



# VESAK CELEBRATION

Unshakable Hearts in Uncertain Times:  
*Living with Loving-Kindness, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity*

Saturday, April 26, 2025

1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

@ James Chapel, Union Theological Seminary

**UNION**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Thich Nhat Hanh  
Program for  
Engaged Buddhism



**2025 Vesak Celebration**  
**Unshakable Hearts in Uncertain Times:**  
**Living with Loving-Kindness, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity**

1:00 PM **Opening Remarks** Rev. Kosen Greg Snyder, Union Theological Seminary

1:05 PM **Lion Dance** Columbia University student group  
MC: Rev. James Lynch, Buddhist Council of New York (BCNY)  
Anjana Priya Peddireddi, Columbia University Buddhist Association(CUBA)

1:20 PM **Bathing the Buddha Ceremony**

1:45 PM **Welcome Remarks** Ven. Bhante Kondanna, Staten Island Buddhist Vihara

1:50 PM **Chanting/Prayer Offering**  
Ven. Gowoo Sunim, B.U.D Zen Center/ CUBA  
Two Bhantes, New York Buddhist Vihara  
H.E. Gegye Yongyal Rinpoche, Geshe Lobsang Dorjee

2:00 PM **Dharma Talk** Ven. Youlin, Fo Guang Shan New York Temple

2:15 PM **Performance** Catherine Boyack – Flute

2:25 PM **Dharma Talk** Ven. Dr. Saccānanda Mahāthera, Brahma Vihara Meditation Center

2:40 PM **Performance** Dharma Drum Mountain – A Song Offering

2:45 PM **Interactive Session** *"Living the Four Immeasurables in Our Daily Lives"*  
Loving-Kindness (Metta) - Shokuchi Deirdre Carrigan  
Compassion (Karuna) - Ven. Yan She, Dharma Drum Mountain  
Sympathetic Joy (Mudita) - Tenku Ruff Osho, Beacon Zen Temple  
Equanimity (Upakkha)- Ven. Burin Thitakusalo, The Middle Way Temple

3:15 PM **Dedication of Merit** Ven. Dr. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki

3:20 PM **Closing**  
*After the closing, feel free to stop by the Sangha Table to mingle and learn more about different Buddhist communities and vendors in NYC.*





This year, we want to highlight two amazing local organizations for which we are fundraising. We are inspired by the work they are doing, putting the Four Immeasurables into practice by supporting our local communities, on and off campus. We invite you to donate if it is within your means or purchase some food at the event, with all proceeds going to the two groups.

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## The 116<sup>th</sup> Initiative

The 116th Initiative has been working to provide financial aid and community support to students of color, first-generation and low-income students since our founding in 2021. Thus far, we have provided over \$175,000 in mutual aid funds for students struggling with tuition, housing, food, medical bills, eviction notices, suspensions and expulsions. But this mass support is only possible through the donations we receive from students. Most of our mutual aid funds come from many, small donations as opposed to few, big donations. Our aid, a recourse for the protection of our community, relies on community support. Our ask to everyone is to join us in supporting the safety of our peers and community members —whether it be donating whatever you can, volunteering with us, showing up to our events, or even reading more about mutual aid, join us in whatever capacity. We are here to support you, and we hope you can support us. We keep each other safe!

Any funds that 116<sup>th</sup> receives from the Vesak Celebration will go toward seed funding for a food justice program they plan to launch for summer residential students dealing with food insecurity.



Venmo





## Mandala Café

Mandala Café is a 501 (c) (3) Nonprofit, founded in 2015. Since 2016, we have been providing a Weekly Community Meal to feed all our Neighbors in Harlem. We have offered 200+ feedings, prepping then handing out 48,000+ meals, with 1,700 volunteers providing 6,100+ hours of service. We also provide a Culinary Training Job Development program to give people skills in commercial kitchens in order to find employment. We also have a small catering company, which can serve 2-200 people, which provides on-the-job training plus part-time employment. Our services provide for those in the justice system, undocumented visitors, persons living with mental health issues, persons without stable housing and/or living in shelters, and veterans.



Paypal



Venmo





## Thich Nhat Hanh Way

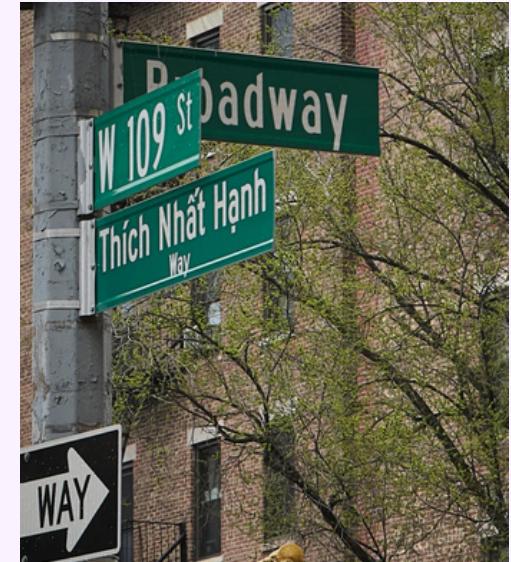
On April 11th, New York City officials co-named a street in honor of our teacher Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, lovingly known as Thay—recognizing his extraordinary contributions to peace, mindfulness, and social transformation in the world.

The naming ceremony took place at West 109th Street and Broadway, near Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, where Thay lived, taught, and planted seeds of engaged Buddhism as a scholar, teacher, and activist during a formative period of his life.

This moment is a deep honoring—not only for those who knew and loved Thay, but for all who continue to walk the path he illuminated. His presence in New York was rooted in courageous engagement with suffering, born from deep insight, the energy of peace, and inclusive love.

When Thay came to New York in the 1960s, the Vietnam/American war was intensifying. Many spiritual communities were unsure how to respond. As a young monk exiled from his homeland, Thay offered a way forward: *peace in myself, peace in the world*. He spoke at churches, universities, and peace gatherings, appealing to the conscience of a nation and calling for an end to violence—starting within.

Thay taught that our daily engagement with life is our practice, and that even in the midst of difficulty, we can touch the wonders of life. This seed of insight, planted in a time of war, would later blossom into the international Plum Village community.





**Rev. Kosen Gregory Snyder** is Senior Director and Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies at Union Theological Seminary, where he oversees the M.Div. program in Buddhism and Interreligious Engagement, as well as the Thích Nhát Hạnh Program for Engaged Buddhism. An ordained Zen Buddhist priest and dharma-transmitted teacher in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki, he is co-founder and Senior Teacher Emeritus of Brooklyn Zen Center and Ancestral Heart Zen Monastery. He also co-founded the Buddhist Action Coalition, dedicated to advancing justice through compassionate Buddhist action. His academic and practice interests include socially engaged Buddhism, contemplative interreligious dialogue, and the relationship between Buddhist liberation practices and social transformation. His current research explores the intersection of Critical Phenomenology and collective karma.



**Rev. James A. Lynch, Jr.** is a Dharma Teacher as authorized by the lay Buddhist Organization Rissho Kosei Kai. He is an official representative for their outside affairs in the New York City area, as well as an official representative for Rissho Kosei Kai to the United Nations. James is currently the Vice President of the Buddhist Council of New York. He also sits on the Board of Religions for Peace USA. James is a tenured professor and Chairman of the Business Management Department in the Koppelman School of Business located at Brooklyn College, where he teaches Workplace Happiness and Spirituality.



**Anjana Priya Peddireddi** was introduced to Buddhism in high school when she began meditating to find more stillness. She took a religious studies course on Buddhism at her previous university that completely changed the way she thought about relationships with others, nature, and herself. Through CUBA, she hopes to continue building a community centered around care, reflection, growing, and sharing with one another through Buddhism.



**Bhante Kondañña** is a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk who began his monastic journey in 1968. He trained in Colombo and earned a BA in Buddhist Philosophy from the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka. In 1985, he moved to the U.S. to serve at the New York Buddhist Vihara. While continuing his spiritual work, he pursued further education, earning a BS in Social Work from CUNY and an MSW from Fordham University. Bhante Kondañña is committed to building strong spiritual foundations and uplifting lives through his teachings and compassionate service. <https://www.sibv.org/>



**Gowoo Sunim** is a female Buddhist monk from the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism in South Korea. She has been engaged in Buddhist practice and meditation since childhood and took full ordination in 2010. With experience in both Korea and the United States, she now serves as the Abbess at B.U.D Zen Center in Queens. Gou Sunim is also furthering her education as a student at Columbia University. She is majoring in Human Rights and is a student advisor for CUBA, where she shares the path of mindfulness and happiness with a broad audience. Gou Sunim finds delight in walking dirt paths at dawn and observing the tranquility of nature.



**Eminence Gegye Yongyal Tulku Rinpoche** is an ordained Buddhist teacher and a respected leader in the Kagyu Nyigma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He holds a master's degree in Buddhist philosophy and completed extensive meditation training. Recognized as the third seat reincarnate Trulku of Gegye Tashi Choling Monastery near Mt. Kailash, he was enthroned following a ceremony led by His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.

Rinpoche has mastered key areas of Buddhist philosophy, including Pramana, Prajnaparamita, Madhyamika, Abhidharma, and Vajrayana Tantra. He currently serves as president of the Amala Center Nepal and the Himalayan Buddhist Center Australia. Since 2020, he has been actively teaching and promoting the practical application of Buddhist ethics, Sutrayana, and Vajrayana practices, emphasizing loving-kindness, compassion, and personal transformation.



**Geshe Ngarampa Lobsang Dorjee**, born in Tibet. In 1991, studied in Gyudmed Monastery, India. From then till 2007 mastered on Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Art, Constructing Sand Mandala/Butter sculpture and Ritual recitation. He came to United States in 2007. President and resident teacher Gyudmed Tara Temple, NY.83-16 Cornish Ave, Elmhurst, New York 11373



**Ven. You Lin** is the Director of Fo Guang Shan New York Temple and a dedicated monastic of over a decade. She holds a Diploma in Buddhist Studies and has led Dharma services, retreats, and seminars internationally. Now serving in New York, she continues to promote Humanistic Buddhism, guided by Fo Guang Shan's Four Objectives: to propagate the Dharma through culture, nurture talents through education, benefit society through charitable services, and purify hearts through spiritual cultivation.



American flutist **Catherine Boyack** is known for her compelling performances and thoughtful approach to sound, bridging classical music with lived human experience. A semifinalist in the 2021 Kobe International Flute Competition and first prize winner of the National Flute Association's Young Artist Competition, she maintains an active career as a performer, educator, and teaching artist in New York City. She is a co-founder of the Coriolis Duo and a fellow with Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect, performing internationally and leading music education initiatives in schools and communities. Her solo project, On Reclaiming, explores mental and emotional health through interdisciplinary commissions for flute and multimedia. Catherine has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Opera San Antonio, and the New Haven Symphony, among others. A Haynes Young Artist, she earned her MM from the Juilliard School and is grateful to her mentors Gretchen Pusch, Carol Wincenc, April Clayton, Elizabeth Weissman, and Ronald Staheli.



**Ven. Dr. Saccānanda Mahāthera**, originally from Bangladesh, was ordained as a novice in 2001. He pursued higher education in Myanmar and received full ordination in 2002 from the International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University, where he studied Buddhist teachings and practiced meditation for nearly four years. He then continued his studies and meditation training in Thailand for another four years, earning a Master of Arts degree. In 2008, he was invited to serve as the abbot of the Bangladesh Buddhist Vihara of New York. Since then, he has practiced in various meditation centers across the United States. He currently serves as the founder and abbot of Brahma Vihara Meditation Center in Westbury, NY.



**Rev. Shokuchi Deirdre Carrigan** is a Soto Zen priest in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. She received priest ordination from Tenshin Reb Anderson in 2010, having trained for more than a decade in residence with her teacher at Green Dragon Temple and Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery in California. She currently offers dharma classes online for San Francisco Zen Center, and leads retreats in person annually at Green Gulch Farm and Tassajara Zen Mountain Monastery. Shokuchi is a founding member of Blade of Grass Zen Sangha in Brooklyn, and lives and practices at Water Moon Guanyin Hermitage in Coney Island.



**Ven. Yan She** entered the Dharma Drum Sangha University in 2009 and received full ordination in 2013. She graduated from the Department of Chan Studies in 2015. From 2017 to 2022, she served at the Dharma Drum Mountain Chan Hall. She is currently serving at the Chan Meditation Center in New York.



**Ven. Burin Thitakusalo** or Monk Burin is the Abbot of The Middle Way Temple, New York, the first Theravada Buddhist temple in Manhattan, New York. As a Thai Theravada Buddhist monk, he has been working tirelessly since 2000 to deliver the profound wisdom of Buddha's Teachings in the most engaging and practical way to people of all ages, races, religions, and no religion. He travels globally to impact hundreds of thousands of practitioners of 31 countries in 6 continents. He teaches business leaders who take executive education courses at Harvard Business School. Young kids in New York who come to learn Buddhism with him, call him "An Orange Man."



**Tenku Ruff Osho**, MDiv, BCC is a Soto Zen Buddhist priest currently serving as Head Priest of Beacon Zen Temple. Rev. Ruff's novice training took place in Zen monasteries in both Japan and North America, giving her a unique perspective on how Buddhism is practiced in different cultures. Rev. Ruff is the former President of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association, holds a Master of Divinity degree from Maitripa College, and is a board-certified chaplain. She has strong interest in ethics, inter-Buddhist / interfaith dialogue, and ways people can support each other and grow through challenges in life.



**Ven. Dr. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki**, D. Min. is a Buddhist priest, ordained in the 750- year-old Jodoshinshu tradition of Japanese Buddhism. He is a President and Founder of the Heiwa Peace and Reconciliation Foundation of New York. He also is a President Emeritus of the Buddhist Council of New York; a Hiroshima Peace Ambassador; Nagasaki Peace Correspondent; an Honorary Board Member of the interfaith Center of New York; an Honorary President of Sanghakaya Foundation (India), and New York City Police Department Clergy Liaison.