



GAY BUDDHIST Fellowship

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Healing Shame

BY JACK MORIN

Jack Morin has been studying the mysteries of Eros for three decades as a psychotherapist and sex researcher in the San Francisco Bay Area. He's the author of *The Erotic Mind: Unlocking the Inner Sources of Sexual Passion and Fulfillment*, which offers a bold new psychology of desire and arousal based on his clinical experience as well as in depth analysis of over seven thousand anonymous descriptions of peak real life encounters and fantasies. He's also the author of the international classic *Anal Pleasure & Health: A Guide for Men and Women*. He writes and lectures for lay and professional audiences about the paradoxes, challenges and potentials of sexuality and intimate relationships.

Thanks for welcoming me back. I really had a wonderful experience when I was here before and we were discussing erotic integrity. Today we're talking about shame, but there's quite a bit of overlap because, as I think we'll get into today, shame can be a major impediment to the development of erotic integrity. And on the other side, developing erotic integrity is a tremendous anti-shame thing to do. So it's not altogether different, although we are going to be mostly focusing today on the experience of shame, how it comes about, and how it can be healed.

Shame is an extremely important, super-complex emotion, but it's also a very, very difficult emotion. As I'm sure you all know, shame—depending on how much of it we deal with—causes so many people enormous levels of distress in their lives. I know that in preparing for today, I got to thinking about instances where I have felt shame, kind of as a catalyst to bring that up, and you may find that our discussion today has the same effect on you. It can be valuable to tune into your own experiences of shame, but it can also be a painful thing. So I want to mention this up front and suggest that if you notice yourself tuning into or remembering experiences of shame for yourself today, that you have an intention going into it of just accepting what you notice without judgment—kind of a mindful approach to it—and certainly not deny that it's there, but see if you can just notice it and even maybe have a little detachment from it—that there it is, this is a part of me and my experience.

Let's talk about what shame is. Though I had plenty of ideas about it, I always have to take a look at the old *Merriam-Webster* and see what they have to say. They actually have three definitions in there, which are to me not clearly differentiated from each other at all, which is kind of unusual. Definition number one is that it's "a painful emotion caused by the consciousness of guilt, shortcoming or impropriety, or the susceptibility to such emotions." Number two is "a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute." That would probably be a more serious version of shame. And then Number three is "something that brings censure or reproach but also something to be regretted," which is when we say, "Gee, it's a shame that you

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cannot go to the party.” So this is obviously a very mild form of shame; it probably shouldn’t be called shame at all, but it is a usage in our language. It is important to recognize that shame exists on a spectrum. And that’s part of what we look at when we look at shame—how strong, how deep, how long-lasting, what is the impact of it. Some shame hopefully is a passing experience, whereas other experiences of shame will stay with us often for a lifetime.

Experientially, it seems to me that the essential experience of shame in its significant forms is basically unwanted exposure. It’s like having something distasteful about ourselves seen and discovered by others. The physical experience is usually the lowering of the head, the covering of the face, the turning away from eye contact—that’s part of that urge to hide, to kind of not be seen, to retreat into the shadows, to avoid further exposure; and then I’ve noticed that there’s an overall physical and psychic constriction. Everything shrinks, and we become smaller and helpless in the moment of shame. The shame is so complex, the way it’s intertwined with a whole bunch of other emotions. Once we’ve had shame, particularly of the serious variety, it’s so uncomfortable that we’ll do almost anything to avoid having it again. It’s kind of like a panic attack. You know that you will generally try to think of anything that you can to avoid having that happen again, because it’s so unpleasant. Shame is not panic, but it’s like panic in that way. We’ll naturally try to avoid it. So people who have multiple experiences of shame go through life with a lot of fear and anxiety that it might happen again, and with that comes a general inhibition or caution, a temptation to withdraw, to not be too out there, to not be seen.

This withdrawal to avoid shame is different from shyness. Shyness is a complicated thing too, but it seems to be at least in part a personality characteristic. There are signs of shyness in infancy. Even by one year old, careful observers can tell which people are going to end up being shy. So to some extent shyness is something we may be born with, but then of course shame can make it much worse.

Now guilt is also a part of the whole shame experience, but a lot of people including myself have strived to differentiate shame from guilt. What’s the difference? In reality, we use the terms interchangeably a lot, and that’s perfectly okay, because there is tremendous overlap, but generally speaking I would say that guilt experiences have more to do with specific things that we did that we feel bad about and realize we could have done differently—and we wish we had. And so guilt has this specific quality to it, whereas shame—especially when it gets bad—it takes on a global form. It’s not like I did something wrong but I am wrong to the core. So that’s probably the closest thing we have to a difference between shame and guilt, but I would say don’t worry about it.

Then of course along with shame comes a feeling of helplessness and for many people a depression, which is really the shoving down, the withdrawal, the retreat, the turning off of the life force within us.

Another thing people often don’t recognize is that very often there’s anger and tremendous resentment toward the shaming forces that have made us feel that way. Many people feel conflicted about that, because they feel bad about themselves and enraged at the same time toward whoever has made them feel the shame. And also when people have a

lot of shame going on, there is a tendency—not universal by any means—to become hypercritical of others and to put them down whenever possible. It’s like to bring them down to your level, or hopefully lower, so there’s someone’s worse off than you.

And then here’s the paradoxical thing about shame that we’re going to be exploring today in different ways: shame in some instances produces a fascination, even an obsession, with the forbidden impulses that we had and the rules that we violated. So shame really can energize the very thing that it is designed to suppress, and we’ll see how this operates as we move along today. And we see a lot of this in our lives, which I’ll talk about shortly.

Why the heck do we have this emotion of shame, which seems so destructive and clearly has that potential? Well, actually it seems like shame is a social emotion. It grows out of the fact that we don’t live as separate beings, most of us, that we are social creatures. We form and crave connections. We need them actually for our well-being and our very survival, and so we form attachments and bonds, and out of that families and communities and cultures. Shame is actually to some degree a necessary and really very effective means of social control. It’s used by groups that we belong to to keep the behavior of the members of that group within certain bounds. So when people venture outside of those bounds, the shame reaction causes them to feel excluded, but they end up coming back to the group, hopefully, and acting better in the future. It produces a certain minimal level of conformity within the group situation.

So I would say that normal people—like us!—have shame because we’re human. It’s part of the human experience within us and our connectedness with others.

The other thing about shame is that it requires self-awareness. People who are totally unaware of themselves, do not examine themselves, don’t have shame, and at the most extreme form, we’re talking here about the sociopaths. These are the people who are totally shame-free or shameless. They don’t examine themselves, seem to have a very limited capacity to do so (or interest), and they also don’t have the ability to empathize with other people, and shame does involve a certain empathy. And so there’s a kind of self-awareness. It’s a kind of advanced emotion in a way. In fact some people in psychology refer to shame as one of the self-conscious emotions—not in the sense of being self-conscious, although it fits in the case of shame, but where it requires a certain awareness of the self to have it. And that would be in the same category as also guilt and pride and even hubris, which is kind of the opposite of shame in some ways: thinking we’re fabulous, or having an inflated sense of ourselves. They all require a kind of ability to self-reflect and self-evaluate.

Now as you know, there are tools for social control that are related to shame. One of them is shunning. It’s extremely powerful to push someone out of the family, out of the group. There’s a big controversy going on right now—I was kind of looking into it a little bit on the Internet last night—about the use of shunning in the Mormon Church. There’s a long history of that. If people violate certain rules—and that certainly would involve if a person is gay—they’re shunned from the community, pushed out. In some of those communities, not only is the gay person pushed out, or the violating person who has been bad in some other

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way, but the entire family is pushed out and shunned. But if the family totally rejects the member who's done the bad thing, then the family is welcomed back in. This is a horrendously powerful tool. Of course, the Mormons aren't the only people who use it by any means. Related to shunning is ostracizing. It's that pushing out experience. And, of course, stigmatization, which is kind of a branding experience. You know maybe the ultimate metaphor for that is the scarlet letter.

So a shamed person becomes the other or the outsider. That means that anybody who's different from the dominant group in any significant way is going to be more vulnerable to experiences of shame and having that inflicted upon them. Of course, this includes all sexual minorities. Anyone who is sexually different is going to be more vulnerable to shame. I think those of us who are gay are more vulnerable to shame generally speaking than others may be. In my work, sexual shame is the most common manifestation that I see.

I want to go over just a little bit some of the damage that is caused by shame. Shame is such a powerful thing in its effects that it can easily get out of control. And sometimes it's hard to have a little bit of shame because the effects can be so profound. And I've noticed that even one experience of shame (and most of us will have much more than one) can stay with us in our memory banks, etched in there, for a lifetime.

Usually, when I present like this, I bring in the experiences of clients that I've worked with, because so much of what I know about anything really I've learned from my clients. But when it comes to shame, I'm very limited in my ability and willingness to do this, because clients who are grappling with shame—like the rest of us—are so concerned about exposure that it's almost impossible to conceal. When I present a case it's never really just one person. One of the ways I protect people is to use a composite made up of many people and I change all the identifying details. But it doesn't matter—and I've found this out in various ways. People will see themselves in it and feel violated and exposed. In fact, I've had this happen when people read my *Erotic Mind* book and were quite sure I was talking about them even when I wasn't. So anyway, I decided I will briefly mention some client experiences along the way today, but I thought I would take a risk, since I'm not going to talk much about my clients, and tell you about an experience of shame I've had that I've never told anybody before.

Before I tell this story, you need to know a little bit about my background. I grew up in a very WASPish middle class neighborhood, actually in the city of Detroit, which was a much different place then than it is now. The neighborhood was really kind of idyllic. It was like people knew each other; there was no crime; we left our doors open; we all walked to school; nobody had to protect us. I don't remember a single abduction or anything like that. And also I grew up (I feel very lucky) in a very good family—not without its problems, of course—but one of the values in my family that was talked about quite openly is that it was

wrong to be prejudiced toward people who were different—and racially especially. And I absorbed this and I'm glad that I did, but you know, one thing that I didn't really think about at the time is that it's kind of easy to take that position when you're not exposed to anybody different. Our neighborhood was the most homogeneous neighborhood you have ever seen in your life. It was all completely white. So it was easy in a way to adopt this “no prejudice” position.

There was an incident. It happened at some kind of a public pool not far from where I lived. I never knew clearly what the incident was. All I knew—the story that I had heard—is that there was some kind of conflict, and something had happened that involved some black kids and the majority white kids at this pool. Some conflict or something had

taken place, and as a result they had for a time closed down the pool. That's all I really knew. I knew no black kids in school at all. In fact, there weren't any until I went to junior high and high school, which for me was together, and there were a few black kids who I knew in passing, but did not know well. But there was this instance where I found myself in a car, in the front seat passenger. There was a teacher type person driving and in the back seat was a black kid who I knew of, but did not really know personally. I just kind of knew him in passing. I do remember—the only thing I remember about him—is that in my mind he was kind of cute. And the other thing is that I liked him. This teacher figure said, “What's going on over there with the pool?” And I blurted out, “Oh, they've been having trouble with colored people.” Dead silence. Nobody said another word about it. And I felt myself sinking, wanting to get out of the car, feeling just horrible. Part of it was I was empathizing with how that kid might feel. I didn't really mean to make him feel that way. And also as I thought about it, I was violating this principle in my family: “Don't be prejudiced.” And also you need to know that I've had in my life somewhat of an inner conflict because I was raised to be a good boy. I didn't cause any trouble. I was cooperative. I was nice. I did well. All that kind of stuff. And yet, as long as I can remember it's been part of either my gift or curse in life, depending on how you look at it, to see and attempt to articulate the unspoken truths anywhere I am. I can't help it. And so I don't have to

blurt out, but I did blurt out there, and I realized later that it wasn't just a personal faux pas on my part that I said that. I was articulating an unspoken attitude in the community, and I felt shame for having done so. Thus it was a very complicated experience. I'm not wracked with shame as a result of it, but I'll tell you, whenever I think about shame or things that I regret, things that I've done, this comes to my mind first. It's never left me, and I don't think it ever will, so you can see the power of shame. This was, as shame goes, a relatively minor infraction, but you get a picture of how this works.

So it's not much of a leap to think that huge big problems, much bigger than I'm describing with my little shame experience, can happen to people on the individual level when a profound shame experience or

Huge big problems can happen to people on the individual level when a profound shame experience or a series of them takes root within a person and begins to shape and distort their development as a person in the world. Out of that shame, particularly if it starts early, can form fundamental poor beliefs about who we are, our place in the world, our worth, our value, our lovability.

a series of them takes root within a person and begins to shape and distort their development as a person in the world. Out of that shame, particularly if it starts early, can form fundamental poor beliefs about who we are, our place in the world, our worth, our value, our lovability. These core beliefs are so deep. In cognizant psychology, they're referred to as schemas, not that it matters what you call them. Generally speaking, the schemas, or our deepest core beliefs, operate outside conscious awareness. What we see or what we can see of our core beliefs if they're shaped by shame is the ways in which they manifest in day to day experience. So we might be aware, for example, of what we say to ourselves in our heads moment to moment and day to day, and ways in which we put ourselves down, or demean ourselves, or the way we interpret events or misinterpret events around us as reflections of ourselves in terms of our inadequacies and our shortcomings. So there's that tendency to put a negative spin on things. When this happens, when a core belief within us has been shaped by shame, we're not talking about an emotion anymore, or not just an emotion; we are talking about a state of being that then affects us as we move through life. It orients us to have and repeat certain kinds of experiences and to respond in a certain way.

Now that's kind of an overview of the damage that shame can cause on an individual level. On a cultural level, shame, which is a tool cultures use to get people to conform, can get way out of control, horribly distorted, and be used for absolutely evil horrendous ends. A lot of attention is being paid right now to the treatment of women in certain cultures and in general around the world. But it seems to be particularly bad in certain Middle Eastern and African countries. And so there's been a lot of coverage about this. For example, one of the things that's being talked about a lot—especially since in Western Africa, a lot of civil wars are going on—is how in that context rape has become a weapon of war, and it's extremely widespread. What makes it such an effective weapon is that not only is the woman shamed by being raped, but her partner, if she has one, is shamed, because he was helpless to protect her, and the family was also shamed. It demeans all communities and weakens them.

But this doesn't occur in a vacuum. I've also been hearing lots of reports and reading things too about how in many of these countries, there's this idea (which is not completely gone in this country either) that if a woman is raped, it's her fault and she bears the brunt of the shame. In some of these central, western and other African countries, and Middle Eastern countries, Turkey even, which is a fairly advanced Muslim country, a woman who is raped will be shunned by her own family for having shamed the family. Basically they go after the victim, push her out of her family, and in some of these communities, it is not unusual and is somewhat expected in certain cases, for a woman to kill herself to spare the family and shame. It's the only way out. It's a common practice in many places for a man to rape a woman and then basically approach the family and ask for her hand in marriage. And the family basically has to say yes, because it's the only way to get out from under the shame that the

daughter has caused by getting raped. So many women are forced by the family to marry the guy who raped her. This is a tool which allows a man to marry up, by raping someone from a higher level family and marrying someone whom otherwise he wouldn't be allowed to marry. I wanted to tell you this partly because it's really been on my mind, because it's in the news, but also because it strikes me as an example of the unbelievable social power and consequences of shame. It can absolutely override what you would think is the strongest and most enduring human emotion, which is the bond between parent and child. Shame can shatter it. That is how powerful it can be.

And so I want to just mention some of the things that can make us more vulnerable to shame than others. Shame sometimes begins with our earliest preverbal experience and that is the way we are touched and handled as infants by shame. And it's very hard to get at this because we don't have any words for it, but many people that I've worked with, in their investigations of their own shame, came to understand that they held within their bodies an unspeakable shame about their physicality and that they were dirty. It's hard to say how this works; it's not a normal kind of memory at that age, but some people (who can say if it's a metaphor or what) can recall in some way the experience of being touched as children and feeling very uncomfortable, like it was a reluctant kind of touch. I think the reason some people can remember that is that if there's that level of body discomfort in a family, it doesn't just happen in infancy; it continues to be manifest along the way. Then there's the proportion of shaming behavior, which is kind of a rejecting, putting down, withdrawal of love, "you're no good" kind of thing, as a way to control behavior in a family, versus nurturing, loving, affirming behavior. Now the thing here is that it seems that shaming experiences carry more weight than nurturing ones. So if a person has a few badly shaming experiences in a family, but a lot of nurturing ones as well, they will remember the shaming ones more. They will have more of an impact.

I want to give you an example of that and this does reflect a client's situation, but it's one that I've heard in so many forms from so many people. A client I have been working with remembers being a kid, maybe five, and he's upstairs playing and kind of exploring issues of gender and self-expression, really key stuff which is the work of childhood. So he finds this sort of shawl type thing, and he's moving around and dancing to himself, enjoying the movement of the cloth, and gets kind of worked up and excited about it and goes running downstairs to share this with his family. But instead of greeting him with laughter—not derisive laughter but a fun sharing of his delight—they became angry at him, and said, "Get back up to your room. Take that thing off. Put your pajamas on and go to bed." So that was that for self-expression of that type, and this left a tremendous wound. And actually this experience came to shape this man's erotic life, because one of the reasons he came to see me is the realization that he has been attracted to super masculine men who would never do anything like that, and who would never face the shame and ridicule

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that he felt, and if he could get a man like that to want to be with him, this could help heal that shame. The only thing is, the minute that manly guy and he got close enough and he started to see that guy's vulnerabilities, because no human being has no vulnerabilities, his attraction would fall through the floor, because they too were susceptible to ridicule. In fact a lot of super masculine guys have a fragile masculinity. It doesn't take much to undermine it. It's a propped up thing. And so he really needed to explore all of this. His relational problems were a catalyst for bringing him in, but it became an exploration of gender and shame. And being sort of gender nonconformist is right up there with being sexually different in terms of being vulnerable to shame.

Oh my gosh, time is rushing by. So since time is rushing by, I want to move now to the important part, which is about healing shame. What do we do with this? I'll summarize by saying shame tends to disrupt the emergence of the true Self in us. And I use this in the Jungian term. Carl Jung, the psychologist, had this concept of the Self which he thought was one of the most important of all human archetypes that show up everywhere in human expression. The Self—capital S—is, you might say, the psychic equivalent of the genetic code. It is a built in seed of who we are to become and that Self contains everything that we might be. The goal of development in actualization in life is to have the Self, inner Self, emerge to become whole, to become manifest in the world. In the Jungian idea of the Self, this growing manifestation of the Self includes the eventual realization that we are not individual Selves, but we are connected with all the others as well. So the Self enlarges to the point where it joins with all of humanity or even beyond the universe if you will. So this is included in the concept of the Self.

Luckily the Self tends to be highly resilient and resistant to the debilitating effects of shame. And given halfway of a nurturing, supportive environment, the Self, no matter how much it has been damaged, will seek to reassert itself. So it's a matter of finding an opening and becoming our own self-nurturing beings. This takes a lot of courage to do. On a very practical level when we're dealing with the specific shame that we hold, let's say one about sexuality—that we have an unconventional turn-on or fetish, or some socially disapproved thing that really excites us, or we're out of control with our sexuality, or whatever—when we have that kind of shame in sex or elsewhere, since the shame experience is to hide, disclosure is a natural antidote to shame. It's difficult, though. People often come to me because they've read *The Erotic Mind* and realize I'm not inclined to be judgmental about unusual turn-ons, so they feel they can talk to me about it, and then when we get into the shame part I will ask them, "Is there anyone that you tend to confide in mutually in your life who is supportive and cares about you that you could consider disclosing this to?" And they often say, "Oh, I could never do that." I'll never push anyone to do it because you really never know how people are going to react; the disclosure of shame is not done lightly. You have to pick very carefully, based on intuition, a person who will hear what you have to say and be interested and not put you down for it.

It seems that shaming experiences carry more weight than nurturing ones. So if a person has a few badly shaming experiences in a family, but a lot of nurturing ones as well, they will remember the shaming ones more.

Now pride is a good antidote for shame—as in "gay pride"—but it's not enough. You can't just stop there with pride, because the ultimate antidote to shame, it seems to me, is compassion. Instead of desperate attempts to fight off shame, to turn away from it, to reject it, we can turn toward it, see the shame that exists within ourselves, recognize that it's there, become mindful of how it operates day to day, and ultimately embrace it as a part of our experience. Doing so begins to call forth the true self. What compassion allows us to do might be called radical self-acceptance which means accepting who we are at all levels, including the most unacceptable shameful parts of ourselves. They must be accepted or the healing cannot occur.

Now in too many instances—way, way, way too many—people's religious convictions and practices have actually promoted shame. Because there are standards that we can fail at, sins can translate into shame. But at the same time, as I'm sure you know, certain spiritual experiences that remind us of our connections beyond ourselves or take us to our deep-self, which is another road to that connection, can reconnect us with who we are, and help us to continue to unfold. The Jungian concept of the self is really very much like the Buddha-within idea, or the higher self, if you will. Basically as we apply compassion to our shaming experiences, and we accept ourselves, we start to reposition ourselves in the world and instead of adopting an inferior position or expecting to be demeaned or feeling like we'll never be loved, or believing that as we become known and seen we will be rejected, we become available to present ourselves in daily life in ways that we have previously been reluctant to do.

I wanted to conclude by going back to the horrendous African rape story. I heard about a woman from a reporter who did an extended story and who has been living in a Western African country, who had met and come to know a woman who had been raped and whose rapist had asked the family to marry her. She had been shunned from the family prior to that, but this woman—this illiterate African woman—not only refused to marry this guy, she pressed charges, which, of course, is a pretty futile enterprise, since the men generally do this with impunity. But technically there were laws, and she called them forth. And then she did something else—many other things, actually. She became literate. She became a lawyer. And she started an organization that exists now to support women in these situations, and they have a whole network of women and centers in that African country where a woman who faces a situation like this, who has been raped and is being shamed or asked to marry the guy, can come to this group, be taken in and protected by them, and they will nurture her, and protect her, and fight for her to help her restore her Self. This makes me cry. I'm inspired by this, and I was so glad to hear about it. I don't know how many of us could go through what she went through and come out like that. I don't know what makes that possible, but it is possible, and people do some version of that every day. And I guess what it tells us is that in the face of shame, and all the other difficulties that we face, we really should never underestimate the power of the Self, no matter how damaged it may have been. ■

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Send us poetry you have written that is related to or inspired by your Buddhist practice. We will include some of these poems in future issues of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship Newsletter. If we receive enough poems we may devote an entire newsletter to poetry.

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Calendar

Sunday Sittings

10:30 am to 12 noon

Every Sunday at 10:30am we meditate together for 30 minutes, followed by a talk or discussion till 12 noon. Everyone is then welcome to stay and socialize over refreshments till approximately 12:30, after which those who are interested usually go somewhere local for lunch. Our sittings are held at the San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett Street. (Look for the red door near 21st St between Mission and Valencia Streets).

MUNI: 14 Mission or 49 Van Ness-Mission, alight at 21st St, walk 1/2 block. **BART:** 24th and Mission, walk 3 1/2 blocks.

PARKING: on street (meters free on Sundays) or in adjacent New Mission Bartlett Garage. The Center is handicapped accessible.

Sunday Speakers

August 1st Open Discussion

August 8th Alistair Shanks

Alistair Shanks has studied Tai Chi, Qigong, Taoist Meditation, Taoist Breathing and Ba Gua with his teacher Lineage Master Bruce Frantzis since 1994. He currently teaches Tai Chi at the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine on Potrero Hill and teaches classes, workshops and private lessons around the Bay Area. He has been a volunteer with Zen Hospice Project (ZHP) since 2004 and for the last 4 years has assisted in training new volunteers as a facilitator. He also is a adjunct faculty member of the ZHP Education Center, conducting trainings and presentations on the Zen Hospice approach to end of life care.

In 2007 he completed a year long Buddhist Chaplaincy training at the Sati Center in Redwood City with Gil Fronsdal and Paul Haller and did his training at SF General Hospital where he also completed a 4 month training with Sojourn Chaplaincy. He worked with a team of chaplains dedicated to the ICU and since 2007 has conducted a weekly meditation group at the hospital for staff, patients and visitors. Since 2005, he has been involved with the Prison Meditation Network leading meditation once a month in the San Francisco County Jail in San Bruno through the Resolve to Stop the Violence Project (RSVP). He has been practicing Vipassana meditation since 2003 and has sat long retreats at Spirit Rock, Insight Meditation Society and the Forest Refuge.

**August 15th Dharma Duo:
Roy King & Jim Stewart**

August 22nd Neil Grungras

Neil is the founder and Executive Director of ORAM - Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration. ORAM is a San Francisco-based non-profit providing international and domestic advocacy, education and representation on behalf of LGBTI refugees. In addition to directly assisting refugees who have escaped countries including Iran, ORAM works closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the US Department of State and several community groups, to establish consciousness and international protection standards for these vulnerable refugees. More information is available at: www.oraminternational.org.

August 29th Jana Drakka

“Gengetsu Junsei” received Dharma Transmission in the Soto Zen Buddhist Lineage from Zenkei Blanche Hartman, the first woman in this lineage. Jana’s nonprofit organization, Jana Drakka’s Community Services, provides a wide range of services including support groups, workshops, classes and talks. Jana’s community work is based in Harm Reduction Principles—a way to meet everyone with complete acceptance—and allows for a client-centered modality. Among her many activities, Jana leads a meditation group at Glide Memorial Church on Monday evenings and facilitates an ongoing peer support group for the case managers at Tenderloin Housing Clinic, where she runs a mindfulness group and a grief/stress support group and gives one-on-one counseling to staff and clients.

September 5th Helen Seward

Helen Seward has been a Zen student for the last 26 years. She is a member of the Stone Creek Zen Center of Sebastopol. For eight years, Helen had been a volunteer for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Prison Project writing letters and sending books to inmates. When B.P.F. terminated their Prison Project, she helped form Dharma Companions, a volunteer organization that sends Buddhist books, magazines and tapes to inmates.

September 12th Anthony Rodgers

Anthony Rodgers is finishing up the DPP program at Spirit Rock this spring, and he volunteers weekly with Zen Hospice. Anthony did the caregiver training last spring, and Zen Hospice feels like his sangha these days. He is also doing the Buddhist Chaplaincy Training at the Sati Center in Redwood City and he just started a masters program towards a degree in Buddhist Studies at the Graduate Theological Union/Institute of Buddhist Studies.

September 19th Susan Moon

Susan Moon is a writer and teacher and for many years was the editor of Turning Wheel, the journal of socially engaged Buddhism. She is the author of The Life and Letters of Tofu Roshi, a humor book about an imaginary Zen master, and editor of Not Turning Away: The Practice of Engaged Buddhism. Her short stories and essays have been published widely. Her new book, *This is Getting Old: Zen Thoughts on Aging with Dignity and Humor*, is forthcoming from Shambhala in June, 2010. Sue has been a Zen student since 1976, practicing in the lineage of Suzuki Roshi at Berkeley Zen Center, Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery, Green Gulch Farm, and now with Zoketsu Norman Fischer’s Everyday Zen sangha. She received “entrustment” as a lay teacher in 2005. She is the mother of two grown sons and the grandmother of Paloma.

September 26th All Sangha Meeting

**GBF NEWSLETTER
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By the power and truth of this practice, may all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, may all be free from sorrow and the causes of sorrow, may all never be separated from the sacred happiness which is without sorrow, and may all live in equanimity, without too much attachment or too much aversion, and live believing in the equality of all that lives.

—GBF dedication of merit