



The Way of Tenderness: Awakening through Race, Sexuality, and Gender

Zenju Earthlyn Manuel

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Rev. Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, PhD, is a Soto Zen priest and guiding teacher at Still Breathing Meditation Center in East Oakland, California. The author of *Tell Me Something about Buddhism* and contributing author to several books including *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women*, she is also a lesbian and a black woman who brings her unique perspective and the wisdom forged of personal experience to bear on the topics of race, sexuality, and gender. Upon entering the Buddhist path, Manuel came face-to-face with her own heartache at having been discriminated against throughout most of her life. “I could seek spiritual or other professional guidance around my personal heartache,” she writes. “However, I felt the healing could not be complete without a collective attention to systemic suffering that is at the root of the heartache.”

The Eightfold Path, according to Manuel, cannot be practiced “without understanding suffering as systemic and as a collective human experience. Therefore, it cannot be practiced without attending to the suffering of classism, racism, sexism, homophobia.”

Based on her own journey of healing, Manuel illuminates Buddhist practice as “a path so expansive that it includes not only our own suffering, but also that of others.” To heal the wounds of those who have been subject to a “systematic withholding of love” on account of their differences, the path must be one of welcome, warmth, and compassion.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Spring 2015)

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