The Workshop

Listening to the Buddhists in Our Backyard

Haruka So, Lesley Tan, Loulou Sloss, Melissa Damasceno, Olivia Yang, and Taylor Dunn
Land and Lineage

Acknowledgment

To read the full acknowledgement, visit plumvillage.org/key-practice-texts/the-five-earth-touchings/
LISTENING TO THE BUDDHISTS IN OUR BACKYARD

Melissa Damasceno, Taylor Dunn, Loulou Sloss,
Haruka So, Leasley Tan, Olivia Yang

Opening
Land and Lineage Acknowledgment
Introducing Our Project

Presentation
Temple Visits
Conversations with Scholars
Creating Meaningful Work
Reflections

Gallery Walk and Booths
Buddhist Pedagogy
Engaged Buddhism
Merit Economy
Language as Cultural Maintenance
Youth Groups

Coming Back Together
Group Discussion
Closing
Introductions

Taylor, Melissa, Haruka, Lesley, Olivia, and Loulou
The Workshop

Made possible by the Tang Institute at Phillips Academy
Listening to the Buddhists in Our Backyard

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Project Roadmap

**Initial Research**
See, Think, Wonder
Assigned readings

**Week 2**
Visiting Temples
Observation, engagement

**Week 3**
Work time
Research, interviews, revisits, processing

**Week 9**
Online Conference and In-person Symposium
01

Temple Visits
Practice

See,
Think,
Wonder
Merrimack Valley
Conversations with Scholars
Chenxing Han

Author of *Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian American Buddhists*

Mentorship through the L2BB project

Co-designed our learning plan

Accompanied us on temple visits

Offered insights

Gave feedback on our work
Dr. Trent Walker

Preliminary research in Merrimack Valley Temples

Author of *Framing the Sacred: Cambodian Buddhist Painting*

Translation (over Facetime!) at Wat Samaki Santikararam

*Story and Song: Learning and Living with Buddhist Chant* led by Trent and Chenxing at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies
Robert Forrant, Ph.D.

Distinguished University Professor at UMass Lowell, Co-Director, Senior Research Fellow

Research and Author of *Ethnicity in Lowell*

Insight on interview practices

Involvement in Lowell community, building connections

Adaptive, experiential educator
Professor Sarah Jacoby, PA ’92

Author of *Motherhood Is More Than a Metaphor*

Discussed family dynamics in American Buddhist spaces

Insight into different areas of contemporary Buddhist Studies

Spoke about Buddhist Pedagogy in Academia
Prof. Diana Eck and Ms. Ellie Pierce

Prof. Eck founded the Pluralism Project at Harvard Divinity School

Ms. Pierce is a former student of the project and now a research director

Offered advice on interviewing at religious institutions
Dr. Tham Tran

Introduction to Buddhism

Extensive interviews about youth groups and the temple community

Doctorate research on *Ethnic Identity among Second-Generation Vietnamese American Adolescents*
Other Scholars

- Susannah Poland: Incorporation of Buddhism into Bhutanese Education
- Jiemin Bao: Creating a Buddhist Community: A Thai Temple in Silicon Valley
- Duncan Williams: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War
- Carol Stratton: What’s What in a Wat
- Priya Parker: The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters
03 Creating Meaningful Work
Reflecting + Documenting

Audio recordings from post-visit discussions

Discussion in the Tang Institute

Taylor’s notebook: learning to mindmap

Discussion of Boston Buddha Var...
Mar 27, 2022
16:23
Discussion of American Wisdom As...
Mar 26, 2022
51:13
After (Car ride) American Wisdom A...
Mar 26, 2022
14:07

Thurs Mar 31
- Nibbana Cafe & Romanic
- We’ve been hands-on all day all week
- Talking w/ grad students helped us think about
- how we ask questions & how we respectfully
- present our learnings
- How did you come to the us” re changing
- our conversation
- What we’ve unlearned
- Disclaimers/Context
- Master texts/models
- Removing ourselves from the story?
- Scholars or lab rats?
- Generosity
- What lessons we have learned:
- What does pluralism project do?
- What structures already exist?
- Contribute to the pluralism project
- What did we miss?
- Connect with existing structures

Mental health practices of
Buddhisms
- Gender roles in Buddhist
- Practice examples
- What does excellent work look like?
- Adaptation of Buddhism in
- American culture
- We also practiced India to Asia
- The pluralism project
- Printing 100 Postcards
- Reflection
Meaningful Work: Authentic Audiences

- Buddhistdoor Global Blogs
- Tang Institute Blogs
- Pluralism Project Profiles
- Individual Research
Individual Research Topics

**Mel:** Engaged Buddhism in Praxis

**Olivia:** Buddhist Pedagogy

**Loulou:** Khmer Language + Cultural Maintenance

**Taylor:** Dana and Merit Economy

**Lesley:** Agency in Young Asian American Buddhists

**Haruka:** Self Discovery in Buddhist Storytelling
Socially engaged Buddhism brings Buddhist teachings into larger political and societal narratives. I looked into how it manifests in American communities, focusing on temple programs and initiatives.
Reimagining learning as a practice of giving to the self and to one’s community is daunting, especially when structures of learning capitalize on competition. But to become aware of a pulsing, breathing, living community and network of support may in fact enhance each of our abilities to learn.

From a pedagogical standpoint, nurturing student creativity and problem-solving ability is a homage to Hanh’s discussions of interdependence. In fact, scholar Bell Hooks points to both the pedagogical work of Freire and the engaged Buddhist teachings of Hanh to explore strategies of “hope” and “peace” in the classroom.
Taylor: The Merit Economy: Dana in a Capitalist Society

Thinking about how we engaged with concepts of Merit and Dana at the temples, I researched the fundamental social structure of merit in Buddhist cultures, and specifically how it has been adapted to the United States’ capitalist economy.
Loulou: The Importance of Language as Cultural Maintenance, Displayed by the Khmer Population in the Merrimack Valley

My research focused on the bilingual programs in schools with majority Khmer students. Language learning has been a way of preserving Khmer Culture in the United States without centering the Cambodian Genocide or the Vietnamese Occupation.
In what ways do Asian American youth immersed in Buddhism have or don’t have agency in choosing their religious beliefs?

- Factors that hinder agency
- Factors that promote agency

Lesley: Agency in Buddhist Identification Amongst Asian American Youth

5/7: Visit to Chùa Tường Văn Lowell Youth Group Program
Haruka: Development and Discovery of the Self, the Collective,
and the Buddhist Path through Story-telling & Recitation

How do Asian American youths learn about themselves in relationship with Buddhism through team and communal settings?

1) Recitation of Buddhist stories at Chua Tuong Van Lowell

2) Recitation of Asian-American Buddhist narratives at Young Buddhist Editorial
04 Reflections
Themes that stuck with us

Communal Learning

Civic Engagement

Learning and the Beyond

See, Think, Wonder Strategy

Generosity and Dana

Embracing Not Knowing
Gallery Walk

Group Reflection
Thank you for attending.