

One World
in Dialogue

PRESENTS



ONE WORLD BEARING WITNESS

WE ARE ONE.



WE ARE DIVIDED.

A 24-HOUR MEDITATION VIGIL
8. - 9. December 2018
oneworldbearingwitness.org

2nd GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS:
BEARING WITNESS



One World Bearing Witness is just around the corner: the weekend of the 8th-9th December! As we are getting closer, you may begin to wonder about the process we will be going through during the vigil. Here we ask: How do we bear witness? And: what will we do together in the vigil?

THE THREE TENETS OF BEARING WITNESS

Not Knowing.

Bearing Witness.

Taking Action.

These are the Three Tenets of Roshi Bernie Glassman's peacemaking work. And they are very helpful to us as Witness Bearers in *One World Bearing Witness*.

Bearing witness invites us to trust our humanity and the humanness of others. Our shared humanity is the key, and this sense of sharing One Humanity, one humanness, is part of what has been broken in our world.

To bear witness, we start by suspending the judgements and habits of the mind and feelings that create separation. We allow our selves to be touched, and to start a process within us. That process may include a lot of feelings – sadness, helplessness, fear, and anger – and we allow them to flow through us, staying with us for as long as they are present. We experience them from a place of not knowing: we neither dive into them nor do we push them away. We don't think about what these feelings mean or why we feel them. We allow ourselves to be an instrument for these feelings and connections that have been blocked or dismissed in our busy and divided world. What you feel is not simply personal to you, but is part of our shared humanity.

As Bernie has said: "When we bear witness, when we become the situation — homelessness, poverty, illness, violence, death — the right action arises by itself. We don't have to worry about what to do. We don't have to figure out solutions ahead of time. Peacemaking is the functioning of bearing



witness. Once we listen with our entire body and mind, loving action arises.” Listening with our whole mind and body is meditation.

HONORING ROSHI BERNIE GLASSMAN

One World Bearing Witness has been enormously inspired by Roshi Glassman. Bernie, as he was called by nearly everyone, unexpectedly died just a few weeks ago, on November 4th. Over the last years, he has had health troubles – a serious stroke, cancer – but his final, and brief, illness was short and caught all who loved him by surprise.

Bernie revolutionized Zen practice and engaged Buddhism, particularly for the West. His love of Zen came from the realization of interconnectedness that was at the heart of it, and so he forged a way to bring the depth of Zen into social action. This was “bearing witness.” Bernie created retreats for bearing witness to some of the world’s atrocities: Auschwitz, Rwanda, and Native American reservations. He also started “Street Retreats,” where the retreatants had to live on the streets of New York or another big city homeless and without money. He dissolved the barriers between ourselves and the stigma and horror of genocide and poverty to re-weave the fabric of interconnectedness between all beings.

This year in *One World Bearing Witness*, we honor Bernie. We will have a special tribute to his life and work for one hour in the middle of the 24-hour vigil. And we will use his Three Tenets as a chant to remind us why we are gathered together.

WORKING WITH THE THREE TENETS IN THE VIGIL

The 24-hour vigil, *One World Bearing Witness*, is divided into seven **three-hour Meditation Cycles**. (There is also an hour introduction, an hour Tribute to Bernie, and an hour conclusion. All together that is 24 hours.)

In each three-hour Meditation Cycle, we will practice bearing witness through meditation together. Each cycle follows this pattern:

1. In the first hour of each cycle, you will receive guidance and direction from the spiritual guides and teachers in each cycle about bearing



One World in Dialogue

witness to some aspect of our humanity. Listen to what is being offered from the depth of your Being, staying open and present. Let your self be touched and allow the responses to arise in your self without getting occupied with them or trying to push them away. We are all in this together. The hour ends with a 15-minute break.

2. In the second hour, there will be a gong to announce the beginning and end of the 45-minute meditation cycle, followed by a 15-minute break. We meditation and take our breaks in silence.
3. For the final hour in each cycle, we will begin by repeating the following together aloud, to anchor our meditation practice:

NOT-KNOWING: letting go of fixed ideas about yourself, others, and the universe.

BEARING WITNESS to the joy and suffering of the world.

TAKING ACTION that arises from Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness.

NOT-KNOWING.

BEARING WITNESS.

TAKING ACTION.

NOT-KNOWING.

BEARING WITNESS.

TAKING ACTION.

The third hour of meditation begins with a gong after this chant and ends with a gong. (At the end of this Guide you will find these instructions on a page that you can print out and have with you during the vigil.)

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE TENETS MORE DEEPLY

To learn more about the Three Tenets, you can go to:

<https://zenpeacemakers.org/> and read more teachings about the Tenets from Bernie and other teachers. Please note: while the Zen Peacemakers speak about Buddhist practice and meditation, the practice of Bearing



Witness is not Buddhist. Bearing Witness in silence and respect and openness has been an essential way for human beings to acknowledge the suffering and joy of life for thousands of years in many traditions and cultures.

Here is an article by **Wendy Egyoku Nakao Roshī** the abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, a successor of Roshī Bernie Glassman, and a founding teacher of the Zen Peacemaker Order. You can find it on the ZPI website.

NOT-KNOWING

letting go of fixed ideas about yourself, others, and the universe.

With regular application, the practice of the Three Tenets can become a way of living from the center at all times. Although the tenets are taken in order when you study them, the practice is not necessarily linear. Each tenet reflects the others; they are seamlessly embedded in each other, flowing as center, circumstance, and action in an ever-unfolding and endlessly varied circle of life.

Difficult circumstances—political upheaval, the sudden loss of a loved one, or the unexpected termination of your job—can make life feel suddenly unstable. But actually, according to the Buddha, things are always unstable. It's just that we have a tendency to live life from a set of unquestioned beliefs that make our lives feel solid. How can you know what will happen next? You can't—because the universe, from its tiniest particles to its largest forms, is continually in flux.

In Three Tenets practice, **not-knowing trains you to continually set aside fixed points of view. I describe not-knowing as a flash of openness or a sudden shift to being present in the moment.** This dropping away of the things you have relied upon for a sense of stability may lead you to examine what you believe is your center, to take shelter in the place before anything arises, a place of emptiness and profound silence, a place of the deepest rest where self-interest has not yet entered. This is not a void, but rather a darkness where things are not yet



differentiated or seen. You yourself can go to the darkness and become like an empty vessel, empty of points of view and preferences. An empty vessel refuses nothing and receives everything that is coming at it from all directions. By practicing in this way, you can create more space to accommodate your own reactivity and the points of view of others.

It should be said that the **not-favoring-of-viewpoints that arises when one practices not-knowing does not demonstrate a lack of caring. Rather, not favoring any one thing over another allows you to center yourself within a boundless net of interconnection and to expand your circle of caring.** In this way, the practice of not-knowing can align you with the ever-changing interconnected reality called Life. Practicing not-knowing may seem impossible to do, and yet, when you realize that life itself excludes nothing, practicing not-knowing over time will enable you to become more aware of what you choose to let in and open to what you had previously excluded.



ONE WORLD
BEARING WITNESS

to the joy and suffering of the world

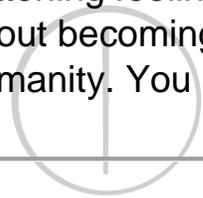
The practice of bearing witness is to see all of the aspects of a situation including your attachments and judgments. You cannot live solely in a state of not-knowing, because life also asks that you face the conditions that are coming at you by being present to them. When you bear witness you open to the uniqueness of whatever is arising and meet it just as it is. When combined with not-knowing, bearing witness can strengthen your capacity for spaciousness, thus enabling you to be present to the very things that make you feel as if you have lost your center. It can strengthen your capacity to listen to other points of view, thus allowing a more nuanced picture of a situation to emerge.

Buddhist meditation trains you to bear witness by strengthening your awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they arise and pass. As your awareness strengthens, you begin to experience spaciousness and stability and see that you have a choice in your



response to what is arising. Over time, you learn to bear witness to all the elements that are arising with a curious and compassionate attitude. This does not mean repressing the strong emotions that arise or stopping the escape into story drama, but rather being aware of what you are choosing to feed. A wise old tale often attributed to the Cherokee warns that when many demons are struggling inside you, the one that you feed is the one that will become the strongest. You alone are responsible for what you feed.

Bearing witness can allow you to eventually come to terms with the most difficult life circumstances. The practice is always available to you regardless of the time, place, situation, or people involved. **There is nothing that you cannot bear witness to, from dusting the lint off your sweater to living in a pit for two years. In bearing witness, you are actively engaged and embodied, even struggling, with whatever is arising.** Sometimes spiritual practices can have a neutralizing effect, flattening feelings rather than stimulating them. To hold to the center is not about becoming a spiritual zombie; it is about living the fullness of your own humanity. You are alive, so be fully alive.



ONE WORLD BEARING WITNESS

TAKING ACTION

that arises from Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness

The third tenet is Taking Action. It is impossible to predict what the action in any situation will be, or the timetable for when it will arise or what might result from it. The underlying intention is that the action that arises be a caring action, which serves everyone and everything, including yourself, in the whole situation.

Sometimes the action is as simple as continuing on with the practice of the first two tenets of not-knowing and bearing witness; the very practice of the Three Tenets is itself a caring action. And though **the action that arises from the engagement of not-knowing and bearing witness is spontaneous and often surprising, it always fits the situation perfectly.**



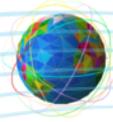
Training with the tenets is a matter of taking a backward step again and again and continually discerning your internal processes in the midst of acknowledging what is happening around you. An effect of ongoing and consistent practice of the Three Tenets is that when you lose your sense of center and fall into reactivity, you also regain your center more quickly. And when you continually perform this practice in the midst of all the activities of your daily life, the practice will be readily accessible to you during the most challenging circumstances.

Training with the tenets brings about resiliency of the spiritual muscles and an ever-deepening sense of reality. As life unfolds around you, the Three Tenets are active inside of you, always directing you back to the center.

For the complete article, originally published in Tricycle: The Buddhist Review, Summer 2017, vol. xxvi, no. 4. follow this link: tricycle.org.



ONE WORLD
BEARING WITNESS



Meditation Cycle Instructions

Each Meditation Cycle consists of three hours for meditation and bearing witness.

First Hour:

Begins with a guided meditation designed to bring our attention to one aspect of the human condition that we can bear witness to.

Meditation ends after 45 minutes with a gong.

>> 15-minute break

Second Hour:

Begins and ends with a gong. This silent meditation session is 45 minutes long.

>> 15-minute break

Third Hour:

Begins with everyone reciting this out loud, together:

NOT-KNOWING: letting go of fixed ideas about yourself, others, and the universe.

BEARING WITNESS to the joy and suffering of the world.

TAKING ACTION that arises from Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness.

NOT-KNOWING.

BEARING WITNESS.

TAKING ACTION.

NOT-KNOWING.

BEARING WITNESS.

TAKING ACTION.

Then there will be a gong to begin the meditation, and one to end.

>> 15-minute break