

the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

## Social Justice e-Newsletter Winter 2007



*Why are you so afraid of silence? Silence is the root of everything. If you spiral into its void, a hundred voices will thunder messages you long to hear.*

*~ Jalal ad-Din Rumi*

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### Upcoming Events



#### [Awakening the Heart and Inner Wisdom](#)

January 16-18, 2008  
Nine Mountain, Plainfield, MA  
**Registration deadline:  
January 9th!**



#### [A Retreat for Activists and Organizers of Color](#)

April 29-May 2, 2008  
Menla Mountain Center,  
Phoenicia, NY



#### [Deep Replenishment and Connection](#)

July 18-20, 2008  
Garrison Institute, Garrison, NY



## Entering Silence: Lessons from Nature in Winter

The season of winter is truly a paradox! Most things in the natural world appear to be sleeping, dormant, and restricted in movement. With shorter days and longer nights it is the time of darkness and quiet. Some describe winter as a time when life and death occur simultaneously. The paradox is in this apparent stillness where growth continues unabated.

During this time, it is common for animals to become reclusive, inactive; they “hibernate” and go into a very deep sleep. Their body temperatures, heartbeat and breathing slow down and they use very little energy. Trees also rest in the winter.

Unlike the rest of the natural world, humans today are not as attuned and respond quite differently to the changing seasons. We barrel our way through this most magical season, ignoring the opportunity it offers to rest and restore our energies, enter silence and be taken into deep reflection of the past and develop new visions for the future.

Here are a few ways to slow down this winter:

1. **Create a special place in your apartment or home** where you can sit alone quietly and breathe for 5-10 minutes a day. With focus you will be able to hear your heartbeat and the sound of your breathing.
2. **Take time to move your body!** Stay physically active by taking a hatha yoga, tai chi, or qigong class at least once a week. You could also rent a DVD or borrow one from your local library. Taking long walks (without your cell phone) in a peaceful or quiet environment is equally beneficial. These physical activities are not only important for keeping our internal organs nourished and warm during this season, but help us slow down and take quiet time away from the business of daily life. Movement helps us get out of our head and connect with our bodies.
3. In the midst of a crisis or feeling caught in a chaotic whirlwind, **bring awareness to your immediate situation**. Stop, breathe, and change your routine right away. Take a walk, listen to your favorite tunes or do a creative activity (collage, paint, draw or write in your journal).
4. Consider **mindful eating**, paying attention to the taste, flavors and textures of each morsel in your mouth at a designated meal each day. Nourish your body with a wholesome meal. Choose a comfortable place (at a table or on the floor), set a beautiful spot (candle, flowers, and whatever you find aesthetically appealing) and savor a delicious and healthy meal. Add soothing instrumental music in the background for effect!
5. **Make a ritual** of taking a long relaxing hot bath organized in a way that soothes your senses. For some this might include the use of scented candles, soothing music, oils, flowers, incense and natural soaps.

*It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers [and sisters]. The more solitary I am, the more affection I have for them.*

*It is pure affection and filled with reverence for the solitude of others.*

*~ Thomas Merton*



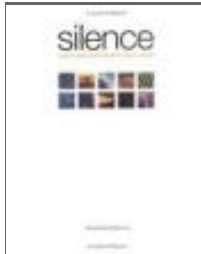
## Recommended Reading



### **The Arrow Over the Door**

by Joseph Bruchac  
Puffin Publishers, 2002

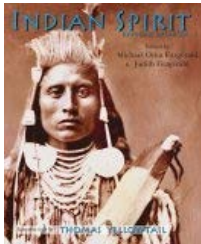
This is a beautiful and touching narrative, based on a real historical incident, of the encounter between two teenage boys, a fourteen year old Quaker boy and a young Abenaki Indian both who value silence as a tool on their journey for peace.



### **Silence: How to Find Inner Peace in a Busy World**

by Christina Feldman  
Rodmell Press, 2003

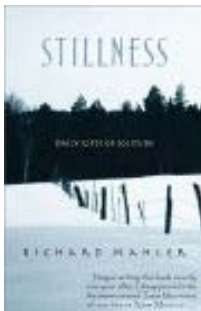
This book offers a deep and comprehensive reflection on the value of silence and its personal and collective impact.



### **Indian Spirit**

by Michael Oren Fitzgerald and Judith Fitzgerald  
World Wisdom, 2006

This is a powerful collection of quotations by Native Americans illustrating their deep embrace and respect for the sacredness of silence.



### **Stillness: Daily Gifts of Solitude**

by Richard Mahler  
Red Wheel, 2003

Presents benefits of quiet-alone time for the stressed-out and discontented.



### **Just Listen**

by Winifred Morris  
Atheneum, 1990

This is the story about Tara who grew up in the city and, visiting her Grandmother, learns to listen to the sounds of the natural world and those of her inner self.

## Recommended Viewing

### **Why We Fight**

Directed by Eugene Jarecki  
Sony Pictures, 2006

This is a moving documentary for citizens who care about a peaceful world and the folly and waste of war.



## Recent Publications



[Add to Cart](#)

### **The Activist's Ally**

120 pages and audio CD. Comb bound, full color.  
\$20.00 plus shipping

The Center's newest publication, *The Activist's Ally: Contemplative Tools for Social Change*, is a resource manual for social justice activists seeking to bring contemplative practice into their lives, communities and workplaces. Social justice workers will find this a valuable resource for personal transformation. It provides tools and techniques for both individual and group practice. Copies are available for purchase in our online store.

*Silence is painful, but in silence things take form, and we must wait and watch. In us, in our secret depth, lies the knowing element which sees and hears that which we do not see nor hear. [...] When sub-consciousness becomes consciousness, the seeds in our winter-clad selves turn to flowers, and the silent life in us sings with all its might.*

*~ Khalil Gibran*



## Our Upcoming Workshops, Retreats and Announcements

### **Awakening the Heart and Inner Wisdom: A Retreat for Activists, Organizers, and Service Providers**

January 16 - 18, 2008  
at Nine Mountain, Plainfield, MA

For those who work in the realm of community transformation, this winter retreat offers the opportunity to draw one's energies inward in preparation for the new season. Participants

will receive support in sustaining one's energy and commitment to social change work, face the suffering one meets on a daily basis and create a tranquil space for reflection and clearing the heart. Learn more at [www.contemplativemind.org](http://www.contemplativemind.org).



### **A Gathering of Activists and Organizers of Color**

April 29 - May 2, 2008

Menla Mountain Retreat Center, Phoenicia, NY

This retreat is for grassroots social change organizations committed to transforming the culture of organizing. 6-8 mentors, senior organizers and activists, will serve as allies and mentors. We encourage registrations from individuals beginning their careers in activism and organizing, ages 17-35. Learn more at [www.contemplativemind.org](http://www.contemplativemind.org).



### **Deep Replenishment and Connection**

with Lama John Makransky

July 18 - 20, 2008

Garrison Institute, Garrison, NY

The meditation practices of loving communion and presence taught in this retreat are adapted from Tibetan Buddhism to make them freshly accessible to people of all backgrounds. These practices can help us become more fully present and connect more deeply with others, so as to evoke their hidden strengths beyond the limiting judgments of society. Learn more at [www.contemplativemind.org](http://www.contemplativemind.org).

## **Other Events**

### **Spirit in Action's Leadership Program**

January 16 - 20, 2008

at Pendle Hill, PA

[www.spiritinaction.net](http://www.spiritinaction.net)

### **Meditation Practice and Discussion for People of Color**

Shambhala Meditation Center of New York

118 W 22 St. 6th Flr.

New York, NY 10011

212 675-6544

[www.ny.shambhala.org](http://www.ny.shambhala.org)

### **People of Color Buddhist Meditation Group**

Boston, MA

For 2007/2008 weekly meeting schedule and location, contact [pocmeditate1@mac.com](mailto:pocmeditate1@mac.com).

## **Classes and Workshops in Nonviolent Communication**

**Nonviolent communication (NVC)** is a process developed by Marshall Rosenberg and others which people use to communicate with greater compassion and clarity. It focuses on two things: *empathy* — listening with deep compassion, and *honest self-expression* — exposing what matters to oneself in a way that's likely to inspire compassion in others. The ideal of NVC is to get one's own needs met while also meeting others' needs.

### **Communicating with Compassion**

A project of the Institute for Peaceable Communities

Workshop located in Amherst and Arlington, MA.

[www.communicatingwithcompassion.org](http://www.communicatingwithcompassion.org)

## Seeds of Connection

Classes and workshops in Northampton, MA

[www.seedsofconnection.org](http://www.seedsofconnection.org)

You can search for many more classes and workshops at

[http://www.cnvc.org/training\\_list.aspx](http://www.cnvc.org/training_list.aspx).



## Spirituality and Progressive Social Justice Research

Are you involved in progressive social justice work and have a spiritual practice?

Interested in participating in a research study that seeks to understand the ways that people do or do not express their religious practices and their social justice work together?

Visit [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=3TXeRLWijTAJYw\\_2bx4As\\_2bjg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=3TXeRLWijTAJYw_2bx4As_2bjg_3d_3d)



## An Invitation from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Do you yearn to be part of a community that shares a commitment to engage in peace and justice work with compassion? Do you see your concern for the world and your spiritual practice as inseparable?

If so, the [Buddhist Peace Fellowship](#) invites you to become a member. Our members are the source of our energy, and provide support for our Peacework, Transformative Justice Program, Youth Program, and more.

As a BPF member, you'll receive:

- A subscription to *Turning Wheel*, which Jack Kornfield calls "the best Buddhist journal I read." Every issue is filled with stories from grassroots spiritual activists as well as from leading socially engaged Buddhists such as Joanna Macy and Robert Aitken Roshi;
- Invitations to BPF events, conferences, and member gatherings;
- Discounts on selected products, including books, t-shirts, and more.

Most of all, being a BPF member means being a part of a community that aspires to meet suffering with compassion and to raise a collective voice for peace. Since 1978, we've been present on the frontlines of efforts to work for peace in Iraq, call for nuclear disarmament, and end the death penalty. Your membership helps to support all these efforts, and more.

Please join the thousands of people from many Buddhist and other spiritual traditions who count themselves as BPF members, including Robert Aitken Roshi, Pema Chodron, Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, Joanna Macy, and Robert Thurman. We look forward to your partnership!

**To Join**, visit <https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=8113>

**For more information**, contact:

[charis@bpf.org](mailto:charis@bpf.org)

phone: 510-655-6169, ext 304

web: [www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)

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**The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society**

199 Main Street, Suite 3

Northampton, MA 01060 USA

phone: (413) 582-0071

fax: (413) 582-1330

email: [info@contemplativemind.org](mailto:info@contemplativemind.org)

web: [www.contemplativemind.org](http://www.contemplativemind.org)