

## Cultivating Social Historical Knowledge to Walk the Bodhisattva Path

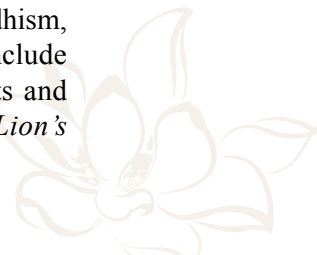


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*A bodhisattva is an energetic, enlightened, and endearing person who strives to guide all sentient beings to liberation... To fully realize the bodhisattva way of life is the goal of Humanistic Buddhism.*<sup>1</sup>

—Venerable Master Hsing Yun

In many regards, the future of Humanistic Buddhism can be considered in relation to its past. Developed as a response to social and political reforms in China during the transition from Qing dynastic rule to Republican governance, Humanistic Buddhism, as conceptualized by Master Taixu, proposed a reform of Chinese Buddhism that redirected its focus from ritual practices for the dead to emphasizing the human concerns of practitioners in this life.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it prioritized an objective of engagement with human needs in a worldly context. While Humanistic Buddhism as expanded in Taiwan under the guidance of Venerable Master Hsing Yun maintains this focus on addressing human concerns, a reexamination of this historic foundation might prove fruitful in yielding new directions for the future growth of Humanistic Buddhism, especially in regards to its propagation throughout the world.

Buddhism presents a path for liberation, and Humanistic Buddhism illuminates how in the human realm, liberation is interconnected with the worldly architecture of society—where political institutions and economic paradigms serve as powerful structures that shape the landscape of human existence. Indeed, the emergence of Humanistic Buddhism was cultivated in direct regard to the religious actions deemed necessary in the context of political upheaval and transformation in China during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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1 Hsing Yun, *The Fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism: Buddhism in Every Step*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2018), 7.

2 Xue Yu, “Re-Creation of Rituals in Humanistic Buddhism: A Case Study of Fo Guang Shan,” *Asian Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (2013): 355.

Master Taixu's notion of a Buddhism based on human life (*rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教), for example, was articulated in his 1928 article, "Instructions to the Chinese Revolutionary Monks."<sup>3</sup> His reference to revolution reflected both a spiritual desire for restructuring Chinese Buddhism and an intertwined intellectual alignment with the call for political reform.<sup>4</sup>

In this light, one might argue that the development of Humanistic Buddhism represented a non-duality of religious and political/social transformation. In fact, Thomas Freeman Yarnell has demonstrated that this view of Buddhist practice—and thus, liberation—as intimately, and necessarily, situated with social engagement can be understood as a stance as old as Buddhism itself.<sup>5</sup> In the words of Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "One can say that Buddhism has been taught by the Buddha to the human world for the purpose of helping people resolve their difficulties in life."<sup>6</sup> This conviction, then, is central to Humanistic Buddhism, as "Everything he [the Buddha] taught is Humanistic Buddhism, and everything about Humanistic Buddhism is Buddhism itself."<sup>7</sup> This relationship between Humanistic Buddhism and social engagement is reflected

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3 Darui Long, "Humanistic Buddhism from Venerable Taixu to Grand Master Hsing Yun," *Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism* 1 (2000): 4. See also Goodell's discussion of Master Taixu's 1937, "The history of my failed revolutions in Buddhism," in "Taixu's Youth and Years of Romantic Idealism, 1890-1914," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, no. 21 (2008): 81.

4 Lei Kuan Rongdao Lai, "Praying for the Republic: Buddhist Education, Student-Monks, and Citizenship in Modern" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2013).

5 Yarnall, Thomas Freeman. "Engaged Buddhism: New and improved? Made in the USA of Asian materials," *Action Dharma: New Studies in Engaged Buddhism* (2003): 7-15.

6 Hsing Yun, *Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of the Buddha* (Taiwan: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise Co, 2016): 5.

7 *Ibid.*

in the scholarship,<sup>8</sup> where Humanistic Buddhism is at times referred to as Engaged Buddhism (to highlight the significance of this connection, the term “Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism” will be employed throughout the rest of this paper).<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, insomuch as Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism is concerned with human life (*rensheng* 人生) and the human world (*renjian* 人間), liberation, can be understood as similarly engaged with the social realm of humans, and ultimately an integral part of the bodhisattva’s endeavor. As Venerable Master Hsing Yun has relayed, the intention of the Humanistic/Engaged Buddhist practice is to walk the bodhisattva path:

*Master Taixu once said, “I am not a bhiksu, nor am I a Buddha. Rather, I wish to be known as a bodhisattva.”... He saw himself as a man of great service, and thus wished to be known as a bodhisattva... A bodhisattva is an energetic, enlightened, and endearing person who strives to guide all sentient beings to liberation. We can all be bodhisattvas. It is for this reason that Master Taixu dedicated his life to spreading the words and ideals of Humanistic Buddhism. To fully realize the bodhisattva way of life is the goal of Humanistic Buddhism.*<sup>10</sup>

Aligning the bodhisattva path with the call for human and social

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8 For a discussion of the relationship between Humanistic Buddhism and Engaged Buddhism, see Jessica L. Main and Rongdao Lai, “Introduction: Reformulating ‘Socially Engaged Buddhism’ as an Analytical Category,” *The Eastern Buddhist* 44, no. 2 (2013): 1-34;

9 For example, see David Schak and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, “Taiwan’s Socially Engaged Buddhist Groups,” *China Perspectives* 2005, no. 59 (2005): 1-17.

10 Hsing Yun, *The Fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism: Buddhism in Every Step*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2018), 7.

involvement recenters the historic engagement with human social structures—the political, economic, and so on—that have shaped the very development of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism. Moreover, this mode of practice may contain the potential to further Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism’s future growth and “sow the seeds for affinity”<sup>11</sup> in different locations across the globe.

In contemplating the future of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has underscored the importance of propagating the dharma<sup>12</sup> and employing a process of localization (*bentu hua* 本土化) to adapt to different regions and cultures of the world.<sup>13</sup> In this paper, I would like to advance the idea that Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism’s roots in engagement with the social realm and political conditions can serve as a meaningful avenue for practicing the localization of the buddhadharma. The increasing instability of the geopolitical and environmental climate and the continued concentration of power amongst political and financial elites has facilitated inequality and the suffering of sentient beings on a global scale, though differentiated in manners particular to each locale. Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism’s form of liberation from suffering, then, can be a much needed and welcomed refuge, one that bridges different regions of the world.

If “Buddhism is a religion for people, and human concerns are at its root,” as Venerable Master Hsing Yun has said,<sup>14</sup> then as practitioners of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism, we must take seriously the ways that human lives are differentially effected and

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11 Jonathan Mair, “Fo Guang Shan Buddhism and Ethical Conversations across Borders: ‘Sowing Seeds of Affinity,’” *Collegium* (2015): 74.

12 Hsing Yun, *Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of the Buddha* (Taiwan: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise Co, 2016), 30

13 *Ibid.*, 326.

14 Hsing Yun, *The Fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism: Buddhism in Every Step*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2018), 4.

affected by the causes that have been historically put into place by systems of governance and power. Karma Lekshe Tsomo has argued that “many Buddhists have not yet sufficiently recognized, let alone challenged, the structural inequalities that underlie much of the world’s suffering. Buddhist voices in development efforts to address urgent issues like poverty, political oppression, and economic injustice are still faint.”<sup>15</sup> In taking her analysis seriously, I would like to suggest that practitioners of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism integrate elements of social historical knowledge into their broader Buddhist wisdom, studying the particular ways suffering has been created in the different regions of the world to better understand its localized manifestations and develop responsive, compassionate relief.

In this vein, this paper presents a case study of such a practice from the United States. It briefly highlights the historical development of American Buddhism in relation to the social and political dynamics of the U.S. It then demonstrates how this history is shaping contemporary engagements between Buddhists and social issues related to the inequality and suffering faced by Central American migrants at the Southern border. Specifically, it examines the recent Buddhists protests at Fort Sill, Oklahoma against the Trump administration’s migrant children separation and detainment policy as an example of the potential for integrating social historical knowledge into the bodhisattva path, and as a meaningful method of localizing the dharma for Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism’s future growth.

### **Social Historical Knowledge as a Component of Localization**

Localization has been a key factor in implementing the propagation of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism beyond Taiwan. “Three

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15 Karma Lekshe Tsomo, “Socially Engaged Buddhist nuns: Activism in Taiwan and North America,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 10 (2009): 480.

primary methods of outreach thus far,” notes Chandler, “have been employed: creating links of affinity (*jieyuan*), sparking people’s curiosity, and localizing Buddhist teachings and practice.”<sup>16</sup> In explaining the latter concept, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has detailed:

*Localization is about contribution and fellowship. Localization means to follow each culture, each place, and each custom to develop a unique feature in different ways. Localization does not imply the “removal” of any elements but the action of “giving.” It is hoped that through Buddhism, the people in each local area are given a more enriching spiritual life. This is exactly how Humanistic Buddhism holds true to Buddha’s original intent—to be accepted by people.*<sup>17</sup>

Hence, localization has been an integral means by which to advance the reach of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism and realize its future growth. However, it is a process that remains open for determining appropriate and effective means of adaptation. Chandler observes that “the debate over the degree to which to localize touches every aspect of temple life.”<sup>18</sup>

### Language

Venerable Master Hsing Yun viewed language cultivation

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16 Stuart Chandler, “Globalizing Chinese culture, localizing Buddhist teachings: the Internationalization of Foguangshan,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 3 (2002): 59.

17 Hsing Yun, *Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of the Buddha* (Taiwan: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise Co, 2016): 326.

18 Stuart Chandler, “Globalizing Chinese culture, localizing Buddhist teachings: the internationalization of Foguangshan,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 3 (2002): 65.

as an important aspect of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism's ability to reach the masses and spread across broad audiences. "The key to international propagation," he has expressed, "lies in the nurturing of multilingual talents."<sup>19</sup> Shi Huifeng expounds that, in fact, language serves as the first of four core points of localization.<sup>20</sup> This point is further reinforced by Venerable Miao Guang, who explains that "the acculturation of Buddhism cannot take place without the use of local language to win acceptance by the natives." "Language serves as the bridge that links Buddhism to each part of the world," Venerable Miao Guang notes. "It is so essential that the propagation of Dharma will almost be impossible if it was not done in the local language, let alone showing people why Buddhism is a good option to a bettered life."<sup>21</sup> In addition to learning the traditional Buddhist related languages of Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has also advocated for the development of English and Japanese fluency amongst his disciples.<sup>22</sup>

In her study of social engagement amongst nuns from the Chinese Buddhist tradition in North America, Karma Lekshe Tsomo similarly argued for the need to further English fluency so that the nuns might extend their ability to be of service to those beyond the immigrant community. "Although the nuns are central to the social and spiritual life of overseas communities," Tsomo writes, "they are simultaneously marginal to the broader society

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19 Hsing Yun, *Humanistic Buddhism: Holding True to the Original Intents of the Buddha* (Taiwan: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise Co, 2016), 325.

20 Hui Feng, "Localization of Humanistic Buddhism in the West," *Humanistic Buddhism Journal, Arts, and Culture* 5 (2016): 200.

21 Miao Guang, "Issues of Acculturation and Globalization Faced by the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order," *Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism* (2013): 12.

22 Darui Long, "Humanistic Buddhism from Venerable Tai Xu to Grand Master Hsing Yun," *Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism* 1 (2000): 12.



by virtue of their limited English competency and economic dependency.”<sup>23</sup> Compounded by dynamics of gender and power, Tsomo observes that the nuns thus become “typically subdued and limited to their own congregations and networks. Most do not venture far beyond the overseas Chinese community or take on large-scale social service projects, much less endeavor to transform social or institutional structures.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Cultivating Social Historical Knowledge**

The significance of language, as expressed by Venerable Master Hsing Yun, Venerable Miao Guang, and Karma Lekshe Tsomo, in being able to facilitate engagement with diverse communities around the world cannot be overstated. Recognizing this importance, I suggest that the call for language development can be supplemented and extended to include the cultivation of social and historical awareness. Just as Master Taixu saw social and political interface as an important element of maintaining Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism, so too can current efforts at localization integrate such an emphasis. Such incorporation would foster a crucial understanding of the causes and conditions structuring suffering in the local sites (with an understanding of how they connect to global systems of power and domination, such as gender, race, and class); thus, enabling informed foundations by which to assist in liberation from suffering in the human world. Knowledge of the histories that have created the current conditions of suffering for different populations within the locale can be integrated as part of the monastic and lay community’s language development and localization training.

In the United States and other English-speaking nations, English can help facilitate this understanding. However, without

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23 Karma Lekshe Tsomo, “Socially Engaged Buddhist Nuns: Activism in Taiwan and North America,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 10 (2009): 475.

24 Ibid.

a specific intention to cultivate social and historical knowledge and to situate Humanistic/Engaged Buddhist practice within this context, English fluency might only serve surface level communication and engagement. There is no guarantee language fluency alone will lead to increases in institutional transformation, as evidenced by the many English-dominant Buddhist groups in the U.S. that prioritize individual liberation. Cultivating purposeful knowledge of local histories and social developments would enable diasporic Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism to expand beyond serving immigrant Mandarin-speaking communities and alleviate suffering on a larger scale, demonstrating its capacity to *jieyuan* (結緣) and sow the seeds of affinity in impactful, life sustaining ways.

### **Case Study: The Development of American Buddhism and the Contemporary Buddhist Protests at Fort Sill**

In demonstrating an American case of the application of social historical knowledge in the practice and spread of Buddhism, I begin with a story of a place called Fort Sill, in the state of Oklahoma. Fort Sill is a United States Army post established in 1869. Historically, it was also used as a site to detain people the government perceived as threats to the nation. In 1894, the American army imprisoned 342 Indigenous Apache people at Fort Sill for defending their land, religion and way of life from occupation by European settlers. Some of the Apache died at Fort Sill, never returning to their communities and families. Less than 50 years later, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 700 Japanese and Japanese Americans were unlawfully incarcerated at Fort Sill during World War II. Their crime was being of Japanese descent and, for many, Buddhist. This past July, 25 Buddhist priests conducted a funeral memorial as an act of protest at the military site, drawing from the deep social historical knowledge of both the development of American Buddhism within the U.S.'s 20<sup>th</sup> century

political and racial context and the connections to the recent federal policy of migrant family separation and child detainment.

In his recent historical work, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War*, Duncan Ryuken Williams documents how in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Japanese and Japanese American Buddhist community in the United States (who represent the oldest Buddhist community in the country) was seen as a threat to the nation's economy and safety.<sup>25</sup> They faced decades of discrimination instituted by federal and local laws that prevented first generation immigrants from becoming citizens, from owning land, and intermarrying. Most notably, in 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which caused the removal, relocation and imprisonment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans, simply due to their race and religious background (the majority of those incarcerated were Buddhists). Buddhist practice was misperceived as an expression of loyalty to the Japanese government and such suspicion served as part of a larger racially motivated justification to incarcerate these families in desert camps with limited resources. Williams highlights how, among the 700 people detained at Fort Sill, 90 were Buddhist priests.

In 1942, the priests conducted a funeral service for 3 of the imprisoned men who died at the site, including a man by the name of Kanesaburo Oshima, who, Williams writes, was “shot in the back of the head by one of the guards the day before the funeral.”<sup>26</sup> This history is important for Buddhists to consider both in regards to attaining a broad knowledge of how the religion has survived challenges in different parts of the world, but also in

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25 Duncan Ryuken Williams, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

26 Duncan Ryuken Williams. “A Call for Buddhist Leaders to Protest Inhumane Treatment of Migrant Children – Lending Our Support to Tsuru for Solidarity,” *Duncan Ryuken Williams*, accessed August 20, 2019, <https://www.duncanryukenwilliams.com/a-call-for-buddhist-leaders-to-protest-inhumane-treatment-of-migrant-children>

illuminating the ways that people suffer differential effects due to discriminatory causes and conditions put into place by government policies and legal institutions. Moreover, cultivating an awareness of such social historical conditions is vital in being able to analyze contemporary conditions of inequality and social suffering that require compassionate action.

*American Sutra*, was released during a time of heightened discrimination on the part of the United States government. Specifically, the Trump administration issued orders to detain Central American migrants seeking asylum, and to separate the children from their parents, some as young as infants. In 2019, the administration announced they would hold about 1,400 migrant children at Fort Sill. Major news outlets and medical professionals have reported that the migrant children in detention camps have been living under conditions where they often “sleep in cold cells without proper clothing or adequate food,” and are denied proper medical treatment and developmental care, resulting in long term psychological and emotional trauma.<sup>27</sup> 7 children have since died in such detention centers.<sup>28</sup>

Drawing from his social historical knowledge, Williams has highlighted the connections between the historical treatment of Buddhist of Japanese descent and these contemporary discriminatory policies toward migrants seeking asylum. Moreover, he has urged Buddhist communities to voice their dissent toward the harmful government actions. In utilizing knowledge of the past

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27 Zolan Kanno-Youns, “Poor Conditions Persist for Migrant Children Detained at the Border, Democrats Say,” *New York Times*, last modified August 29, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/29/us/politics/homeland-security-migrant-children.html>

28 Nicole Acevedo, “Why are Migrant Children Dying in U.S. Custody?” *NBC News*, last modified May 29, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/why-are-migrant-children-dying-u-s-custody-n1010316>

to create the conditions for a more liberatory future—in this case to **literally** liberate children from detention camps where they are often enclosed by wire fencing—Williams helped to organize a recent Buddhist memorial at Fort Sill. In reflecting on the service, he writes:

*At this 2019 ceremony, we dedicated any merit derived from the chanting of sutras at the memorial service to the Japanese immigrants who passed away during their WWII incarceration; to all those who suffered at Fort Sill in the past; to the ten children who have died in the border crossing or in custody of the U.S. Border Patrol and other agencies in the past fourteen months; to all the migrants who are facing such difficult circumstances currently; and to the guards and others who are overseeing the children to pray for the prevention of history repeating itself.*<sup>29</sup>

Here, the social historical knowledge of the past served as a crucial condition for the fruition of the Buddhist memorial and protest, which was in turn organized with the immediate future survival of the migrant children in mind. It also served as a means by which Buddhists could sow seeds of affinity with other non-Buddhists protest, introducing the buddhadharma to Indigenous, Latinx, and

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29 Duncan Ryuken Williams, “A Call for Buddhist Leaders to Protest Inhumane Treatment of Migrant Children – Lending Our Support to Tsuru for Solidarity,” *Duncan Ryuken Williams*, accessed on August 20, 2019, <https://www.duncanryukenwilliams.com/a-call-for-buddhist-leaders-to-protest-inhumane-treatment-of-migrant-children>

other participants who joined in the funeral service.<sup>30</sup> “Causes and conditions,” notes Venerable Master Hsing Yun, “enable us to connect with one another all over the world.”<sup>31</sup> Through the development of social historical knowledge, we can better understand the conditions impacting the lives of those in our immediate communities, and through an awareness of structural causes, strengthen our ability to attend to human suffering on a global scale as an integral aspect of localization.

### **Bodhisattva Path**

An important aspect of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism is the application of the bodhisattva vow in this life. Declaring that “we can all be bodhisattvas,” Venerable Master Hsing Yun argues that to “fully realize the bodhisattva way of life is the goal of Humanistic Buddhism.”<sup>32</sup> How then does a bodhisattva confront the structural causes for suffering, especially as they continue to exert harmful effects today and in the immediate future? Returning to the work of Duncan Ryuken Williams demonstrates that to be a bodhisattva in today’s world, our compassion may require challenging the status quo, as Master Taixu and Venerable Master Hsing Yun sometimes did in their own region-specific ways in response to the social historical realities in their locales.

With his awareness of the history of Japanese and Japanese American Buddhist incarceration, Williams has been increasingly

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30 “Buddhist Leaders join TSURU FOR SOLIDARITY and other Marchers at Fort Sill Protest, July 20, 2019,” YouTube video, 4:14, posted by “J-Town Community TV,” August 19, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgUonE6zLvE>.

31 Hsing Yun, *The Fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism: Buddhism in Every Step*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2018), 21.

32 *Ibid.*, 7.

vocal in pointing out the parallels between World War II incarceration and the United States government's recent migrant detention policies. These connections have compelled him to step into social action and participate with organizations like Tsuru for Solidarity, a project initiated by Japanese Americans and Japanese Latin Americans in direct consideration of the history of World War II incarceration, to protest the detention of migrants and the separation of migrant children. Williams issued a public letter asking for fellow Buddhists in America to support the termination of migrant detentions. In response, 160 Buddhist clergy, leaders, and practitioners across diverse traditions and lineages signed the letter, demonstrating a commitment to denounce harmful government actions.

In doing so, the signatories model an embodiment of the idea of “non-regressing bodhisattvas as companions” (不退菩薩為伴侶)<sup>33</sup> in this current world, demonstrating that the cultivation of social and historical knowledge then requires compassionate responsiveness. “The enormity of our current challenge may seem overwhelming,” Williams notes in the letter, “but Buddhist practice does not shy away from challenges—our bodhisattva vows include ‘Sentient beings are numberless; I vow to save them all. Desires are inexhaustible; I vow to put an end to them. The dharmas are boundless; I vow to master them. The Buddha’s Way is unsurpassable; I vow to attain it’.”<sup>34</sup> Illustrating this idea, Tsuru for Solidarity created a video depicting the bodhisattva Jizo (地藏

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33 *Amitabha Sutra as Discoursed by the Buddha* (Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2017), 76.

34 Duncan Ryuken Williams, “A Call for Buddhist Leaders to Protest Inhumane Treatment of Migrant Children—Lending Our Support to Tsuru for Solidarity,” *Duncan Ryuken Williams*, accessed on August 20, 2019, <https://www.duncanryukenwilliams.com/a-call-for-buddhist-leaders-to-protest-inhumane-treatment-of-migrant-children>

菩薩), recognized in Japanese Buddhism as a protector of children, sitting guard at Fort Sill.<sup>35</sup> In the video, Jizo folds a red paper crane and sends it flying to Fort Sill. As the crane arrives at the site, so, too, does Jizo. Thus, Jizo joins the protestors and Buddhist priests as non-regressing companions to the migrant children. The bodhisattva path, therefore, is not separate from the need to liberate all beings from contemporary forms of social and political harm. The future growth of Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism can be more deeply attuned to the social historical structures that cause today's harm and voice dissent at the continuation of such systems of suffering. Such action can have meaningful impact in alleviating suffering and have sown seeds of affinity for Buddhism in the locale of the U.S. Indeed, the sight of Buddhist priests participating in the protest received widespread media attention and helped to elevate the cause in the public discourse. Shortly after the protest, the U.S. government announced that they would no longer be utilizing Fort Sill as a detention center for migrant children.

## Conclusion

“Humanistic Buddhism may be working to liberate society,” David Chappell observes, “but a byproduct has been a transformation and liberation of Buddhism as well as the improvement of society.”<sup>36</sup> Developing an intention to acquire social historical knowledge and respond with social action not only enables Humanistic/Engaged Buddhists to “guide all sentient beings to liberation,”<sup>37</sup> but it can also foster the future growth of Humanistic/

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35 “Jizo with Tsuru,” YouTube video, 1:00, posted by “Tsuru for Solidarity,” September 8, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJEd-21nbko>.

36 David W. Chappell, “Humanistic Buddhists and Social Liberation,” *Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism* 3 (2002): 58.

37 Hsing Yun, *The Fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism: Buddhism in Every Step*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed (Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center, 2018), 8.



Engaged Buddhism by demonstrating its relevance to the broader community. This aspect of concern for social conditions has been especially important for today's youth, who are searching for meaning in a complex and instable global climate. Reverend Richard A. Stambul, President of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), has recently noted that in addition to a moral and ethical obligation to address social issues, such social engagement also speaks to the needs of the younger population. In arguing that the "BCA should be talking about the pressing humanitarian concerns of our society, and finding creative ways to be of service to those suffering right in front of our eyes," Stambul also highlights that a "strong commitment to improving social ills has attracted many people seeking a new religious home. It also appears to be a magnet attracting and motivating a new millennial generation."<sup>38</sup> The youth have good reason to be concerned with social matters as their very futures are contingent upon the policies that are enacted today. Inasmuch that Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism can develop a deep awareness of, and response to, the pressing social political concerns that are structuring suffering in today's world, it will also be working to enhance the future of society; thereby engaging with the concerns of the youth, and in turn, enhancing Humanistic/Engaged Buddhism's own future.

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38 Richard A. Stambul, "BCA and Social Consciousness," *Wheel of Dharma*, September 2019, 5.



Don't shun the disabled: recognize their talents.  
Don't resent the able: employ them.

—*Humble Table, Wise Fare*