Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Newsletter

A Monthly Publication of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, San Francisco February, 1995

GBF Calendar

26 Feb, Sunday Meeting Carl Grundberg, from the San Francisco Shambhala Center, will be addressing us to discuss **Enlightened Decision-Making . . . or . . .** What to do when you don't know what to do. The San Francisco Shambhala Center has been proud to work with GBF over the years providing space for classes and other GBF events in its gracious 1630 Taraval space, at 26th Avenue.

Carl was a Zen practitioner for a number of years in San Francisco and over the past many years has been a student of Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche practicing both within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the unique secular school which Trungpa, Rinpoche fashioned, called Shambhala Training.

12 Feb, Sunday Meeting This meeting will include a presentation of plans for the Feb 18 workshop, ***Exploring Gay Practice - Exploring Our Lives.*** It will also be an opportunity for GBF members to offer ideas for the workshop.

18 Feb *Exploring Gay Practice - Exploring Our Lives.* A day of exploration, led by GBF members. The workshop will be held in Berkeley, at Sangha house, 1800 Arch Street. Cost is $10 and enrollment is limited to 35 people. Send your check to the GBF address, and you will receive a registration form.

26 March, Sunday Meeting Dharma talk given by Katherine Thanas, head teacher at the Santa Cruz Zen Center.

Buddhist AIDS Project

"What is going on now is very important" - Thich Nhat Hahn

by Steve Peskind

The Buddhist AIDS Project - BAP - is a big name for a small group responding to practical and spiritual needs of this time. BAP was born in the Fall of 1993, as an outreach effort of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship. With increased diversity of volunteers, BAP organizationally separated from GBF in the Spring of 1994. The project today includes a working committee of eight who administer BAP and monitor client services; thirty Buddhist-sensitive volunteers who provide assistance - from meditation instruction to body work; and twenty people living with HIV who receive and offer skilled services. They are half of BAP's working committee and several key resources.

BAP is not "officially" affiliated with a particular Buddhist community. Consequently, as a grass roots, inter-sangha project, BAP not only provides a valuable information link among diverse Buddhist communities throughout the Bay Area and US, but also Buddhist information and referral services to any person living with HIV/AIDS. To date, most of BAP's services have centered in the Bay Area. The project regularly informs BAP participants of local and pertinent Dharma events. BAP has also responded to inquiries from New York, Arkansas, Oregon, and New Mexico.

In 1995, BAP looks forward to a steady increase in services here and across the country. The project will be publishing two resources: a compilation of excellent articles on integrating Buddhist practice and living with HIV and an information manual on Buddhist funeral rites from Theravadan, Zen, and Vajrayana resources. With the development and distribution of audio and video materials and participation on Internet, BAP will network further with AIDS services and Buddhist communities in the Bay Area and nationwide.

Coming Up - BAP will be supporting two conferences/retreats on Buddhism and AIDS, organized by other agencies and scheduled for New York and California this year. BAP highly recommends the book, In The Lap Of The Buddha, a 1994 Shambhala publication describing author Gavin Harrison's courageous integration of Buddhist practice with HIV/Gay/sexual abuse issues. Gavin is graciously offering an In The Lap/BAP benefit scheduled for April 8, in San Francisco. Other suggested services for this year are the beginning of an ongoing medita-

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- **BSC** Berkeley Shambhala Center: 2288 Fulton Street, Berkeley 510/841.6475 or 510/549.1481
- **GGF** Green Gulch Farm (SF Zen Center) 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito 415/383.3134
- **HBC** Healing Buddha Center/Medicine Buddha Healing Clinic [Two locations: (1) Unitarian Universalist Church, corner of Cedar & Bonita in North Berkeley - 2nd floor, Fireside Room - entrance through garden on Bonita; (2) 702 Solano Ave., Albany] 510/525.7835
- **KDK** Kagyu Droden Kunchab: PO Box 170370, SF, CA 94117 415/752.5454
- **LMB** Land of Medicine Buddha: 5800 Prescott Road, Soquel 408/462.8383
- **NI** Nyingma Institute: 1815 Highland Place, Berkeley 510/843.6812
- **ODD** Orgyen Dorje Den / Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo: 410 Townsend #406 SF 415/826.7181
- **POL** PÖL Pema Ösel Ling 2013 Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos 408/761.6266
- **RF** Rigpa Fellowship: 816 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 510/644.1858
- **SFSC** San Francisco Shambhala Center: 1630 Taraval St., SF 415/731.4426.
- **SFZC** SF Zen Center: 300 Page Street 415/863.3136.
- **SR** Spirit Rock/Insight Meditation West: 5000 Sir Frances Drake Blvd., Woodacre 415/488.0170 and 488.0164
- **TCL** Tse Chen Ling Center: 4469-23rd St., SF 415/641.0671.

Do you want a Dharma center's events listed here? Send a note with information on special events , or better yet, arrange for their mailings to be sent regularly, to:

Mark Picciano
Local Dharma Calendar

LOCAL DHARMA
February, 1995

Ongoing Events

Sundays **Introductory Open House** The purpose of the Dharmadhatu is to promote an uplifted environment for students to practice meditation and to study Dharma according to the Tibetan Buddhist Kagyu and Nyingma traditions as taught by the Vidyadhara, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. 9-noon. Free of charge, meditation instruction available. BSC

Sundays **Community Practice Day** This includes open house, sitting practice session, and Shambhala Practice Session. Meditation instruction is available during any of these practice sessions. Talks are given at Open House and on Shambhala Practice Days. SFSC

Sundays **Weekly Vipassana Sitting** with Eugene Cash. 45 minute silent meditation followed by discussion. 7 pm-9 pm

Sundays **Sitting** 9am-12 noon, meditation instruction available at 10am. BSC

Tuesdays **Sitting** 7pm-8pm. BSC

Tuesdays **Weekly Vipassana Sitting** with Howard Cohn. 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

Wednesdays **Shambhala Sitting Practice** 7pm-8pm. BSC

Thursdays **Weekly Vipassana Sitting** with James Baraz. Albany United Methodist Church, 980 Stannage (at Marin), 2 blocks up from San Pablo, Berkeley. 7:30 pm-9:30 pm

Thursdays **Sitting** 7pm-8pm. BSC

Special Events

5 Feb **Lama Tarchin** All day practice 9am-5pm SFSC

5 Feb **Italian Dinner** Monthly event for visitors and friends to join in a gourmet vegetarian menu. 7pm $15, call for reservations. NI

6-7 Feb **The Twelfth Tai Situpa** 2 Empowerments: White Mahakala and Medicine Buddha & Green Tara. 7:30pm each night, $20 per Empowerment. Call Ewam Choden Tibetan Center 510.527.7363

8-12 Feb **Insight Meditation - 5 Day Residential Retreat** led by Anna Douglas and Howard Cohn, at Angela Center, Santa Rosa. $180 ($140 lower rate) plus dana. Call for details, 415.759.6461

9 Feb **Tai Situ Rinpoche** 7pm $20 suggested donation. BSC

10 Feb **Jigme Rinpoche** presents a slide show of a trip to Tibet 7pm $10 suggested donation. BSC

10-11 Feb **Dzogchen Retreat with Lama Surya Das** , an American lama who spent many years in India and other Asian countries. Victory Center, Fairfax, CA. Call for details, 415.648.1029

10-12 Feb **Retreat** at the Zen Center of Los Angeles. $180 call909.659.5272

11 Feb **One-Day Zen Sitting** 5:40am-9pm. SFZC

11 Feb **Healing - A Workshop** Sylvia Gretchen presents deeply healing exercises designed to touch and transform emotional pain, and challenge commonly held assumptions about pain. 10am-4pm $75 fee includes lunch. NI

11-12 Feb **Lojong Practice Weekend** call for details. BSC

12 Feb **Shambhala Practice Day Open House** 9am-5pm, with Open House Talk by Charity Martin at 11am: "Longing". SFSC

13 Feb **Beginning Tibetan Language** 6-week series of classes taught by Ven. Kunga Thartse, Rinpoche. Mondays beginning Feb 13, at Ewam Choden Center of Tibetan Buddhism, 254 Cambridge Ave., Kensington. $90 the series. Call 510.527.7363

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Special Events

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25 Feb **Time, Space, & Knowledge: Working with Time** Alan Olson leads this challenging analysis of our conceptions of time, coupled with deep personal inquiry into our past, present, and future. 10am-4pm $75 fee includes lunch. NI

25-26 Feb **Shamatha Practice Weekend** "The Four Foundations of Mindfulness", led by Rob Ward. Call for details and registration. SFSC

26 Feb **Beginner's Sitting** This sitting is intended to accommodate new students and those who wish to enjoy a gentler schedule. It will include sitting and walking meditation, silent lunch, lecture and discussion, and an opportunity for individual zazen instructions. 9am-4:30pm $10 members, $25 non-members. SFZC

You Can Help The People Of Kobe

The San Francisco Zen Center is collecting contributions to assist the people of Kobe in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake. If you can help our Buddhist brothers and sisters in Kobe, Japan, send your check, payable to "Buddhist Earthquake Relief Fund for Kobe", to:

San Francisco Zen Center
300 Page Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

What GBF Means To Me

by David Holmes

[The following article is another in an ongoing series. We encourage others to share their perspectives about GBF - GBF Newsletter Committee]

To study the Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be awakened by all things. ----- **Dogen**

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship is a great blessing in my life. Whether sitting within the quiet, sacred space of this group on a Sunday morning or engaging your clear, bright minds in dharma-dialogue, I feel I am learning from you how to fully embody the gay soul I have been given in this incarnation.

It seems that we are all just beginning to discover that there is something unique in our experience of this life that can be used by each one of us to catch a glimpse of what lies beyond the veil of consensual reality. This gay spirit is whole, complete, ancient and abiding in the human race. That it persists in the genes of all the families of all the races of the world is, to me, eloquent testimony to the vital role it has played in the development our species. I wouldn't be at all surprised if the evolutionary strategy of sprinkling the population with a few gay men and women turns out to have been as central to human evolution as the development of the opposable thumb. (With our corpus callosum 13% larger and our anterior commissure 34% larger than those of our heterosexual brethren, it's no wonder I enjoy hanging out with you guys!)

I'm not advocating the cultivation of "gay pride"—anymore than I would advocate cultivating pride in one's gender, race or nationality. But we must learn who we are. To paraphrase Dogen—before we can be awakened by all things, before we can forget the self, we must study the self, by observing what arises in the mind, moment by moment. As gay people in this society, we've all been sold such a bill of goods—we've been taught to despise the very thing we should most cherish. What so often arises in our minds is the distorted view of ourselves which we have absorbed from straight culture. To fully transcend this gay body/mind, we must first see it for exactly what it is. As I spend more time in fellowship with you, as I gradually pull away the layers of internalized homophobia and confront the fear of knowing who I really am, I am learning that there is a fully functional being within me who is gay and absolutely in line with his true nature. He gives me wise counsel: to awaken to all things, I must fully become who I am.

I wish to express my gratitude to each of you and to our practice. As Dogen quotes an ancient sage in the Shobogenzo:

Familiarity with good people is like walking through mist and dew; although they do not drench your garment, in time it becomes imbued with moisture.

EXPLORING GAY PRACTICE...
...EXPLORING OUR LIVES

One of the most basic questions you can ask of a Buddhist is about "practice". What is your practice? Do you practice with others? How does practice affect your life? The word practice implies something you do and a path you follow. It is often described as a spiritual path, a way to realize your own nature and find enlightenment. For a Buddhist, it is frequently a meditation practice, but others have described theirs' in terms of social service, earth service, writing, the arts etc.

On **Saturday February 18th** in a one day workshop, the Gay Buddhist Fellowship will explore and focus on who we are, how we as gay men practice and what that means for the GBF. The day will be an opportunity to look at "gay practice" as a direct expression of our true nature. It will be conducted in a Beginners Mind spirit reflecting the innocence of a first inquiry. For many of us, it has been an individual dilemma as well as a sangha (group) dilemma to describe why we come together as Gay Buddhists.

Dozen-zenji, the renounced Japanese Zen teacher said, "To study Buddhism is to study ourselves. To study ourselves is to forget ourselves." The day will begin with sharing our stories (Buddha nature), continue into looking at how we practice (the Dharma), and conclude with our experience within GBF (Sangha). Buddhist teachers have emphasized bringing the practice from the meditation hall into our daily lives. If we do that as gay men and as Buddhists, we can begin to understand what gay practice means. We invite you to consider joining us for this exploration of each other as well as practice.

This workshop will be held at Sangha House located at 1800 Arch Street in Berkeley one block from the UC campus. You must pre-register if you plan to attend. Cost will be $10.00 to cover lunch and help pay for the use of this Buddhist center. Enrollment is limited to 35 people and we at present have 15 people registered. Pick up a registration form at the first meeting in February. You can register by sending a check to GBF for $10.00 and we will send you the registration form by mail.

Building Sangha is a focus in this workshop and it is always appropriate to reconnect with what the Buddha taught. Buddha's comment on Sangha is taken from the book "White Clouds, Clear Path" by Thich Nhat Hanh. As noted in the monthly schedule, this subject will be the discussion topic at our first meeting in February and a full report of what was discussed will be available after the workshop.

SANGHA

"The very nature of a sangha is harmony. I believe harmony can be realized by following these principles:

1. Sharing a common space such as a forest or home.

2. Sharing the essentials of daily life together.

3. Observing the precepts together.

4. Using only words that contribute to harmony, avoiding all words that can cause the community to break.

5. Sharing insights and understanding together.

6. Respecting others' viewpoints and not forcing another to follow your own viewpoint. "

Buddhist AIDS Project
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tion/support group for people with HIV and another similar group for anyone affected by the emotional stress of the epidemic.

The Buddhist AIDS Project, which runs completely on donations, including a monthly gift from GBF, expresses heartfelt thanks to all of its supporters. Donations of time and skills and funds are needed and welcomed as BAP looks at "what is going on now", and ahead.

For more information, please write to BAP,

Finding the Muscle

From a lecture by Katherine Thanas

Recently someone asked, "How do you get rid of the pain?" An experienced meditator said, "The pain never goes away." The great secret of Buddhist practice is we learn to open to the pain, the frustration, the suffering that never goes away. We might call this pain the gap between what's happening and what we are willing to accept...the gap between the moment that's here and a better moment we might imagine.

That's a different result from what we anticipate when we begin practice.

Someone—a long-time sitter—told me recently that he was very disappointed with his practice. He recently "blew" it, got really angry, lost it. He was very disappointed in himself.

We think that when we've been practicing for many years we should have found equanimity, a clam mind, some place safe form the winds of anger, greed and confusion. We think by now we should have calm sailing, that when we see some heavy-duty thing coming ahead, we should adjust our sails, monitor our breath, our posture our state of mind, and sail smoothly through it.

What actually happens is that we are constantly falling out of balance and returning to balance again and again until falling out is one movement with returning to balance. Maybe practice is learning to return to balance, rather than dwelling in balance.

When we practice for many years we are more willing to know our experience and to let it pass through us. The longer we sit the bigger our stomach and heart become and the softer our muscles and mental formations become.

We may think we should be centered and calm, but if we try to practice equanimity before we have met all the energies of our lives—circumstances that nave not yet been resolved, nor completely met, await us. When the circumstances are ripe—frustration, or joy, or anger, rage, longing, whatever—pop up. If we don't let that stuff come up because we have prematurely found a place of ease, we do not see what has to be seen.

Expressing our anger or our bully nature, or whatever, allows us to see "Ah, here's something I actually do. I can be a bully. I can really unload anger or power-trip someone, I can kick someone around." If we don't ever see ourselves enacting this, we continue to live our lives dualistically, deceiving ourselves. By denying or degrading fields of energy within, we bypass large parts of ourselves, perhaps the juicy creative energy of our lives.

When you have really known your experience, entered it penetrated it—you don't hang onto it any longer. The secret power of that energy returns into continuous exchange with the universe. It is only when we don' really admit our energy that we are pushed around by its power.

In Daigo, Great Enlightenment Dogen Zengi says "The Great Way of the Buddhas is constantly being transmitted. And the merits of the Ancestors reach everything."

The Great Way of the Buddhas is ultimate reality, things as they are. This great way is constantly being transmitted, without interruption. Today we are enjoying these beautiful apple

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Finding the Muscle

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branches that Jim cut from the tree, but in order for the apple blossoms to grow, last autumn's leaves had to fall.

The Great Way of the Buddhas is the actual way your mind is, the way your body is, your thoughts, your feelings, everything that's coming up for you as you sit.

The main precept of our practice-life is that "Practice is not separate from enlightenment." Right now is the only moment of our life and in this moment delusion appears, enlightenment arises. Inseparable, arising together. This moment is fully delusion. This moment is fully enlightenment.

The thinking mind grabs at things: its function is to discriminate, to distinguish, to discern and label. So how do we practice the Buddha Dharma in the midst of the arisings of small mind? The great contemporary teacher Uchiyama-Roshi says that how you do that is to "open the hand of thought."

We practice to notice the hand of thought grabbing onto our formulations, our judgments, our opinions, and to find the muscle to release the tension, open the hand and let it all go. Finding the flexibility, the inner balance. That's how we convert our karmic life into dharmic life.

Enlightenment is completely beyond our ideas of enlightenment and delusion. Enlightenment is freely coursing through our ideas of enlightenment and delusion. And the pain of our separation from our deep wide nature doesn't end until we close the gap that separates this moment from our fantasies about it.

Katherine Thanas is Head Teacher at Santa Cruz Zen Center. She will be the guest speaker at the March 26th GBF meeting.

GBF, 2261 Market St. #422, San Francisco, CA 94114. For 24-hour information on GBF activities, call (415) 974-9878. Submissions for newsletter publication can be sent on a MacIntosh disk to: GBF Newsletter, Mark Picciano, Editor,

All signed articles express the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the GBF.