some people will take exception to some of the views expressed in these teachings. The positions taken use interconnectedness as the primary paradigm for the discussion. The discussion will also make many people uncomfortable. I don't think we can approach this subject without discomfort. Truly, racism is a topic filled with pain, however this pain leads to our growth on the spiritual path.

A casual survey of contemporary North American Buddhist attitudes on racism reveals a number of tendencies. The first trend is that racism is genuinely disavowed by virtually all sangha in North America. This often takes an intellectual, dispassionate, form that demonstrates intention, but does not look at the reality of how our views may or may not manifest in the society at large. Another tendency is that white people, especially males, take exception to the notion of white privilege.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship has been addressing racism and Buddhism for a number of years, as part of their dedication toward social justice. I found a post by Nathan Thompson, August 2013, especially poignant.<sup>1</sup> A segment of that post reads as follows:

White Buddhists (in North America anyway) tend to be liberal, progressive, or somewhere further left on social/political spectrum. There's an almost default sense that racism is something perpetuated by conservatives, regardless of whether it's in the form of ugly, individual actions or in the promotion and upholding of systemically racist structures. Furthermore, I think the sincere belief in "being a practitioner of Buddha's teachings" brings about a lot of cognitive dissonance for the average white practitioner who either is called out for a specific act of racism, or who experiences a general calling out of how white folks are complicit in white supremacy. The want to be viewed as "a Good Buddhist," failing to recognize how much attachment they have both to whatever their notion of "Good Buddhist" is, but also to whatever their notion of "white person" is.

Dismantling notions of "Good Buddhist" and "White Person", or Asian, Latino, Black, Native American, etc. are essential to our developing as people who personify interconnectedness not as an affectation but as embodiment. What I propose is that we start by better understanding the dimensions of racism in North America, especially as experienced by African-Americans. There are other forms of racism and discrimination that we must also approach. However, by understanding the extreme case of African Americans, we can later apply what we have learned from that experience.

*Between the World and Me*, by Ta Nehisi Coates, (Spiegel & Grau - 2015) is a start. Toni Morrison writes "I've been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died. Clearly it is Ta-Nehisi Coates. The language of *Between the World and Me*, like Coates's journey, is visceral, eloquent, and beautifully redemptive. And its examination of the hazards and hopes of black male life is as profound as it is revelatory. This is required reading." We will discuss this book on several occasions in coming months. Acquiring this book, whether purchasing or library loan, will provide us with a common understanding for dialogue.

There are focused exercises we will encounter on this journey in the future, however, reading and discussing Coates book prepares us for more interactive involvement. This journey toward a better understanding of racism in North America and how we as Buddhists must change ourselves, as well as society, will not be easy, it will not be painless. If we are serious about our Buddhist Path, serious about a better understanding of the nature of reality it is essential.

Love and Gassho... Monshin

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[1] White Buddhist Race Talk. Posted by: Nathan G. Thompson  
Posted date: August 26, 2013 In: Healing, Race.

<http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/white-buddhist-race-talk/>

### **The Third Jewel-**

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

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### **The Calligraphy at Tokudo**

During our tokudo ceremony back in June, Koshin and I each received a beautiful calligraphy from Kobori-sensei. I wasn't actually sure what the calligraphy meant, but Gyosho translated and explained it to me a few weeks ago. Since many sangha members saw this calligraphy presented at the ceremony, I thought they might also enjoy taking a closer look at it and hearing more about what it means.

Each character of the calligraphy has its own definition, but when combined, the three characters together have an even greater meaning.

尽-zin means to do one's best or devote oneself into something  
真-shin means truth or real

心-shin means heart or mind

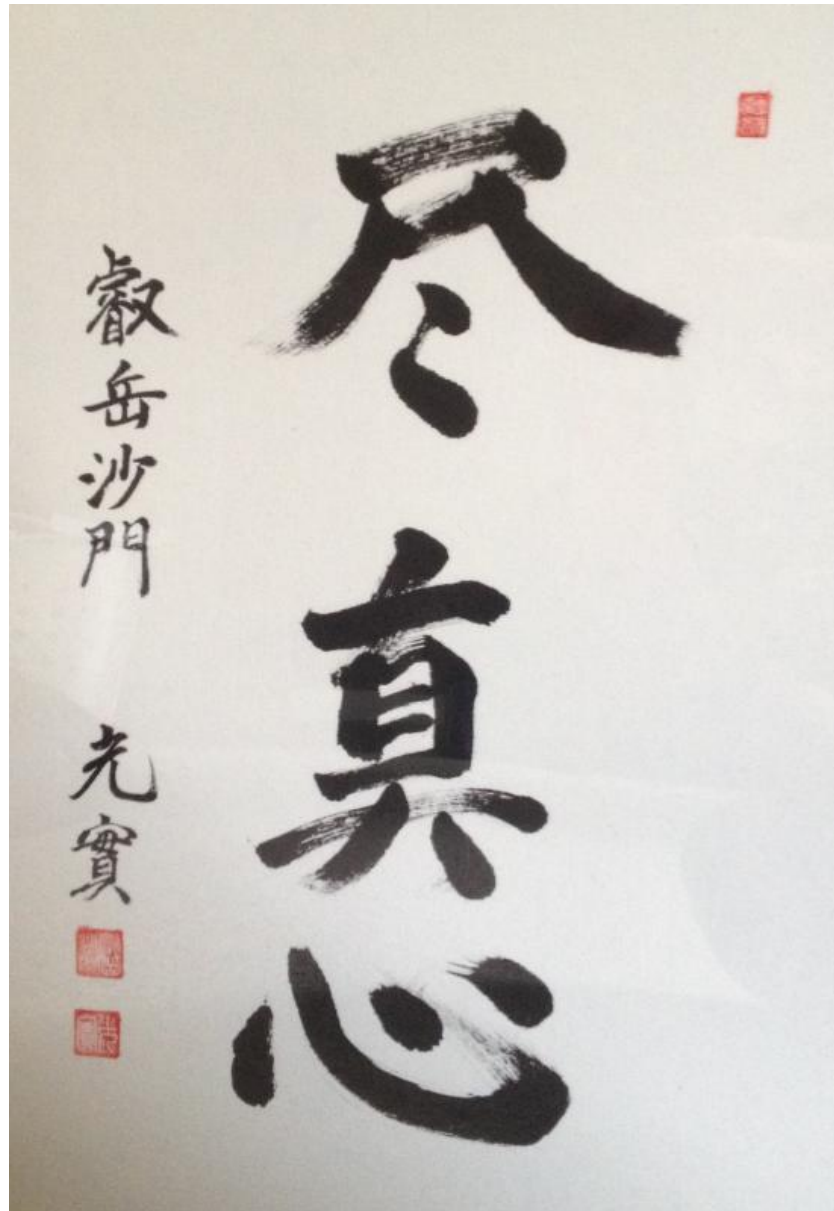
When taken together, these characters mean: Devote yourself to something from your real heart or from the bottom of your heart. This implies that we should show kindness and warmth in actions, attitude, and words.

The message in this calligraphy is one that can inspire us all in our practice.

Shingaku Jenny Henderson  
Gyosho Akioishi Hibara



Tokudo



Calligraphy

**Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact . . .**

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