

Dear Ones :

As we absorb the shattering voices and images from the southern border and consider how to respond, please allow me to ask you to remember : If you are a person of Chan and Zen, if you have benefited from koans or retreats or work in the room, practices or writings or community life, you have benefited from immigration. We can do what we do because, over the course of two thousand years, restless seekers and spiritual busybodies crossed deserts, mountains, and seas with the insane notion that some stranger on the other end of the journey would be interested in what they brought, tucked in their pilgrim's bundle.

Bodhidharma made the crazy perilous journey from India to China and promptly went off to sit in a cave for nine years. Now that's faith. In the end he handed off a tradition that his descendants would completely re-imagine.

Forty-six medieval people — thirty Japanese students and sixteen Chinese teachers — made the dangerous sea crossing that transmitted Chan from China to Japan, where it became Zen.

Kamakura women fled violent marriages into the temple of Tokeiji, throwing a sandal over the wall to claim sanctuary. They went on to create some of the most innovative practices in Zen history.

During World War II, Senzaki Nyogen, our great great uncle in the Dharma, was interned at Heart Mountain in the Rockies. He turned his six-by-nine foot room into a zendo and kept something alive for us. Another of our ancestors, Robert Aitken, was an American interned by the Japanese in World War II, where he learned of Zen.

We have been accompanied and taught by Vietnamese people pushed from their land by a war Americans played a terrible role in, Tibetans sent into diaspora by Chinese invasion. The ancestors of many African-American people of Zen were forced here under horrific circumstances.

Restless Western souls have gone to East and South Asia, done hard practice, and brought something precious back to us. Teachers have come not just from Asia but from all over the world to North America, including from Tasmania and Germany and Great Britain.

Chan and Zen pilgrims have always been called clouds-and-water. We are wanderers of the earth and of the vast territories within. However far into the mountains or deep

in meditation we go, we are accompanied by our ancestors. If the Way means anything, these children at the border are our children. Dear ones, where do we go from here?

abauzutholau8 