

RISE -- January 2026 Meeting Notes

“I want to make my words deliberate. I want to take off the shoes of my voice so that I can enter a place with care,  
so that I can do the work that I need to do.” -*Ocean Vuong*

“May I have the confidence that whatever work offers up—success or failure, happiness or disappointment, recognition or indifference—I  
can unshakably rely on myself to be self-assured, resourceful, and at my ease.” – *Michael Carroll*

Dear RISE Sangha Members:

Sending this memo in follow-up of our 1<sup>st</sup> session of 2026 on Mindfulness/Healing the Heart of Democracy.

Reminder, first: **Next monthly meeting is Wednesday, Feb. 4 @ 4:00pm PT**—hope to see you there!

Regarding “Part 1” of our meeting, here are the quotes and prompts, addressing the “inner game”—how we tend to our own broken/open hearts and aspirations and how we may, through our sangha and community, keep hope alive.

<p><b>Healing the Heart of Democracy:</b> Despite our sharp disagreements on the nature of the American dream, many of us on the left, on the right, and in the center have at least this much in common: a shared experience of heart-break about the condition of our culture, our society, our body politic.</p> <p>That shared heartbreak can build a footbridge of mutual understanding on which we can walk toward each other. Within us is a yearning for something better.</p> <p>Put time, skill, and energy into the education and mobilization of the powers of the heart. As history consistently demonstrates, heart talk can yield actions just as practical as those driven by conventional forms of power.</p> <p><b>Habits of the Heart</b> are deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, our concepts of meaning and purpose in life; taken together are critical to sustaining a democracy.</p> <p><b>A Sense of Personal Voice and Agency:</b> We give rise to new life as we speak out and act out our own version of truth, while checking and correcting it against the truths of others. Many of us lack confidence in our own voices and in our power to make a difference. It remains possible for us to find voices, learn how to speak them, and know the satisfaction that comes from contributing to positive change. I need to stop being audience and need to start being participant in democracy.</p> <p><b>Capacity to Create Community:</b> Without community, I cannot find my voice or exercise agency. The steady companionship of kindred spirits can kindle the courage we need to speak and act as citizens. —<i>Parker Palmer</i></p>	<p><b>On Personal Voice and Agency:</b> We often tell our students, the future is in your hands. But I think the future is actually in your mouth. You have to articulate the world you want to live in first. If hope is to be defining and forceful in the world, we must speak hope into being. I want to make my words deliberate. I want to take off the shoes of my voice so that I can enter a place with care, so that I can do the work that I need to do. -<i>Ocean Vuong</i></p> <p><b>On Personal Voice and Agency (continued):</b> The world at this time in history absolutely needs your voice. Every voice, every vision, every imprint is a creative solution. Something definitely changes when we finally summon the courage to risk telling our truth. When our words, actions, and behaviors are in harmony, wisdom and authenticity emerge. --<i>Angeles Arrien</i></p> <p><b>Invitations for Reflection and Sharing</b> *What is the “something better I am yearning for in my/our common life? What animates my deepest hopes for my community/country/world? * How do we keep hope alive?</p> <p><b>To Bless the Space Between Us— For Work:</b> (excerpts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* May the light of your soul bless your work with love and warmth of heart.</li><li>* May you see in what you do the beauty of your soul.</li><li>* May the sacredness of your work bring light and renewal to those who work with you and to those who see and receive your work.</li><li>* May dawn find hope in your heart and may evening find you gracious and fulfilled.</li><li>* May your soul calm, console and renew you. --<i>John O'Donobue (thank you, Leah)</i></li></ul>
---	--

“Part 2” of our meeting, addressed the “outer game”—how we bring **Habits of Heart into** our work lives and world. How do we create beloved community, safe-enough and brave spaces that encourage and nurture others’ sense of belonging, voice and agency?

Alan offered a brief “presentation” on how he incorporated Empathy Interviews to engage staff and student voice to create a culture of radical kindness at his previous elementary school... resulting in the creation of a deck of ‘kindness cards’ incorporating mindfulness and SEL practices to address concrete problems that students experienced at school. This “presentation” served as a springboard for conversation about how we can and do apply similar strategies in our own individual settings.

**We invite any of you**, if so moved, to share a practice (opening meditation, honorable closure, or example of how you incorporate mindfulness to promote Habits of Heart and community at work)—please write back and let us know!!

\* Please **join us at our next meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, February 4 @ 4:00pm PT (7:00pm ET, etc.)**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6770705919>

**Happy New Year and Best Regards, --Alan and Ranjeeta**