

## Compassion

On Monday we celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. His commitment of trying to bring about equality among all Americans helped make this country a better country. Though he was assassinated at a young age, his influence was far reaching. Following Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence resistance, he was able to convince his followers not to raise arms against their oppressors. Violence begets violence. The power of the people can make a change in a positive way.

Times have changed since the sixties with less strife now. I believe Dr. King's Dream has mostly been fulfilled. Laws are in place to protect all classes of people so that the constitution is upheld and all people are created equal. General sensibilities now are such that we are kinder and treat others as brothers and sisters. There are still pockets of injustice and hatred towards others. To make a change we must make the change ourselves.

Dr. King's views are based in part to his Christian roots and quotes bible passages to help spread his message. We as Buddhist understand the message but can interpret it in a different way. Buddha stated that everyone has the Buddhaseed thus everyone has the opportunity to reach Buddhahood. Equality among all people was preached over 2,500 years ago. We are all one in the same, thus we must treat each other like we would ourselves. Follow the Golden Rule. When we think pure thoughts, pure actions will result. From these pure actions, we begin to influence our surroundings. Once our surroundings become pure, then the city, then state, then country then the world. This is how we can bring about peace.

Is this easy, no it is not. Everyone is at different levels of understanding the dharma and awakening their Buddha nature. Many are still blinded by their ignorance and will not be able to see. Others are ready but hesitant since they have yet to find the path. This is where we step in. We have compassion for all living beings. Compassion involves empathy and love for another as well as love for oneself to break the bonds of suffering. We understand the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Fold Path and use both as guides throughout our daily lives. We are governed by the principle of Cause and Effect, leading to our interdependence amongst all people.

In order to bring compassion to the world, we must appreciate ourselves first before we can help others. We have to live, breath and follow the teachings of the Middle Way and not be attached to our desires. It is difficult to be mindful of our thoughts. But through practice and by being conscious at first, like learning how to ride a bike, it will become second nature. As we develop ourselves, we can begin spreading compassion to others.

There is a policy at work, if you see garbage on the floor, pick it up. If you see a glass lying around, pick it up and drop it off at a bus bin. If you see garbage and walk right past it, you are saying that you accept this garbage on the floor and more garbage is ok. Likewise in our daily lives, we see injustice, we see suffering. If we walk past then we are accepting the world as it is and not making an effort to make it better. Yes, there are situations where your involvement may bring about more trouble. Each situation is different but each situation has a safe response. What is that safe response? That comes from wisdom. Wisdom comes from study, but also comes from deep faith. Chant the Odaimoku sincerely every day. Chant Odaimoku before you step into a situation. Quite

possibly you may be able to reach the Buddha level of consciousness and the correct response will appear in your mind.

We are all living in Dr. King's dream. We can sit down at a table with all races and creed without the fear of segregation. We are based on the content of our character not on the color of our skin. Now is the next step, to develop everyone's Buddhaseed. Show compassion to everyone. Help those who are in need. Explain the nature of all things, that we are all interconnected. By doing so, we can make this a better place, a more peaceful place, a more happy place.