



Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

HEADQUARTERS UPDATE

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MARCH 2021

BISHOP'S CORNER



As we observe Buddha Day (*Hanamatsuri*)...

Bishop Eric Matsumoto

For Buddhists especially in the East Asian Traditions, one of our most important and significant observances Buddha Day, when we celebrate the birth of Prince Siddhartha Gautama or the soon to be Historic Buddha Sakyamuni, will soon be here. Unfortunately, due to the Pandemic, much of our observance of *Hanamatsuri* (Flower Festival) will be virtual or online, once again. I am saddened that so many of us will not be able to visit temple and participate in the traditional pouring of Sweet Tea which has been a custom in East Asian Buddhist communities for over 1,500 years. Though we are not able to throng to our temples and pour Sweet Tea to

celebrate Buddha Day that does not make this year's celebration any less significant.

We are all familiar with the life of the Buddha marked by his birth, enlightenment and passing away to enter into Parinirvana. However, today, I would like to highlight a fourth occasion or event of the Buddha's life and that is the Buddha's sharing of the Dharma or the contents of Enlightenment with others so that others may also attain the same peace and happiness, and wisdom and compassion too. This is a very important point. The ultimate goal in Buddhism is not only one's own enlightenment, but the enlightenment of all others too. Unless, all are happy and at peace, one cannot be happy and at peace and the peace and happiness of one is dependent on the peace and happiness of all others. The Buddhist aspiration is the peace and happiness of all existence whether human or otherwise, animate or inanimate, visible or unseen, those living in the past, present and future, not limited to Earth, but extends to the farthest reaches of space including other dimensions. It is compassion which, literally, knows no bounds and includes all.

This compassion is intricately linked/connected with wisdom. Sakyamuni Buddha became aware of many universal truths with the attainment of enlightenment, and one of the most fundamental and basic universal realizations was that all existence is equal, precious and interconnected. Due to this new realization, this new mindset, the Historic Buddha was able to equally treat all with loving-kindness, respect and compassion. He was opposed to the caste system with its insistence that birth and class made an individual noble and instead proclaimed that wholesome good deeds are what makes a person noble. He, also, refuted that gender hindered the attainment of enlightenment. Thus, people of all walks of life were accepted into the Sangha. The following is a quote of the Buddha from www.Buddhanet.net website which recognizes the equality of everyone in the Sangha. "*Just as, O monks, the great rivers Gangâ,*

Yamunâ, Aciravati, Sarabhû, and Mahi, on reaching the ocean, lose their earlier name and identity and come to be reckoned as the great ocean, similarly, O monks, people of the four castes (vannas)... who leave the household and become homeless recluses under the Doctrine and Discipline declared by the Tathâgata, lose their previous names and identities and are reckoned as recluses who are sons of Sâkya" (Udâna 55). There is also a comment on the website which shares that "The Buddhist position regarding racism and racial discrimination made explicit at such an early age is one reflected in the moral and scientific standpoint adopted by UNESCO in the present century (Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, UNESCO 1978).

In short, the Buddha did not approve of any kind of discrimination and treated all that came before him with respect, equality and compassion. As the Sangha, let us be guided and inspired by the Buddha-Dharma and share Enlightenment's message of the preciousness, equality and interconnectedness of all life, all existence to address the suffering in the world and nurture peace and harmony. It is with such intent and hope that the Office of the Bishop released a statement speaking out against the violence against Asians which was jointly authored with a few members of the Committee on Social Concerns, Rev. Blayne Higa Chair.

As we observe Buddha Day (*Hanamatsuri*), let us take a moment to reflect upon the deep significance of the Buddha's birth and the Buddha's wish that one and all are freed from suffering and sorrow. Please have a happy and joyous Buddha Day, but most importantly a meaningful Buddha Day!

BISHOP'S STATEMENT

Statement Against Anti-Asian Violence

March 21, 2021

The recent killing of eight people in a series of mass shootings that took place at Asian-owned spas in Atlanta, Georgia are both shocking and horrifying. We mourn the loss of life and denounce the continued acts of violence against Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities across our country.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began a year ago, there has been an exponential rise in hate crimes directed toward Asian Americans. As with other marginalized groups, there is a long and painful history of racism, scapegoating, and exclusion of AAPI communities in the United States.

The conditions for violence have been fomented by the continued use of hateful speech directed toward Asian Americans. This kind of racist language has resulted in verbal and physical harm. We must all work together to stop these acts of violence.

The Buddha taught, "The mind is the forerunner of all actions. All deeds are led by the mind and created by the mind. If one speaks or acts with an agitated mind, suffering follows, as the wheels of a cart follow the ox pulling it. If one speaks or acts with a calm mind, happiness follows, as surely as one's shadow."



Let us take great care to use language in ways that foster compassion and love, not anger and hate.

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii is a spiritual community devoted to sharing the Buddha's teachings so everyone may enjoy lives of harmony, peace, and gratitude. We decry with deep lament all acts of hatred and violence and we stand in solidarity with all who walk the path of peace and equality.

May we be guided by the light of all-inclusive wisdom and all-embracing compassion in the difficult days ahead.

Namo Amida Butsu
Eric Matsumoto, Bishop
Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

Photo: A sculpture of the Buddha's hand in the Abhaya Mudra (Semui-in), which symbolizes protection, peace, and the dispelling of fear. The sculpture is in the stylized form of the Sukhotai Period of Thailand.

MINISTERIAL ASSIGNMENTS

Reverend Kazunori Takahashi, currently serving at the Headquarters as the Executive Assistant to the Bishop and at Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin as the Acting Rimban, was relieved from the position of Chaplain at the Pacific Buddhist Academy as of March 15, 2021.

Reverend Sol Kalu, currently serving at Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin as its Associate Minister, has been appointed as the Interim Chaplain at the Pacific Buddhist Academy as of March 16, 2021. Rev. Kalu will continue his assignment to Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin as its Associate Minister.

CONDOLENCES

Mr. Yoshio Kijima, a member of Makawao Hongwanji Mission, passed away on February 13, 2021. Mr. Kijima served as the President of Makawao Hongwanji Mission and the treasurer of the Makawao Hongwanji Mission, Makawao Hongwanji Preschool in Pukalani, and the Maui Hongwanji Council. He also served the greater Maui community as treasurer of the Maui Hiroshima Kenjin-kai, and as a leader of the Maui Japanese Language School Association. The Ingo of CHUU-SHIN-IN 忠信院 which means "One who is sincere, loyal and true" in recognition of his life of nembutsu was conferred by Bishop Eric Matsumoto on March 6, 2021.

COMMUNICATIONS & RESOURCES ON COVID-19

The Office of the Bishop has issued a series of memos (1-15) to provide directives and recommendations regarding temple activities and procedures during the COVID-19 outbreak. These are available in the following page of our Hawaii Kyodan Website. The latest memo was issued on March 21, 2021 following recent changes in vaccination eligibility and restrictions on the various islands.

<https://hongwanjihawaii.com/blog/2020/03/13/covid19/>