



guesthouse

NEWSLETTER



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6 Questions for Bernie Glassman

From May 10-12 at Guest House, Bernie Glassman will co-host, with **Walter Link** (Diamond Approach® teacher and originator of the “Inspired Pragmatism” approach to transformation) a program entitled “Living a Life that Matters: Integrating Action and Realization to Unfold Our Potential.”

Zen master Glassman is co-author, with actor Jeff Bridges, of *New York Times* bestseller *The Dude and the Zen Master* (Penguin). He founded Greyston Mandala, a network of for-profits and non-profits working to improve the lives of individuals and the larger inner-city community of Yonkers, New York. He also founded Zen Peacemakers for Zen practitioners dedicated to peace and social justice. He has hosted Bearing Witness retreats at the old sites of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland for 18 years, and this year will conduct one



Photo Credit: Alan Kozlowski

.....
“My opinion of loving actions are those that arise naturally when one enters a situation in the state of not-knowing, and then bears witness to that situation. It has nothing to do with one’s or the other’s opinions as to whether it is loving action or not.”

in Rwanda to bear witness to the genocide that took place there 20 years ago. Most recently he is focusing on promoting socially engaged Buddhism, the development of dharma centers (Zen houses) in impoverished areas and on nurturing communication and interaction between affiliates of the Zen Peacemakers Sangha.

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My Guest House

By Jorge Arango

In every corner, around each tree—a transformation, an opening. The field of Guest House sustains me through infinite personal discoveries, headlong tumbles into the abyss and re-emergence into a greater fullness of life.

A walking meditation one crisp autumn afternoon... Skirting the woods I become aware that I absorb with great joy the tapestry of colors, the rustle of breeze as it sifts through the thick screen of birch, oak and pine. Yet my eyes also dart quickly over unruly tangles of vines and haphazard scatterings of leaves that have curled and browned, and suddenly I understand how in my human life I seek order and turn away from messier situations. What I cannot order—the chaos of fear, the confusion of emotions I don’t comprehend, the disorientation of shifting identities, the muddle of projections—discomfits me. Being attentive to this tendency eventually lessens my avoidance and makes me more resilient.

Another summer morning, I am “silent witness,” observing, from the loft above the dining room, my fellow students having breakfast.

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Essential Contemplations

In each issue, we look at different views from different paths regarding a single subject. Since our 2013 programs are focused on the heart, we offer these contemplations on the heart and on love...

The important thing is not to think much, but to love much; and so, do that which best stirs you to love.

—St. Teresa of Avila

There is a light that shines beyond all things on Earth, beyond us all, beyond the heavens, beyond the highest, the very highest heavens. This is the light that shines in our heart.

—The Chandogya Upanishad

Love is an existence, not a reaction, not an activity. It is not a thought, or an emotion... it is Essence. You cannot have love, as you are love. Whenever you feel you have love, there is a contradiction.

—A.H. Almaas

Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question.... Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good. If it doesn't, it is of no use.

—Carlos Castañeda

A Winter's Tale

By Jane Bronson

On Friday, February 8, a severe winter storm dropped approximately 40 inches of snow on parts of New England. We had a full house for Diane Poole Heller's retreat, "Healing Attachment Wounds and Embracing Essence." Jane Bronson, one of our board members who attended, sent us this dispatch when she arrived back home that Sunday.

I just returned from Guest House. The retreat itself was wonderful and nourishing to me personally. I feel the significance that Guest House programs can have. The field generated was open and deeply compassionate, which touched us all. So, when the big snowstorm hit, I was already in a place of open sensitivity. That may explain some of the impact that Guest House had on me these past few days.

Marianne (Hile, director of retreat services), Chef Steve Matterazzo and a couple of kitchen staff stayed overnight so they could serve us as usual on Saturday. Marianne didn't sleep soundly, having kept one eye open for the power to go out, as we all felt certain it would. Thinking ahead, she had bought a pile of flashlights just in case. The next morning she was at the desk early with such grace and energy you would have thought she'd been home and asleep for a weekend.

Meanwhile Will (Galvin, our maintenance manager) looked like a snowman each time he'd take a well-deserved break from shoveling. He stayed up all night to keep ahead of the storm and ensure access remained clear. He was still shoveling Saturday morning when I saw him, and he kept shoveling snow the entire day. He and his daughter Becca eventually shoveled out over 30 cars. He just kept on going, kept on going, kept on going. I was in awe.

On Saturday one of the kitchen staff walked three miles to get to work, one mile of it in waist-deep snow. Chef Steve felt magnanimous to

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Photo Credit: Marianne Hile



Photo Credit: Sarah Tremaine



Photo Credit: Jane Bronson

A Winter's Tale

(Continued from page 2)

me. The food that day was superb, as always, including the 120 coconut haystacks! (There were just six left on the plate once we had our fill.) All the kitchen staff was cheery and helpful, as though nothing much had occurred overnight. Mind you, most of the roads were still impassible.

Sunday, Marianne was once again at the desk early. She had slept over, as another group of 40 were arriving. Our group was out of our rooms by 10 a.m. to accommodate the shift. Only two housekeepers could get in, so Steve (Kennedy, our executive director) and his wife Pattie, snowed in themselves, trekked to Guest House and pitched in. The last I saw Steve, he was pushing a cartload of used sheets and towels into the elevator, bound for the laundry. He still had his ski cap on.

When I expressed my gratitude to Marianne, Steve, Will and Chef, they seemed surprised. This was life at Guest House. Perhaps this particular situation was unusual, but many are. Still, I felt touched to my core to be so taken-care of, and to see that their obvious professionalism was coupled with such a depth of personal generosity, compassion and joyful sense of service. Everyone in our retreat group felt this. It was these few individuals who took it upon themselves to absorb the entire impact of the storm so that we retreatants could have a seamless experience. Even now I do not know how they did that.

With a deeper and more thorough sense of this organization I am a part of, I feel, more than ever, what an honor it is for me to be a participant. And by the way, Guest House looked lovely dressed in white. ■

Other GH News

* We'd like to thank Tom Muraco for his donation of bedroom furniture, which was not acknowledged in our last newsletter. Apologies, and thanks Tom!

* And another huge thanks to Hilary Peck for her second donation of furniture, rugs, lighting and outdoor chaises. Soon our already beautiful interiors will be even more inviting. We're beginning to look like a spa!

* As if the February 8th snowstorm was not enough, Mother Nature dumped another 16 inches of the white stuff on us March 8th. Once again, our amazing staff came to the rescue. Thanks to Will, Bob, John, Henry and Steve Jr. for all the arduous shoveling. ■

Our Gang

A regular column that focuses on a guest group frequently in residence at Guest House.



Founded over 40 years ago, the Hoffman Process brings into awareness the counterproductive beliefs, perceptions and emotional needs that have been adopted from parents and others who shaped our early life. These distortions of reality block our capacity to be fully present and open to life's opportunities. The Process provides the possibility and tools to let go of what is not working and move naturally into being the primary creative force in all aspects of our lives.

Our "infused teaching" addresses all dimensions of your being: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual. It is the integration of our whole self that creates powerful forward motion and establishes the framework for being a more loving, mature, creative and balanced person.

The Hoffman Process continues to develop in collaboration with experts, including health professionals, therapists, educational advisors, spiritual healers and others from the human potential movement. One teacher for every seven to nine students provides you with the individualized attention that catalyzes powerful personal change.

"Guest House provides impeccable support for our work," says teacher Sudas Buckley. "The attention to detail of the staff, and their loving care, make this a premier site for the Hoffman Process. The cleanliness and healthy cuisine are gifts that inspire a healthy lifestyle in our students so they can do the work they came to do."

Learn more about the Hoffman Process on free, live introductory calls offered every Tuesday evening at 5 p.m. PST. Got to www.hoffmaninstitute.org for information. Or call **800.506.5253** or **415.485.5220**. ■

Meet the Staff: Meredith Dow

Q: Where are you from?

A: I've lived in Connecticut my entire life, and in this area for 12 years. And it takes me about 12 minutes to get to work, which is the kind of commute I like!

Q: How did you come to work at Guest House?

A: I was working at The Cooking Company, a gourmet bakery/take-out restaurant, where [GH executive director] Steve Kennedy came pretty regularly for a muffin and a coffee. One morning, the coffeepots hadn't been assembled correctly, making the coffee extremely watery. (I didn't realize this until later that morning.) The next time Steve came in, I apologized and told him to help himself to a cup of coffee, on the house. It was just the right thing to do.

Several weeks later, I was putting out the "Open" flags when Steve pulled up. I was having a very bad morning and, as he got out of his truck, he asked, "Hey, ya need a job?" I think I laughed, wondering how serious he was. But, yes, I did need a job. I loved working at The Cooking Company—I have a passion for food—but I needed something full-time. A couple of days later, I had an interview with Rhonda [Nutile, business operations director]...and the rest is history!

Q: What do you do here?

A: I work with Marianne Hile in retreat services. People



come to the front desk with all sorts of needs and special requests. Among other things, it's a lot of chasing down information to then pass along to Bob for setting up meeting spaces, or to Chef so he is aware of any food restrictions guests may have.

Q: What was your first impression of the building and grounds?

A: Rhonda gave me a tour after my interview, and I remember saying, as we walked toward the dining room, "Oh my! I don't think I'd ever get sick of walking past this fireplace. It's beautiful!" And I love the old beams in the dining room. It's a lovely place to work. All of the employees who take care of this building are so dedicated. I am always amazed at the way Guest House supports the needs of the groups who come here—we create such a sacred space.

Q: We hear you teach yoga...

A: I've been practicing yoga for about 10 years and got my 200-hour certification two years ago. I completed my training while living at Kripalu for a month. The training was mentally, emotionally and physically intense; we would practice yoga for eight to 10 hours a day. I currently teach five classes a week and have taught guest groups here.

Q: Has it given you some particular insight for your work?

A: Yoga has given me patience and clarity. The practice and the lifestyle allow me to trust the process of life and to tap into my inner wisdom, my intuition. Yoga benefits every aspect of my life—not only at work, but also in my relationships with myself and others.

Q: What kinds of things do you do in your free time?

A: I love to take my 1½-year-old yellow lab, Dharma, for a run or a hike. She is the best running buddy. She sets a great pace!

Q: What's something you can tell us about yourself that no one at GH knows yet?

A: I LOVE to cook! Especially in the summertime when I've picked up all my beautiful, fresh ingredients from local farmers' markets. But there is something to say for using a crock-pot during those winter months, coming home to the entire house smelling delicious!

Q: What's your favorite color?

A: Green... and purple.

Q: Channing Tatum or Jeremy Renner?

A: Ha! Channing Tatum. ■

Giving Corner

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."

—Winston Churchill

Guest House depends on your tax-deductible donations to cover a part of its operating costs and help keep our rates as low as possible.

When giving to causes they believe in, not everyone can afford to give major sums. But no matter the amount, the act of giving enriches not only the cause that receives, but also the lives of those who give. By giving, you become a part of Guest House, which is a beautiful, nurturing and supportive environment for the transformational work of those who seek to develop human potential and enrich the world.

To give a tax-deductible donation, go to guesthousecenter.org, click on **Donate Now**, and then on **Friend of Guest House**. Any donation, no matter the size, is greatly appreciated.

Here's what your donation could cover:

\$25 - One flat of begonias and pansies

\$75 - Granola for a month

\$100 - 85 boxes of Kleenex

\$250 - Screens for one French door (need 17)

\$500 - New computer for front desk

\$1,000 - Electric bill for one week

\$2,500 - Booster pump for the well

\$5,000 - Improve parking lot lighting

Our Thanks...

...to all who were Founding Members of the first class of 2012 Friends of Guest House.

2012 FRIENDS OF GUEST HOUSE HONOR ROLL

Karen Anderson
Roseanne Annoni
Jorge Arango
Jill Berman
Bush Bing
Peggy Braun
Jane Bronson
Tabor Butler
Sydney Cash
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Sarah Tremaine
Ann Viviano
Michael Ward
Laura Wells
Susan Weiley
Malcolm Winkley
Sara Zwart
Anonymous (3)

6 Questions for Bernie Glassman

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GH: For our 2013 programs, Guest House wanted to bring awareness to the role of the heart in spiritual work. You've spent a lifetime integrating action and realization. What's the heart's role in spiritual activism?



Photo Credit: Alan Kozlowski

BG: Loving Actions are those that arise naturally when one enters a situation in the state of not-knowing and then bears witness to that situation. It has nothing to do with one's or the others' opinions as to whether it is loving action or not. This is my opinion of heart in spiritual activism.

GH: Many think of Zen Buddhism as having a passive nature in its philosophy. How do you reconcile this with social action?

BG: Japan's leading spiritual leader of all time, a Buddhist master active in the 6th century, said the way you can tell the depth of a person's enlightenment is how they serve others.

GH: *The Dude and the Zen Master* has been enormously successful. Congratulations! To what do you attribute this? The popularity and cult film status of "The Big Lebowski"? Or is it about something deeper?

BG: I believe the book brings the essence of Zen to the reader in non-technical language.

GH: In the introduction to the book you say you are a practitioner of the "Zen of action, of living freely in the world without causing harm, of relieving our own suffering and the suffering of others." How is your work—the book, the retreats at Auschwitz, this workshop—an expression of that Zen of action?

BG: In the days of Shakyani Buddha, during the rainy season, Buddha would stop his

meandering and spend time with his monks and nuns in one locale. In Japanese this period is called *Ango*, a period of peace in space and time. In English we use the word "retreat" to often mean "getting away from

the issues of the world." A Bearing Witness retreat is becoming one with the "issues of the world." A Zen meditation retreat bears witness to the wholeness of life. I use the word "plunge" for my Bearing Witness retreats; that is, to plunge into the unknown, into that which my rational mind can't fathom. These plunges, or Bearing Witness retreats, have helped folks let go of their attachments to their ideas or concepts and experience things as they are.

GH: In the book, you use the analogy of the rowboat to refer to your practices and say that as your spiritual understanding has gotten bigger and deeper, your rowboat has changed many times. Could you share some practices that you use most?

BG: The founding of the Greyston Mandala to assist homeless and low-income folks was based on my spiritual understanding and is my major work in bringing that understanding to the world of business. The Bearing Witness Retreats—in the streets, at Auschwitz and in Rwanda—have brought that understanding to the world at large.

GH: In addition to "The Big Lebowski," what other works of pop culture seem on the surface purely entertaining, but actually have substantial spiritual subtext?

BG: "The Fisher King" and "Ground Hog Day." ■

My Guest House

(Continued from page 1)

Other silent witnesses have reported how obvious people's disconnection from their experience of nourishment becomes from this vantage point. But for me, the disconnection I perceive is my own. I realize how many of the leadership duties I've taken on in the group (as well as in my career, my family orbit, my board work) are motivated by a desire for approval, visibility and respect.

Then a deeper understanding: my projection of being capable and in control actually separates me from those with whom I crave to connect because they have grown accus-

morning session, now open to incalculable shifts that reverberate for the rest of the retreat and beyond.

During a free afternoon on another retreat, I sit by the fire with my computer. Some students knit, others converse, others read. We look up occasionally to engage in some spontaneously arising conversation. I notice the absence of any need to prolong dialogues and an effortless ability to sense when they reach their natural conclusion. This, I think tenderly, is true intimacy. I have had other experiences of intimacy with fellow students, but it is only now, in this small

even the remorse for moments when I've acted without presence and compassion. It is this room's sturdy wooden beams that hold me as identities crumble, leaving me momentarily terrified, empty; this room's chalky white walls that bleach those fears from my bones and allow me to face the world as a new person, in a new life, every single day.

None of these realizations is static. They deepen and morph and dissipate into mist. And they do not transpire in a vacuum. My board work elicits capacities I never thought I had, which illuminate specific aspects



Photo Credit: Anastassios Mentis, mentistudio.com

tomed to the illusion that I need nothing. This fictional being also intimidates some into feeling they can only relate to me in some official capacity. The spark of profound contact becomes as remote as my fellow students are from this lofty perch.

My mind hallucinates a glass bubble descending over my fellow students, and I see myself thrown onto it, wailing and violently banging my fists to smash through to some sense of connection. My legs are shaking when I descend the stairs and head for the

pearlescent moment, that I apprehend myself as an embodiment of that quality.

The White Barn is a vehicle for epiphanies so numerous that I sense them rushing down like a cascade of brightly burning stars. In this space I am granted the gift of true compassion—for my parents, for a misguided world and, most importantly, for myself. Here I am set free from the compunction to reject what I perceive as “less virtuous” aspects of my life; where I understand I can own it all,

about my soul and what it uniquely offers. And this in turn brings dimension to my experience of my value in inquiries with my fellow students. I can't always access understanding and openness in the day-to-day world. But somehow at Guest House, even if I struggle with self-remembering, even if I cannot make sense of the chimeras that enslave me, I know a powerful field here supports, protects and values my experience. ■

Coming Up

Guest House Programs

(Visit www.guesthousecenter.org and click on "Programs" for more information)

Living a Life that Matters: Integrating Action and Realization to Unfold Our Potential
with Bernie Glassman and Walter Link
May 10-12



Portals to Transformation in Popular Culture
with renowned Enneagram teacher
Russ Hudson
June 28-30

Slain by Beauty: Freeing the Heart through Sufi Dance, Music and Inquiry
with Gayan Macher and Maitreya Jon Stevens
October 18-20



Exploring the Heart: A Video Retreat
with A.H. Almaas (Hameed Ali), Jane Bronson
and Anne Singer
November 1-3

Meditation in the World
Alternating, with Jane Bronson and Nancy Joly
Free, Wednesday evenings at 7:00

Other Programs Open to the Public

Rupert Spira (nonduality; rupertspira.com)
April 28-May 3

Hoffman Process groups (hoffmaninstitute.org)
**May 17-24, June 21-28, August 23-30, and
October 11-13**
April 19-21 (Q2 Intensive group)
September 27-28 (Inner Work for Leaders)

Soulstirr—A BreakAway for Women of Color
(zuridesigns-usefulbeauty.biz/soulstirr)
May 29-31

Hartford Family Institute Summer Conference
(healers and psychotherapists, info@hartford-
familyinstitute.com, 860.236.6009)
June 7-12

Male Survivor Weekend of Recovery (male survi-
vors of sexual abuse, tmassa@malesurvivor.org)
July 12-14



*Forever Family Foundation Retreat (foreverfami-
lyfoundation.org)*
July 26-28

Gestalt Center Retreat (gestalt@gestaltnyc.org)
July 26-29

*Write Yourself Free Retreat (writeyourselffree.
com, tishpatrick@gmail.com)*
July 28-31

*Anne Marie Santoro Writers Retreats (yesams@
aol.com, 888.937.2536)*
July 28-August 3 and August 11-17

*COSIA Women's Leadership Retreat (cosiare-
treat2013@eventbrite.com)*
August 2-4

*Art & Soul Metal Clay Mojo Conference (met-
alclaymojo.com)*
September 5-8

*Roberta Isleib Seascape Writers Retreat (mystery
writers, robertaisleib.com/seascape.html)*
September 27-29

*3rd Annual Gemstone Therapy Retreat (gem-
stone therapy sessions, GEMFormulas.com,
860.646.3063)*
October 16-20

This newsletter is published by:

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