

# Buddhist Peace Fellowship Chicago Chapter

www.bpfchicago.org



*Hatred never ceases through hatred in this world.  
Only by love does hatred cease. This is an ancient natural law.*  
— The Buddha (Dhammapada)

**Our chapter**, of a network that has been active for over 40 years, brings together Buddhist practitioners working collectively for peace and justice. Coming from a variety of Buddhist traditions, we are a community of activist friends trying to engage more directly in social action and service for the benefit of all beings. We work with Chicagoland organizations and other BPF chapters, and participate in an ongoing series of activities.

*We embrace diversity and invite anyone to join our meetings. Currently we are meeting on Zoom, on most 2nd Thursdays of each month. Please email [bpfchicago@yahoo.com](mailto:bpfchicago@yahoo.com) if you wish to participate. Thank you.*

**Our practice of contemplation and social action is guided by our intention to:**

- Recognize the interdependence of all beings
- Meet suffering directly and with compassion
- Appreciate the importance of not clinging to views and outcomes
- Work with Buddhists and people from all faith traditions
- Connect individual and social transformation
- Practice nonviolence
- Protect and extend all human rights
- Use participatory decision-making techniques
- Support gender and racial equality, and challenge all forms of unjust discrimination
- Work for economic justice and the end of poverty
- Work for a sustainable environment
- Oppose the militarization of our society
- Support anti-military recruitment, and the return of war veterans
- Oppose nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation
- Oppose the death penalty
- Support laborers facing inhumane working conditions and economic injustice

**BPF Chicago chapter select activities:**

- Hiroshima-Nagasaki memorial and anti-nuclear vigils, Evanston IL August 2023, 2022
- Open Discussion with Extinction Rebellion Chicago, Zen Buddhist Temple, February 2020
- Co-sponsored Zenshin Florence Caplow, two speaking events Nov 2019
- Hiroshima-Nagasaki memorial and anti-nuclear vigils, Hyde Park 2017, 2018, 2019
- Sponsored, co-sponsored speaker Hozan Alan Senauke (Clearview), 2009, 2013, 2018

- Despair to Healing to Activism workshop at DePaul Univ, with Ken Butigan, Apr 2018
- Rally/Protest with the Rohingya (persecuted Burmese minority), Chicago 2017
- Sponsored, co-sponsored speaker/writer David Loy in 2007, 2008, 2017
- Women's March on Chicago, rally and march participants, 2017
- Co-sponsored novelist, filmmaker, Zen Buddhist priest Ruth Ozeki, 2016
- Numerous presentations/discussions co-sponsored with DePaul University's Center for Religion, Culture and Community (CRCC)
- Sponsored speaker Peter Coyote in 2014
- Co-sponsored Joanna Macy workshop and talk in 2012
- Buddhist social ethics forums at local university campuses
- Participated in anti-NATO march for peace
- Anti-Drone killings participation with the Protest Chaplains
- Meditation vigils at ongoing Occupy Chicago gatherings
- Sponsored speaker Sarah Weintraub, former Director of BPF National
- Conducted Burma awareness public events and video showing
- Ongoing opposition to military recruitment at area high schools
- Co-sponsored "Averting Another Catastrophe: the Folly of an Attack on Iran" program
- Co-sponsored "Iran and the Peace Movement Forum" featuring Scott Ritter
- Pro-monk and pro-people of Burma and Tibet activities
- Anti-war and anti-death penalty meditation vigils
- Actions to encourage protection of Thai environmentalist monks from violence
- Supported the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to obtain humane working conditions
- Eyes Wide Open Demonstration (with American Friends Service Committee)
- One Big Table Food Bank Fundraiser
- Meditation vigils at executions in Michigan City, IN
- Support of the Dhamma Moli Project in Nepal to protect girls from the sex trade

**Fear results from resorting to violence--** just look at how people quarrel and fight! Let me tell you of the dismay and terror I have felt. Seeing people struggling, like fish writhing in shallow water, with enmity opposed to one another, fear came upon me. At one time, I wanted to find some place where I could take shelter, but I never saw any such place. There is nothing in this world that is solid at base and not a part of it that is changeless. I had seen them all trapped in mutual conflict and that is why I had felt so repelled. But then I noticed something buried deep in their hearts—the dart of ignorance, craving, and egoism. This is the dart that sends its victims running all over the place. But once it has been removed, all that running and the exhaustion that come with it are finished.  
— The Buddha (Sutta-Nipata, vs. 935-939)

**From a Buddhist perspective**, the starting point is to become self-aware, to become aware of one's own violence. Many activists may speak out clearly about many forms of "external violence" but they may not be very aware of their own internal violence, and how they act with the people around them. For this reason, nonviolence is an important foundation. If one is violent toward one's self and with others, then the violence tends to become more and more structural.

Actually, most so-called Buddhists do not even look very deeply into themselves. But if someone has come to understand himself or herself well, the next step is to confront suffering, that is, to follow the first of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths. But how do we find the cause of suffering when greed, hatred, and delusion are institutionalized and structural?

We have to understand and transform the structures. We have to see how greed is present in consumerism and capitalism; how hatred is linked with centralization, state power, and the military; how delusion is present in our education and media. Then we can change those structures through the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. But without personal transformation, social or structural transformation is not possible.

— Sulak Sivaraksa, Thai engaged Buddhist leader