

A large, expressive black brushstroke in the shape of a circle, resembling a Zen 'enso' painting, serves as the background for the central text.

A Universal Statement of Marriage Equality from the Zen School of Buddhism in Australia

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THE ZEN SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA

Zen Buddhism in the 21st century is represented across Australia with diverse Geo-lineage origins, however whether their teachings and lineages are spoken in English, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese or Mandarin and whether they originate from the Rinzai (Linji) sect, Soto (Gaodung) sect or more recent fusion schools they are all Zen, which it's self is a major branch of the Mahayana school of Buddhism and today accounts for roughly half of all Buddhists in the Western World.

Zen in Australia stands out from other forms of Buddhism in Australia in being truly multi-ethnic. The majority of Zen groups across Australia are not tied to geo-political identities in spite of their origin and links. Though many have deep connections to Japanese, Korean, or American organizations and teachers, its mostly the case that the Zen school in Australia is represented by fully independent Australian organizations and the Australians who practice and train in our groups, Centres and Temples are a multi-ethnic and diverse representation of the average Australian public, ranging across every profession and level of education. Professors , Doctors, Lawyers, Grand Fathers, Mothers, Plumbers and school teachers from every sector of Australia.

Zen Buddhism has a historical relationship as a Civil religion beginning it's transformation in Tang Dynasty China and historically it's impact as civil religion on education and culture and social development has been profound. The impact of the Zen school in Asia cannot be quantified adequately, from Tang times Zen teachers were in China and Japan and Korea Imperial Advisors, teachers to ordinary citizens and conveyors of cultural refinement, today powerful industrial families such as the Hondas still patronize Rinzai Zen in Japan. In the West, Zen has played a role in giving birth to modern psychotherapy, Carl Jung studied Zen. Modern Arts visual and audio arts, and even industry Steve Jobs modelled much of the Apple philosophy on his Zen training.

Australia and Zen represent a perfect match, both Zen and the Australian character are pragmatic while seeking social equity.

Australian Zen Studies Institute

AZSI is a peak body for the promotion of Zen Buddhism in Australia. The Australian Zen Studies Institute is a not-for-profit Zen Buddhist organization founded as a multicultural Zen Buddhist Community in which people of all abilities discover shared humanity by direct seeing.

We are open to all committed to cultivating a practice in diversity and multiculturalism by practicing to dissolve the all barriers that perpetuate the suffering of separation, prejudice, and discrimination. To expand and develop our awareness of the ways we are conditioned to separate ourselves by socioeconomics, nationality, race, age, belief, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability and other forms of identity. To realize 'THIS' Mind.

Preface

‘Humanity without clarity is like having a field but not ploughing it. Clarity without courage is like having sprouts without weeding. Courage without humanity is knowing how to harvest but not how to sow.’

Fushan Yuan, Sung dynasty Zen master

There is nothing more noble or higher thing than the mind, our consciousness, rich or poor, in mind we are equal if we will see it. We must see without rank and division.

It is important that we as human beings stop separating and ranking each other in the future. In this generation's life time we will share our cognitive world with another intelligence, another consciousness, regardless of whether that will be a negative or a positive, it tells us that this is the time in this generation. It is fundamentally important we get to know each other as humans without rank and label. We are coming to the end of ignorance as a choice. In order to survive the future that we are making, we must be inclusive of each and every one of us, regardless of our differences and even celebrating our differences.

This is not so much Spaceship Earth, as Rowboat Earth, and everyone must get a seat and those who can row, row, and for those who can't that's OK, some will row for them, so long as we stop squabbling about who gets a place, and leave no one behind or we will sink in the depths of our own making. In our time of man-made environmental crisis and disaster, nuclear threat, finite resources, wondrous technology advance, and fluid borders, this is our opportunity, this is our human prerogative. We should be ashamed of the current circumstance of marriage equality and take up change because it is the right thing to do. We recognize this is equality not for some, but for everyone, to set all people as equal and free.

We should not judge by the group, any person who judges by the group is ignorant; we should take people, individually, as they are. To do this we must overcome group identity by making everyone equal.

In doing so we embrace each other as Humanity, we become Rinzai's ideal 'Person of no-rank'.

Ven. Reverend. Mujiyo Williams



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Australian
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The Chrysanthemum has Ten Thousand Petals

The Spiritual Basis of Equality

The Great Way includes all and does not discriminate

Buddhism is Humanism. This is not divisible. To define this further all Humans are Buddhas, therefore all Buddhism is concerned with the nature of Humanity. Any action that is against Humanity is counter to the Buddha Way. The Buddha Way means the Way of all Sentient Beings. It is therefore the way of Humanism. Humanism, being synonymous with the Buddha Way, is the way of Great Compassion.

The Buddha Way is concerned with the eternal self or non-self. It is concerned with equality which it sees as good, and division, which by definition as separating ourselves, as obstructive and harmful to the self. We therefore, in the Buddha way, extend the principle of self to the community. In this way, the Buddha Way is the Great Way, the great way of all humanity.

Therefore, it is basic to human experience and thus enlightened experience to recognize the equality of all beings. It is impossible to separate one human from another with fairness. In fact, to do so, is to do harm to ourselves. A community that separates and divides itself or is forced to do so, we can call unwell. The Great Way includes all and does not discriminate. So how can people discriminate among each other and how can law and government?

Equality

The Historical Tathagata Buddha Sakyamuni taught that all people are equal, there is no high and low, there is no clean and unclean. The Rich man's son and the Poor man's daughter are all equal. All are subject to conditioned suffering and all are equally capable of ending this suffering. This equality in the Buddha's teachings is without limit and therefore extends to all. This is the Tathagata Buddha's teaching, because it is the Dharma truth that all things and all people are equal as all things are Consciousness.

The Precepts and Equality

Not Kill Life. The first of the Ten Precepts of the Buddha Way. This infers not do harm. This is the same as not do harm to the self as it is to not doing harm to others, and this extends to all sentient beings. This extends not only to mortal harm but to all types of harm, to self and to others and, therefore, to the greater community. Not [to] Kill Life is the Way of Compassion.

Right Sexuality, another of the Ten Precepts of the Buddha Way, also extends to not doing harm to self and not doing harm to others. A community, or an individual, who attempts to force others against their sexuality is therefore, doing harm in the Buddha Way. This is called Wrong Sexuality. Sexual harm to one human being, is harm against all sentient beings and harm against another is harm against self. This is what the Buddha Way calls 'Harmful Action'. Harmful action and wrong sexuality are the same.

Equality in causality

Harmful action is the root of Suffering known as *Dukka*. Suffering marks all things. All things experience decay, and the aim of the Buddha Way, and therefore of all sentient beings, is to end Suffering. Harmful action is rooted, as is Beneficial action, in Innen or Thought and Effect. A person often believes when something good or bad happens to them that this is 'caused' by another action alone, but this is an incomplete understanding. 'Cause' and thought- consciousness are same. Therefore, also effect and consciousness are the same, and therefore there is no separation from what is before and after. All actions or effects as we may also call them, arise from thought. Even when the wind blows and a leaf is swept away from its' branch, the wind and the leaf are Thought, so we see there is no separation of thought and effect. Thought and consciousness are as one.

Therefore all things are consciousness. If there is Harmful action it is born in harmful thought. Harmful thought is the mirror side of Beneficial thought.

Thought pervades all things. All things are thought, thought is Buddha-mind, all effects are Buddha mind. So as we said, harm against another is harm against one's self, there is no differentiation. Differentiation is a dualism, and not the Buddha Way. In cause and effect, cause is thought and effect is the result of thought. Inequality, is therefore, reflected by the effects it produces on the mind and the society. Inequality is nothing less than thought giving rise to suffering.

Identity

Identity is not separate from thought. All things are identity, as all things are thought. That is, that thought does not make identity, but that thought is all things without limit. So a person does not think their identity, identity exists as their thought does from the moment of existence. A child does not choose identity anymore than it chooses consciousness. Identity and consciousness are one and the same. To Buddha Mind there is no discriminating identity. A person is born, as a person is born, a Buddha. Their sex and status have no bearing on this. Therefore, it goes that a Buddha is a Buddha regardless of sex and status, and to treat one person and another unequally is ignorance.

Ignorance

The historical Tathagata Buddha Sakyamuni spoke that suffering is itself rooted in ignorance. When ignorance is cut off, suffering is ended. Ignorance is the cause of suffering, it is the cause of division, greed and anger and no society should tolerate or nurture it. He then outlined the Noble Path to ending ignorance. Ending ignorance results in Great Compassion. Which results from understanding self and refraining from doing harm to others. Allowing others to live, and living with Compassion, is Not Killing Life. Ignorance is cut off by understanding the source of consciousness that rests in all things. When this is realized then all are equal.

Ignorance is ultimately believing there is division among beings and things. In spite of the wisdom, that all things are consciousness and therefore indivisible. In the great Prajna paramita hidraya Sutra we find 'all things have the character of emptiness, they have no beginning, no end, they are

faultless and not faultless, they are perfect and not perfect', - this statement is the teaching of non-separation.

LGBTI Marriage equality must be recognized

So as you can see the statement of support for equality across all communities is not just a matter of temporal agreement or approval, it is rooted firmly in the Buddha Way and, therefore, in concert with all Zen communities and all human communities in our view.

Denial of equality under the law and society leads to suffering, based in ignorance. Suffering in this instance can take the form of denial of access to loved ones, legality of parental relationships, fair and equal division of property and observance of chartered bequests, contracts and wishes.

None of this should be acceptable in a healthy society as described. It is quite simple, to separate out one group of people from another and insist their rights are different is Harmful Action and one and the same with Harmful thought. Harmful thought is by definition that which causes separation from reality and that is same as suffering. A society which allows harm and perpetuates it through excluding the rights of some is by definition, ill. The cure to this illness is inclusion and understanding. In this case, the inclusion and understanding is that all should have access to loved one's equally, property equally, recognition of parental relationships and all other contracts under law.

All people, therefore, in the society should, regardless of gender and sexuality, have access to and recognition of, marriage equally under law in all society. We feel that this is basic and intrinsic in value to the Buddha Way and therefore, to all Humanity.

Further than recognition of values today, the values of the Buddha way are timeless and instruct future generations. People who follow people today should understand these values and protect them. They should understand that these are not new values but timeless ones. People in the future should understand this also and protect these values as they are bound in the Buddha Way and the consciousness of all things.

All wrong doing arises because of mind.

If mind is transformed

Can wrong doing remain?

Sakyamuni Tathagata Buddha

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