(JC): Welcome back, dear friends, to this latest episode of the podcast series ‘The Way Out Is In’. I’m Joe Confino, working at the intersection of personal transformation and systems evolution.

(PH): And I am Brother Phap Huu, a Zen Buddhist monk, a student of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in the Plum Village tradition.

(JC): Today, Brother, we are going to be talking about the North American tour that you have just returned from and I was on the last leg of. The first part of it was the first International Music Tour, music concerts across America. Then you did a retreat for 250 people in Toronto. And then I met up with you on the last leg, which was a retreat for climate leaders and activists on Cortez Island in British Columbia, in this beautiful Retreat Center called Hollyhock. So, we're just going to talk about what happened, what we learned, and what we experienced.

**About the North American Tour: Retreats and Music Tour**

(JC): Hello everyone, I'm Joe Confino.

(PH): And I am Brother Phap Huu.

(JC): Brother, as I mentioned, we have returned from Hollyhock, a retreat center in Cortez Island in Canada, as part of a schedule of retreats that were being planned for climate leaders and activists. Thich Nhat Hanh was an environmental leader and activist for more than 50 years. He felt deeply around the need to help the environment, about recognizing the need to collapse the separation between us and the environment; and the importance of dealing with our suffering, so that we can deal with big issues like climate change and social inequality. Thay has been a great leader in this. And now Plum Village is continuing that legacy by engaging particularly with this community at a critical time in human and earth’s evolution. So, Brother, I think it’s a good time to reflect on what we did, and find out how these teachings really can help people to deal with their personal suffering, and also the collective suffering of climate destruction, biodiversity loss, social injustice, etc… Brother, do you want to start off with just a flavor of what we did and how this sort of developed?

(PH): Developed, as in all of the retreats or…?

(JC): Yes, because you were doing general retreats and then doing a music tour. So, let's start off with talking about your time in America, North America.

(PH): Like Joe said, we just arrived two days ago. So, definitely still jet lagged, but very happy to be back in the Sitting Still Hut of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, in his cozy kitchen/ dining hall/ calligraphy room/ attendant office/ printer office. We started the tour with a group of seven monastics from Plum Village, France, naming it after this podcast ‘The Way Out Is In’. This is a continuation of our teacher’s legacy, which is to bring the Dharma into different places of the world. Not everybody has access to Plum Village, which is in France. Sometimes the work of a monastic is to be of service. And our service is to sow seeds of awakening or to sow seeds of mindfulness. I think it was very critical, particularly for my generation of monastics, young monastics, to know that now the torch of wisdom is in our embrace. It is our responsibility to continue to light this flame and care for it. As well as to transmit it and to continue to sow the seeds of mindfulness into people's hearts.

**The Importance of Music in Engaged Buddhism**

(PH): Music is such a powerful language. I think it transcends even the meaning of the lyrics in a way, particularly in what we have created together with meditation, music, and spoken word. They're like bite-sized Dharma talks that match the songs that we have put together with the foundation of our teacher’s poetry. The poetry that our teacher manifested, all came from his experience during the war, the Vietnam War. As well as the crisis of the boat people of Vietnam during that time; as well as his insights in the Dharma, in the practice, like the poem “Unborn and Indestructible”. So, all of this comes from deep insight. Through the years a lot of his poetry has been put into music.

But particularly our generation was putting it in the flavor of pop, hip-hop, and even contemporary, I would say music-wise. It's a very complex set of songs that embraces melody, strings, rap, and upbeat drums, etc… It's very diverse. It’s very alive. We’re using this as a new bridge to bring more people into spirituality. For us, spirituality doesn't mean becoming a Buddhist or following a religion. Spirituality is the capacity of awakening in everyone, which is learning to stop our thoughts, our running; and to connect to our suffering, taking care of it, transforming it. That is spirituality. And there’s so many layers as we've discussed through so many of the podcasts.

This was the first big tour that we've done since Thay’s continuation, of him returning back to the earth. So I think for many of us young Dharma teachers, it was a moment of real togetherness. We really worked and served as one body. I hope you were able to see that, Joe, that none of us was trying to be the leader. None of us was trying to outshine the other. We learned to work as the fingers of one hand and to be in harmony. We all have our strengths; we all have our weaknesses. So, this tour, from a perspective of service, holds the legacy of continuation. Then from a perspective of brotherhood and sisterhood, sibling-hood, our togetherness. When we're on tour, we have an opportunity to truly connect at a deeper level. It's like when you put a bunch of chopsticks together and you're cleaning them. You all rub each other from the experience: from walking together, eating together, curating together, planning together. We just become more present, more clean, because we're rubbing off our habits to be in harmony with each other. So, this tour that we offered had this layer.

My favorite moment, concert-wise, was in Boston. Sister Chang Kong, our most senior elder sister in our community; Thay’s long-term assistant, student, friend, and I would even say soulmate on the path, sang the song, “The Smile”, which was a dedication to Thay, and to so many people who are suffering. That we still can smile, no matter what. And she had a standing ovation of 480 people after she sang that song in Boston. It was just so beautiful to see that she is still seen and loved by the community. Because

particularly, I think Sister Chang Kong and Thay are a pair of opposites that inter-are. I always say that Plum Village cannot be without these two great beings. Thay, our teacher, wouldn't be who he is without the support of Sister Chang Kong; and Sister Chang Kong wouldn't be who she is without a teacher like Thay. And since the passing of Thay, I think it has been more of a grieving journey for her. Deeper than for a lot of us, because of her long-term relationship, of being alongside Thay, from the start of the social workers in Vietnam. And to see that she is loved is very important for me, as a younger sibling of this family, this monastic family.

And then we led two retreats. One in Toronto for 250 people, fully booked out. The retreat was just so beautiful. For three years, the sangha of Toronto hasn't had a chance to come together in person. There are so many new friends. I think one of my greatest joys was I had three friends who were in the same middle school with me; they all came to the retreat and that was such so special for me. So, shout out to my three friends, who were there. They had such a transformative experience and a real eye-opening to what the practice is.

**Climate Leaders and Activists Retreat**

(PH): And then onto our journey to the west coast of Canada, Vancouver. This retreat which we have been planning since the last retreat we had in Plum Village; to continue to build a community of climate leaders and activists, to have a spiritual practice in order to support themselves, as well as to support each other. We know that service in this movement, it's not a one-off, it's a lifetime commitment. In the light of Zen, part of the title for it was “A Zen Approach to Climate Resilience”, as we take care of ourselves and take care of Mother Earth. We came in with the mindset that the earth is an object and we are protecting it for the sake of human beings. So then, it becomes a job. It becomes a mission; an end to meet and then we can be happy and then we can be safe and then we can do happy dances. When, right now, we're just struggling and suffering; and there’s a lot of grief, a lot of pain, which is also reality. We’re not denying any of this.

But from the last retreat, what we have explored together is to create a sustainable approach of caring for oneself is also caring for Mother Earth; and to see the inter-being nature of humans and the environment. And Brother Phap Linh (Brother Spirit) had this insight. He asked me to write it as a calligraphy. It’s “The Way Out Is Inter-being”.

(JC): So, we have to change the name of the podcast.

**Creating a Healthy Culture of Service**

(PH): I love that. I love that. I think about creating a healthy culture of service. Because we have to shift our mind from doing. To this is love, and this is care, and this is a culture that we want to hand down to the next generation; even the present generation that are all still sleeping and not aware of our crises.

We discovered that a lot of people felt guilt, just incredible guilt to be in a retreat to take care of themselves. I think that's the one thing that we all recognize. We had to lead people into a space, where they can be vulnerable to touch their own hearts and their own experience of life. Right here, right now. And for them to discover where they are in body, spirit, and mind. This was the journey that we accompanied together. And for me and the monastics, it was our journey too. I believe that this care for Mother Earth is not just one group of people’s responsibility. It's everyone's responsibility; from activists to climate leaders to businessmen, scientists, teachers, doctors, anyone who is a civilian of this earth. We have to pay attention. This is the collective awakening that we are building together as a community.

**Innovation in the Plum Village Tradition; Opening New Dharma Doors**

(JC): Thank you, Brother. Just before we come to focus on the climate retreat, I want to go back to the music tour. One of the things in my experience at Plum Village is that there’s a willingness to always innovate. While the core teachings remain present and are at the heart of everything, Thich Nhat Hanh talks about opening new Dharma doors. There's always new ways, depending on cultural changes or technology changes, of reaching new audiences with the teachings. And of course, this podcast series is one way. It didn't happen before and it's a new way of communicating the Dharma and the teachings in order that people can touch it, reflect on it, and incorporate it into their lives. Music and culture are also so important. And the fact that you have a group of monastics, some of whom are world-class professionals, like Brother Spirit on the cello and Sister Trai Nghiem on the violin. This is actually another way of communicating. So, do you want to just talk a little bit about how you came to this idea of music. It's very novel. It's not what people would normally expect. It is deep into the the core principles and understandings of the Dharma, but through a new form. So, how did you come to this idea of doing a tour?

**Poetry and Peace Activism in Thich Nhat Hanh’s Life**

(PH): First of all, I have to bring it back to our teacher Thay. I think not many people in the early days knew Thay as a monk. They knew him more as a peace activist and a poet. His poetry was his way of channeling his experiences during the war: to write about the suffering in order to transform the mental formations that one experienced during war; and to see beyond the chaos and still touch the depths of life in the present moment. This is a deep meditation and even against the stream. Because everybody is violent. Everybody is trying to kill each other. And here you are, still trying to transcend all of that, and still see the beast in man as a human being. The beast in men is not the man, but it is the ignorance. It is the suffering. It is the discrimination. And to not poison our hearts even in the midst of such suffering. Thay, he was an artist himself. A lot of Vietnamese songs Thay made, his side quests were making music. It's just incredible who this human being was, and his ability to cultivate all these talents. His first communities were young activists who were working in war-torn villages and seeing orphans, death, bodies dissembled from the bombs, and so on. It was deep suffering. Our Days of Mindfulness in the Plum Village tradition come from that time. Our teacher had the insight that once a week, we need to come together as a community of activists, of people, of practitioners. And we're not going to talk about the war. We're not going to talk about the suffering. Because at that particular moment, there was enough just by stepping out of our doors. But here, we're going to cultivate the miracle of life. Thay allowed the young social workers to bring guitars, drums, and make music and sing together. A lot of his poems were put into music. He also brought in a lot of artists, songwriters, singers, poets who became very well known in Vietnam later on. So, his community were all of these artists of life. And Buddhism is a way of life. It is to highlight the beauty of the present moment, as well as to shine the light of mindfulness on the suffering, to see its roots, to care, to transform, and to cultivate new insight, new seeds in us. So, music has always been a part of Plum Village. But it has evolved through the years. I'm not sure if I shared this yet on the podcast, but I shared it during every concert, because it gives context to why we are doing these concerts. Because like you said, so many people would never imagine monastics with a cello, with a guitar, with a drum set, with sunglasses, and to rap and so on.

**The Story about Br Phap Huu Rapping and Thay’s Reaction**

If I remember correctly, it was 2012. It was 30 years of Plum Village. It was an anniversary year that we were celebrating. Every retreat had a Be-In, a festival, but the summer had the biggest one. And there was a call for monastics and friends to contribute to the celebration, to bring skits, poems, dance, and music. The norm during that time in Plum Village was very beautiful songs. It wasn't in the genre of hip-hop. And now Thay has a much larger student body of young students, who grew up with Tupac, with Eminem, with Jay-Z, and Backstreet Boys and so on. We come from hip-hop and pop, and we wanted to bring a new flavor to the celebration. So, we took the chance. We made a leap of practicing two songs: one, a rap song by Lupe Fiasco called “The Show Goes On”; and the other was by Jessie J featuring B.o.B, the “Price Tag”. And when we offered these two songs, the crowd, the audience, the community went wild in a mindful way. People were just so happy. But among the monastics, it was very new. Some monastics, they raised their eyebrows like “What just happened? Is this even allowed?” And for some, the monastics of our own community, I can only imagine, didn't know how to process it. So, they went and told Thay, like tattle-telling. A few days later, I had tea with Thay at the Hermitage in Plum Village. When I came in, I still remember Thay had this look on his face like ‘you just did something and we're going to talk about it’. I sat next to him and he looked at me. He said, “So, Phap Huu, I heard a few days ago you and some young monastics did a song that was not particularly normal in our tradition and apparently you guys were dancing and whatnot.” And I was like, ‘I don't think we were dancing’, in my mind. But when you're feeling the vibe, you're moving, and you're going to the beat with your body movement. And I just said, “Yes Thay, we did it.” You know, I'm gonna own up to it. Thay said, “Well, some monastics had opinions about it and they felt different. And they told Thay.” In the mind of this young monk, this is 10 years ago, I only thought that I was about to get canceled. Like this was about to be over, like we're not ever going to be allowed to perform or to offer this kind of music anymore. Thay looked at me and he said, “Well, do you know how Thay responded and are you eager to know?” I said, “Yes Thay, what did you say?” Thay told me, when Thay looked back at the monastics who were reporting to Thay of the performance, Thay had a smile. Thay looked at them and Thay said “This is my kind of Buddhism.” For me that was a mic drop. That was the greatest recognition, acceptance, and approval that a young monastic could be offered; meaning that Thay trusted us and Thay loved it. He said, “This is the new generation. Allow them to express through their language, their experience, and what moves them.” This story particularly, I think it can show the depth and the love and the the vision of our teacher. Of how he doesn't want people to box us: monastics should be like this - silent, serene, no body movement, and so on. It's so much deeper in our monastic culture. This ancient wisdom from 2600 years ago, the only way it has still succeeded and survived to today is through adapting to culture. If we look back in Zen, just at Zen tradition, you can see that they brought in poetry, calligraphy, gardening art, bonsais, archery, even martial arts, even music. Even music in the traditional Vietnamese chanting in Hue, Central Vietnam, in the North and in the South, they bring in different string instruments of Asia. So, when Plum Village started to have a new chant of Namo’valokiteshvara, it started with just a guitar and a djembe. Later on, when Brother Phap Linh and Sister Trai Nghiem became monastics, Thay said, “Don't throw your talent away. Bring it in to the Dharma. Allow it to be a transmission.” We have actually been criticized when on YouTube, there are some new chants with guitar, drums, violin, and cello. People are like, ‘This is not Buddhism. This is corrupted Buddhism.’ I've seen these comments on YouTube. When I see that, I just recognize, ‘wow, people still want to box us in to whatever view that they saw online or in movies or in a book they read, that is so ancient’. I think for us to have this courage is very important. Because the tradition of Plum Village is ‘Engaged Buddhism’ and ‘Applied Buddhism’. We have to have the creativity to find ways to bring the language of Buddhism, of awakening, of mindfulness, into the mainstream. And sometimes it's very interesting. This tour even helped us break free from our own view of who we are.

**Silent Clapping and the Concert in Washington, D.C.**

Particularly there was a very interesting experience we had in Washington DC. In this concert, if you're familiar with Plum Village, Thay and Plum Village has created a silent clap, which is like flowers of the hands. It's a movement of the hands shaking back and forth. And when 600 people do it, it's very beautiful. But there's no sound, so it speaks to the Zen tradition in a way of celebration. It doesn't have to be loud and rowdy. But particularly in this setting, we wanted people to be able to express through clapping, snapping, stomping, and even dancing, if they felt the need. Inter-being, for us, is not a performance, but it's an offering. So, when the other is receiving, it gives us energy to continue to offer. These live sessions become a co-created experience in this venue. We selected MCs to help introduce the session; to create the space and the permission for people to clap, permission for people to express themselves. We were very aware that there was going to be a portion of friends who are already very familiar with the Plum Village tradition, who are students of Thay, etc. So, we needed to say this at the beginning, so that people don't feel confused. And in DC the MC said, “In the tradition you don't have to clap. This is how we offer our appreciation.” And all of us in the band, we looked at each other, and we're like, ‘this is not the memo that we gave’. So we kind of interrupted and we said, “No, you can clap. We want you to clap.” And our Brother on drums, Brother Tinh Yi, started to beat the drums. Even I had to go “Woohoo!” to just break the energy. And what was so astonishing, is that friend still didn't get it after that. She said, “Well, but you still don't have to clap if you don't feel like it.” It really threw me off, as one of the eldest on this tour and as someone who gave direct instructions. I came out and we had a discussion about what happened. I just realized that for some, the view is so strong, and they box us. And I realize that even our own community is trying to box us in a particular form or spirit or behavior. I just hope that Buddhism is to transcend views. When it's appropriate, allow for claps, allow for stomps, allow for snapping. Because our practice is to to dance with life. We have to approach life with mindfulness, as a dance. If we only know how to do one particular dance, like ballet, it won't match in different environments. We have to know how to flow with the rhythm, with the beat; when to be still, when to be present, and when to be active, when to be loud, when to give our energy 120%. And this is Zen.

(JC): Thank you, Brother. What you say is so important, because in some spiritual traditions, when the master passes, everything becomes ossified at that moment. It's like whatever they said or did becomes the way to do it. And I think what perhaps is most strong about Thay, was he said “It's got to be reimagined for each generation to be relevant.” So, that fundamental permission he gave, which was to say, “Don't stop; it can never be stopped. It's always growing. There are always new ways of seeing the world. And if you’re not adapting to that, then the teachings don't become relevant.” But Brother, rather than just talk about your music, I suggest that we now listen to one of the songs. And what you haven't said, Brother, is that you are the rapping artist. There was a moment, when you were doing a music evening. The last evening, you suddenly put on your shades, and you felt this sort of ripple in the audience of like, ‘what is coming up now?’ And then suddenly you get into the rap, and we're going to play this song now called “Little Star”. And there was just an eruption of joy and excitement. The energy was just like a volcanic eruption. And what was so skillful, Brother, was after that, the energy was so high. What you did was so skillful as a group. You then channeled that energy into “Namo’valo” — into the prayer which is about metta; about giving love to yourself, giving love to the people you love around you, and then giving love out to the world. You channeled that energy from this high, excited energy right back into the practice, and finished it in such a deep way. And I thought there was something so meaningful about that. Because you could have just kept on the energy, build the energy, build the energy, but actually you channeled it. Anyway, let's take a few minutes now, dear listeners, to listen to “Little Star”.

**The Song ‘Little Star’**

“Today the kingdom of Heaven

Held a festival for thousands of stars

I went up to that kingdom

Knelt down and prayed

That the anguish, the killing, the disaster

In our poor land would end”

Where have you been, little star?

I’ve been looking for you everywhere

Out of my window among the dark clouds

Where have you been, little star?

I feel so alone

Like a small bird lost on a foggy island

It has been raining for nights

Late night on the sidewalk

I see the silhouettes of lonely, wet forms

I’ve tried to call your image

From deep in my consciousness

While the rain and the wind continue to rage

Tonight as I bend over my desk

My head in my two hands

The wind has carried all the clouds away

The sky is clear

The rain has stopped longing for your call

I’m surprised to see you there

You have returned

Little star!

{Rap}

I’ve been looking at the stars in the distance

I’ve been looking in my heart for resistance

I’ve been searching in the self for existence

all alone by myself Reminiscent

underneath the Bodhi tree but it isn’t only me

you and I collective energy how it’s s’posed to be

I hope to be the ocean tide

With my spirit open wide

standing on a mountain top see the world with open eyes

I was so surprised

to know that I’m a part of this

Sunrise sunset

rain clouds all of it

The journey of awakening taking it with one step

one breath

save all beings till there’s none left

Suffering is painful

but I’m still the same fool

searching for the river

while I’m swimming in the same pool

Maybe we can find it

keep the light shining

walking on the path of ancestors behind me

If you could be the person

who you are in your heart

would you grow a little bit

or would you play a bigger part

Love is a paintbrush

life is the biggest art

and I’m still the same kid

wishing on a little star

Where have you been, little star?

I’ve been looking for you everywhere

Out of my window among the dark clouds

Where have you been, little star?

I feel so alone

Like a small bird lost on a foggy island

It has been raining for nights

Late night on the sidewalk

I see the silhouettes of lonely, wet forms

I’ve tried to call your image

From deep in my consciousness

While the rain and the wind continue to rage

Dear little star

You have been through such storms, rain, and wind

For how long and on what strange land have you been weeping?

You’ve come back

Your little body, still shivers will cold

With tears in your eyes

You recalled

You’ve been praying for our homeland

Your voice has reached the stars

transformed to teardrops

Trembling in the air

I’m sending deep thanks to

Countless little stars

With diamond-strong faith

You are like flowers, blooming everywhere

My little star, you are back home

With tears in my eyes

I call your name

And feel the warmth in my heart

**The Meaning of the Lyrics to ‘Little Star’**

(JC): So, Brother, just tell us a little bit about that song, about the meaning of the lyrics.

(PH): “Little Star” was a poem that our teacher wrote for all of the activists who were with him. For him, during the darkest night is when the star shines the brightest. All of the activists were the little stars of the night; that no matter how little you are, when you come together, a festival of stars can brighten the deepest nights, the darkest nights. And this, I also see, was his homage to all of the young people of his times. But I would even say this poem is still so relevant to all of the activists of our times, in our era today. There's a line that says that ‘your faith is diamond strong’. When we become an activist, it comes from a place of selflessness, of non-self, to serve beyond you, and to bring the love and the care that you have into the places that are in need of help. And it's so important to find your allies of stars. We have to learn to shine together. We have to learn to practice together, and to offer each other support, and offer each other joy and to be there for each other in the darkest moments. In moments when our star, our light is dim, we can rely on the other person's light that may be stronger. But we don't become jealous. We see it as a moment to rely and take refuge, and for us to rest so that we can shine again. And I know particularly that poem was written for Sister Chang Kong, who was also taking care of all the orphanages during the Vietnam War. She was such a leader and a compassionate bodhisattva, which means a being that has the mind of awakening. Bodhisattva vows are those who, even after having the Dharma and the practice, don't want to just hide in the mountains. They want to be of service to humanity in whatever form and way they can. And there’s, as we know, many layers of service today. So, “Little Star” has that message and that homage to all of the social workers. It’s such a relevant poem still today.

**The Climate Retreat; Resilience and Guilt in the Climate Movement**

(JC): Let’s switch our attention to the climate retreat. You started off saying something very important, Brother, which was about people, a number of the participants, feeling real deep levels of guilt that they would take six days out, to come for themselves, to look after themselves. The sense they were being self-indulgent. At the same time, many of them turned up exhausted, feeling they had little left to give. So, we see in a sense this paradox: that people feel we're dealing with this climate emergency, biodiversity emergency, social injustice emergency; and people have to give fully of themselves all the time, but without thinking that they need to, as you say, be resilient. They need to refill their tanks and actually they need to refresh themselves in order to stay in the game, so to speak. It feels like such a deep-seated feeling, Brother, of people thinking that their energy just is always going to be there, that they don’t need to recycle it. In other words, we talk about renewable energy; we talk about recycling. But people don't realize that about themselves. That if you keep giving without receiving, then actually that is exhaustion. That is burnout. The other thing, Brother, I think we all notice is that the look of people between arriving and between leaving, that some were pretty unrecognizable. They were looking younger, more joyful. Their facial features in some cases relax. There was one person who came in one morning, and I just said, “Oh my gosh, I don't think I would have recognized you,” because literally their face had transformed. I was talking to Brother Spirit and he said that one of the unofficial metrics of a Plum Village retreat is that you can actually see the difference in people's faces. So Brother, is there anything you want to say about this aspect where people just think it's self-indulgent, guilty; that they don’t deserve it, that they need to be on the front line?

(PH): I also heard that in my circle sharing in a retreat; from friends feeling too privileged to be here, when we know that there is suffering. And that being here, is not being somewhere else. But after the practice and after six days, as you shared, everybody realized that to be somewhere else, but not be who you are, is also not true. I think that this guilty feeling is a mental formation that we all have. Guilt, on one side, can be very good. It allows us to know that if we do something wrong, we should feel guilty about it. We should know how to change, but then there is the other edge of the knife. The other side of the knife of guilt, which becomes toxic. It allows us to never have self-awareness, self-compassion, and love for oneself. And I think, if I dare say, it's also in the culture of sins. Others have died for us to be happy; religiously, as well as, even in war. Like freedom comes with a price. At one of the memorial places in the U.S that some of us got to visit in Washington DC, I think, freedom is not free. It comes with a price. Therefore, this idea of happiness becomes very foggy. I think people are still trying to grapple, to understand, and to have a sense of what does that mean. Therefore when you are put in this environment, which after so many years, let's say 30, 15, 14, 10 years, they've never been in a peaceful environment. Suddenly, this becomes foreign. The stillness, the space to connect to nature; this group of people, who we are together; and being instructed by the monastics and Christiana Figueres and you, Joe, and other leaders. We are here not to talk about business. We're not here to hand out business cards and to talk about our profession, etc. We're here to connect with one another. And this is not normal anymore. When we come to a conference, we’re all coming prepared to meet each other with ideas. We’re coming together to meet each other with different opinions, which can become arguments, which can become conflicts. Rather than deep listening and loving speech, which we devote a whole day of practice for in our retreat. And not just a whole day, but we start to trickle it in from day two, which is the first Dharma sharing that we have. Bringing everyone into the circle and asking everyone to share their first name. We don't need the second name, the last name. We don't need to know about what you do in your profession. Just to speak from heart space. I think one of my questions that I brought to the group was, ‘I’m very aware that all of you who received the request and committed to the request, also means that you had to move a lot of agendas to be here; but since you're here now, what would you like to invest yourself to for the next six days in this different setting?’ And so many people talked about caring for themselves. So many friends realized that they haven't been there for the grief that they have been holding. Whether it's on a very, very personal level to family, or on a level of communities, or level of the environment, of Mother Nature. I think that our society is so structured around suppressing and forgetting our emotions with consumerism, even in work. Service can be an energy to consume. Even a retreat is to consume; like I'm here to consume this. And we're sharing that mindfulness is not a pill. It's not a fix. Mindfulness is a path of understanding and transformation to cultivate non-violence, peace, awakening, and love. There were so many insights from the practitioners, such as ‘love is regeneration’. I think everybody was fueling themselves back in the spirit of being alive again, being with people who share the same mission. Maybe we have different approaches and different views, but at the end of the day we are here for the collective care of this environment; and their collective awakening that we are bringing to the different layers of our society, our environment, our culture, etc. We had elders to leaders to young activists, who were also present, and very diverse. Those who definitely also didn't see eye to eye. But that was also the reason why to come together. I think my main thing was to allow people to connect back to the heart. Of course, it may be uncomfortable at first. Allow it to be uncomfortable. You need to feel this. You need to accept this. You need to learn to come home to yourself. And coming home to yourself takes courage. Remember, Joe, in the last retreat when you asked everyone not to offer gratitude to others, because it's so easy to project our love outside of us. As we know in Zen, ‘the way out is in’. And the way out is to inter-be. And how do we inter-be? We have to connect to ourselves. That is our spirit, where our wisdom of ancestors have come to us; spiritual, genetic, and land. Therefore if we can't connect home to ourselves and we're just giving, giving, and giving, we're going to lose ourselves. And aspiration needs food. Love needs food. The retreat is a way to allow people to come home to nourish themselves.

**Why this Climate Retreat Was Novel; Freedom**

(JC): Brother, I think it's important just to be clear about why the retreat was so novel, apart from the teachings. When people were invited, they were not given an itinerary. They were not told about anyone else who was coming. They were not given any information apart from to have faith. I went to so many conferences in the past, where you get an app. You immediately see who's coming. You see the schedule. You decide which sessions you want to go to. And then there's the pre-networking app, so you can look at who you want to connect to. So, by the time you arrive at the conference, the grabbing mind has already decided who is worth speaking to; who isn't worth speaking to; what can I get from the people; what can I bring to myself; what can I take from other people; and how to divide my time. So, you've already allowed your mind and your grasping mind to take complete control. Here is the exact opposite. You turn up almost naked. You don't know what to expect. You don't know who's going to be there. You don't know what's going to happen. And that is freedom. That is freedom, because it's giving people no ground. It’s taking the ground away, which is allowing them to fall to a deeper place, which is themselves. And to have to be emergent, to be present, to come into the present moment, because they don't know anything other than that moment. So, it's quite extraordinary. Also, that people show the faith to come. And there are many reasons for that. One of them is Plum Village and its reputation. One of them is Christiana Figueres is so deeply respected in the world. And so if the invitation is coming from both of them, there's something there. But it’s remarkable how many people actually deep down are willing to have faith, and to then act on it. Brother, one of the other things that I think we both saw very clearly was this idea of the Buddha; with our thoughts we create the world. That showed up with a lot of participants, and very concentrated in a few. But I think what was generally there, was that a lot of people have been guided by the energy of anger. That they look at the injustices in the world, and it brings up the sense of deep anger. And that anger is seen as a very powerful fuel with which to give them the energy to try and create change. But what comes along with that happening, is that if they keep repeating that anger, that actually they become angry. And they don't just become angry at the world. They become angry in themselves and in all their relationships; in their relationships with themselves, with their family, with their friends, and with the world. We saw that particularly with people, who literally said, “I realize anger has fueled my activism, but now I’ve become an angry person. And what can I do about it?" And then Brother, what we often see in these processes is that people realize actually, they don't want to be angry anymore. It's not serving them. But then they're left with this void, because what they say is: “Well if I'm not angry, then what am I? Who am I? And how do I show up in the world? Because that's been my fuel. If you take my fuel away, I’ve got nothing left.” There's this sense then that, ‘Oh well, all I'm left with is compassion and love’. And those, in that context, can seem very weak. It can seem, well you know, ‘how is that going to save the world?’ I think what Plum Village does so beautifully is to bridge that divide. And to help people see that is not an option, of this perceived strength of anger and this perceived weakness of compassion, love. But there's a bridge across that, which I think in Buddhism and in the Plum Village tradition, you call either radical compassion or fierce compassion. And I think it'd be really helpful, because it's been very helpful to me, in saying, actually there's not just this binary choice of what is called strong and what's called weak. But actually fierce compassion is a deep, deep strength that not only can help change the world, but can sustain that change. So, for those of our listeners who are saying, “Well, what is fierce compassion?” It came up in the retreat. Well, what is that? Do you want to give us a sense of what that actually means and how might we be able to practice with it?

**Dealing with the Energy of Anger; Fierce Compassion**

Yes, before I get to an example, I want to speak on this, because it seems very binary to say either this or that. In Buddhism and in the teaching of mindfulness, Right Mindfulness, when we're angry, we don't say ‘you cut off anger’. You don't cut off anger. Anger is one of your mental formations, one of your energies. We learn to acknowledge and know that we are angry. We learn to care and transform and channel our anger into a different energy. Maybe at the beginning, we literally need to remove ourselves from that situation. We all have experiences that when we are angry, our words, our thoughts, and our actions are not kind. And the result of our action, based on anger, would lead to something; even if we think it's for the good, but there is a real, direct poisoning that is happening, making us more toxic, making us more vicious in a way. One time somebody asked Thay this and Thay said, “Well, we think that anger is a powerful energy, but actually compassion is a very powerful energy.” How do you transfer and embrace your anger of seeing what has happened as so wrong? Now to meet the object or meet the person or meet the situation that is creating the suffering; instead you meet it with an energy to understand, and to communicate, and to help the other side see their wrong action. This is only when real transformation in our society can happen. If we're going to keep meeting each other with anger, on any size, in any fight; whether it is nations, whether it is society, or it is climate, it will lead to war, because anger carries a very vicious energy of punishment. We want to punish the other because they dare to make me suffer, make my loved ones suffer, make my society suffer, make my community suffer, my nation, etc. It will just keep escalating. And anger grows many other seeds: discrimination, seeds of violence, seeds of punishment, and it goes on and on. And you start to create a different view. We know that even if we send all of the nuclear weapons, all of the knives, all of the dangerous weapons to the moon; that if we don't transform the hearts of humanity, if none of us do the inner work, we're still going to find a way to harm each other, to kill each other, and to take from each other. That is why for us, anger is not the solution. Anger is an energy to recognize, to practice with, to guide through walking meditation, to guide through being with nature. Then you realize that your energy, your emotions are also impermanent. You know that if it goes up, it will have to go down. And you can come back to the situation with a different energy. If you have practiced for a long time, you can channel your anger right away. You make sure that your anger is not the foundation of your words, your mind, and your actions. And you can do this. In our history of humanity, there are many great beings who have met the beast of man with kindness. I think that we can all say that when somebody arrives, who has such virtue of presence, understanding, kindness, and compassion; the other side, the other people will feel that. And even sometimes, it just de-weaponizes them. They see that they don't even want to harm this person. The Buddha himself was such a being. He met a serial killer and the serial killer just realized, 'I don't think I should do anything bad to this human being’. He had a whole discussion with the Buddha. And the Buddha transformed him. I'm sure in every ancient culture and civilization, we have beings like this. Therefore in all traditions of insight, of culture, of wisdom, love becomes much stronger. Kindness becomes much stronger. There was one friend in our retreat who shared that one takeaway is the insight to meet suffering and to meet the challenges; the uphill battle that she is embarking on, kindness is the source of energy that will always take you the long way, the long run. I don't remember the other energy that she was mentioning, but it was the opposite of kindness. Therefore, for us, compassion doesn't mean to fluff everything, to put everything under the rug, and to be naive. And to say, “Well, the tree is still there, and the sun is still rising, and the flowers are still blooming”. That's not it. Fierce compassion, or compassion that has strength, has to come with understanding. One example is, from time to time, we have to ask people to leave our community. When somebody is so toxic, when somebody is not in harmony with us, and when somebody is destructive, mindfulness is to recognize that this is somebody who is draining the energy of the community. If we allow that person to continue after all our intervention and we realize that there is no more help, the compassionate act may be to let that person go. Even in our times, there are criminals that our compassion is to put them behind bars. Because that is a compassionate act for humanity and maybe for that person. So that they don't continue to have harmful actions, which becomes their karma, which will haunt them and destroy their soul. Compassion always has the element of understanding to lead to a more healthy and safe community environment. Compassion is a very big word itself. And love is a very broad teaching. Therefore we have courses or lessons in which we talk about love for two weeks straight, because there are just so many layers. I think that in this retreat, somebody had the insight that, we have to have radical compassion during our times; to even see the people who are bringing harm to our environment, to still see them as human beings. That is our practice. In our truth in Buddhism, there are two pairs of opposite. We're never going to be in a situation where there is only good. We're always going to meet two sides. The good and the bad are a pair of opposites that come together. Happiness and suffering are two pairs that rely on each other to manifest darkness and light, birth and death, right and wrong, and so on. In Buddhism, the deepest insight of practice is to break free from all views, which is to touch inter-being. So that we can be free; and to see the truth behind all manifestation and the forms that we meet, whether it is a person, whether it is their energy. Are we meeting just their anger? Or can we see beyond their anger and still have compassion and help them out of their suffering? We always have evidence that when somebody is inflicting suffering, it's because they have suffered so much. Nobody has taught them how to love, how to understand. Maybe they are the most broken souls of our world. Therefore, if there is a bodhisattva somewhere who can befriend them, can shine love on them, and shine light, then they can wake up from their wrongdoing. Then we have an opportunity. Maybe prisons were, in principle, to help re-educate or so on. But we know that there's so much corruption and the system is also so broken there. We know that mindfulness, and the path of awakening, is a way of life. It's not a religion. Therefore in our times, in my own generation of monastics, monks and nuns, I think we have to continue to grow this insight in ourselves, to transmit it, and to walk this path.

**Forgiveness; Understanding and Transforming the System**

(JC): Thank you, Brother. As you talk, it reminds me of one of the things that came up in the retreat around forgiveness. There were people who were saying, “Well I can forgive individuals, who are doing harm. But how do I forgive the system?” I think it was Brother Spirit, who answered really beautifully. He said, “It's not about forgiving the system. It's about understanding the system. We can't forgive a system. But once we understand a system, then we can transform it.” It's not about forgiving all the time. It's not a weakness of, 'oh I have to forgive it’. But once I deeply understand it, then I can act. The other thing, Brother, was related to what you're saying and I found it so helpful. Again we know it, but to really feel it deeply, is that everyone is suffering. So, there was such a diverse group of people. There were writers and there were indigenous people, who've been fighting the Tar Sands for decades. There were wealthy people. There were people working for business. There were people working for NGOs. There were these extraordinary youth activists on the front line and there were people in their 70s and 80s. We had this extraordinary diversity, which you don’t often get in the same room. And yet everyone suffers. You could deeply see the indigenous people present, who've been fighting on the front line for years and have become ill from being in close proximity to all the chemicals. Their health has suffered and their spirit has suffered. And then people who are incredibly wealthy, but they also suffer and have guilt. I think it's about having non-discrimination around suffering. You can look at people, and you can try and compare people’s suffering. Well, a wealthy person suffering can't be nearly as bad as someone on the front line. But actually, when you take the comparison away, everyone's suffering needs to be recognized. Because if we don't recognize each other’s suffering, then it leads to anger and attack. And then separation. Because as soon as you get attacked, you get separation; people going back into their camps. When we all appreciate each other's suffering, which is the amazing work that you do in these retreats; then everyone is allowed to come into the center. No one feels excluded. No one feels they're not part of it. And everyone can feel that they can show up.

**Spirituality and Climate Work**

(PH): It was like a deep tissue massage, the retreat. Like each day, you just press another pressure point to release all of the tension that has been building up for years for many of our friends. One friend, who's a writer, shared that she came into the retreat feeling very disconnected and like an outsider. But after six days, she felt like family had manifested. And we can see that family, as not just genetic and blood; but family, as shared aspiration, shared understanding, shared support that we want to offer for one another, and to see each other as human beings. I definitely felt it and I think even I put on a mask at the beginning. Like, if everybody wants to be professional, I will be professional Zen monk Phap Huu too. It's so interesting, how it's so automatic. We come into these beautiful settings, yet here we are, still showing up with a shell. The work is to feel and give permission to feel our own vulnerability and suffering; and to slowly open ourselves up to un-layer ourselves, to soften our hearts. I think that these retreats, especially for everyone working in this space, some shared that they have never been in nature for this long. I felt like, ‘oh my goodness, we have to make this a requirement’. This is why in monastic-hood, our teacher said, ‘if you want to be a monk, you stay in a monastery’. That's what you have to cultivate. You have to cultivate what you want to become, what you are nourishing in yourself. I feel this is why these retreats with all these leaders, especially Christiana Figueres, with this wisdom, is that there is a very deep spiritual dimension in the climate work. Because nature is spiritual. You cannot come into this work, and see it as a nine to five. It's not a career to live in order to get fame, money, power, etc. If you're meeting that line of work with that energy, I think nature would challenge you itself. One of the friends shared that deep down in her heart, she always knew that spirituality and climate work has to go hand in hand. And this retreat showed that this is exactly the missing link for some. For one very close friend of both of ours, he shared that this is the first time he spent in nature for six days. And he's been here for a long time in this form of work. I think that should be a bell of mindfulness for all of us. To see that if we are not deeply connected to the land, to the trees, to the soil, to the waters, we don’t even know what we are caring for. We're just caring for our own survival, which is very selfish.

**Inspired by Nature; Noble Silence; Deep Connection**

(JC): Brother, it reminds me of a retreat I was co-facilitating in San Francisco for climate leaders a few years ago. I took the group for a walk in the countryside. The first half of the walk, I was watching. They were chattering, chattering, chattering, chattering. When we got to the halfway point, I formed a circle and I said, “Okay, I now want each of you to share one thing in nature that you saw that inspired you.” No one could, because they'd all been talking. And they're all people who work around environmental issues. Then I said, “For the second half of the walk, let's all walk in silence.” When we got back, we had another circle. “What is it that you noticed, that inspired you?” And everyone had seen something deep and meaningful to them. I'm reminded of that, Brother, because one of the key strengths of the retreats is silence. Again such a skillful part of the design, because I think most people think, you just do a retreat. But there's an old technology to this, and a form. The first day and a half is complete silence. It doesn't allow anyone to get into the mode of who's there, who are you, what do you do. It allows people to settle; and to hear their mind, to hear their mental activity, to recognize what's going on. The power of silence is so meaningful. There were a couple of retreatants who told me, “You know people said I wouldn't be able to cope”, especially if they're very chatty or they're used to talking. But those are the people who enjoyed it most. Because actually people often chat to hide away from things. When they're given silence, it allows other things to emerge.

(PH): I think Sister True Dedication and Sister Trai Nghiem did an amazing opening in the orientation. I remember Sister Train Nghiem explaining Noble Silence. She said, “You'll experience how delicious silence is.” It is only in the silence where you can truly open your senses to what is around you. And Joe, we both were in the same sharing circle. One of our young activists, who I truly adore, said, “I get to be like a little squirrel in this place. I'm climbing trees. I'm waking up early at 5 a.m and just sitting on a tree to see the wonders of life. I'm able to just walk and to feel alive.” When she shared that, I felt it opened and allowed everyone to touch their inner child. This is a spiritual understanding of our connection, because no matter how old we become, we are still children of this earth. We will never outlast Mother Earth. When you have eyes of wonder like our young activists, that curiosity is what allows you to still see the beauty. I know she comes from New York. So, to be in a space, where the forest is your backyard, is education. It is a real transmission and connection between one and all. I see that the retreat offers so many levels of deep connection, but also there are moments of challenge. We had a case of covid that happened. I think it was day three and there was so much emotion. Somebody was very upset about the mask situation and even interrupted the talk, which was very challenging. I think it disrupted the energy of it all. I believe that that person was coming from good intention; but it was such a wrong energy that that person was channeling into the collectiveness, which was already being very present and aware of the situation. The organizing team was working behind the scenes to take care of the situation. And the way we all held it together. I have to give major, major props to Christiana Figueres. Because at the half time of the break, after the first talk, she came in and gave a heart moving and vulnerable invitation to everyone. That talk particularly was from a lead-on from Sister Lang Nghiem’s talk on Mind and Store Consciousness, based on the seeds that we all have of mental formations, emotions, and feelings. So, it was almost like it was meant to be. We just learned about it and here is the challenge. Christiana invited everyone, “I invite all of us to recognize what seeds are present right now. How did we all react? And how are we reacting right now? Because the pandemic is a crisis. One of the crises. But the biggest crisis that we are all embarking on this path, is the crisis of our behavior to climate, our consuming, our taking, our eating from the soil, the flesh of Mother Earth; and our unmindful responsibility that we have. And if all of us become angry, become upset, how will we even embrace and handle the collective emotions?” The way that she just brought the suffering as an opportunity of deep looking and practice, for me, at that moment, I was a student. I was a student of Christiana Figueres. I marvel at her mindfulness, and her compassion of embracing the group; and being a woman, who is such a powerful leader. I recognize in our sharing that many young activists, young friends, she is who they want to become. That’s the role model who they would like to be guided by: those who know how to face suffering and not bring back stronger emotions by saying, “Oh, what you said is wrong. How dare you disrupt, etc…” But it was an invitation. And that was fierce compassion. That was how can we look at this together and not blame each other. There were people who were thinking about leaving right away, of giving up, of ‘just okay, there’s suffering, let's just leave’. Isn't that also such an autopilot mode that we all have installed in us? So in our retreat, you can't plan for this. It just manifests to allow us to actually apply everything that we’re learning into the present moment. In our sharing circle I asked, it was like the elephant in the room that we had to address: how everyone's emotions are. I was asking, “How did all of you apply the last three days of Dharma talks and of practice?" One friend ,who has major health issues, shared that it was the first time when she met a health crisis in a space where she wasn't scared at all. She was able to accept the situation. She shared that “I'm going to do the test. If I have covid, I have covid. I will accept it. I will take care of it. And if I have time for isolation, I will work on my podcast.” Isn’t it just a view, that how you invite into your mind consciousness, you can change your whole energy and your approach to the situation. I think this was the groundwork that we were helping everybody, at so many different levels, from the walks, the sits, the sharings, the eating in silence - of how we are cultivating gratitude, how we see food, how we see each other. It is all views.

**Personal Reflections and Lessons Learned in the Retreat**

(JC): Thank you, Brother. Maybe to finish, we could share one personal reflection of

something that we learned from that retreat. What you were saying just sparked off in my mind a deep learning for myself. So, I can go first. Before the retreat started, I arrived with the monastics and Christiana. We were assigned rooms and I was in a room that was quite nice. But I saw other people's rooms and there was a part of me that thought, ‘everyone's got a nicer room’. And then I got moved out of my room into another room, which was much smaller, and even probably, I would say, the worst accommodation in that area. I was jet lagged and tired. It was a small shared room. And I thought, ‘oh I’m not going to be able to sleep and what have you’. And what came up for me, Brother; so, I'm 61 years old. I've been associated with Plum Village for many years. And yet, the deep wounds in me are still there. And I know that. But I watched it happen in real time. Because what came out for me, I'm the youngest child of six. What came out for me was, because I had this story as a child, which was I never had enough. I was always ignored. I was always the last. I was the one who always had to suffer. And all this emotion just came up in me like a sort of volcanic eruption. It's like the plates of the earth, of my earth, shifted. This earthquake happened in my mind, which was ‘no one cares about me’. So, I took this for a walk and I saw these two aspects of me. The part of me that was holding on to this old story. I knew consciously no one had seen that room. No one had said, “Oh, Joe should have this room or that room.” So, I knew and I was able to sort of calm my mind, to say you know this is an old wound coming up. This isn't important. It's not important where I stay. It's amazing to be here. And all the parts of me that could calm myself. But there was a part of me that was so insistent in my old story saying, “No, you know, I have been wronged. This isn't fair. You're being ignored. There's no respect for you and all that.” It was such a gift before the retreat started, to see an old wound come up, flourish; and despite my attempts to calm it, it wanted to be right. It still had an investment of 61 years of being right about an old story that was no longer relevant in my life. Anyway, I took it for a walk. I calmed it. I resolved the situation. It was all fine. I let it go. But it was just a reminder for me, Brother, that however much practice we do, that this is a lifetime journey. It doesn’t end. It's not saying, “Oh actually, I've cured all my wounds. I know I am free of them.” I think this was one of the things that actually came up generally in the retreat. That this is a lifetime's work. As you said, it's not a fix. Mindfulness is not a fix. It's not a pill. It doesn't mean all your worries go away. But we work with them. And we continue to work with them. And I was able to resolve it in my mind within an hour. Whereas in the past, it would have just kept on coming into my mind. So, I think it was just a reminder to myself to be compassionate to myself. But also to be compassionate when other people's stuff comes up. That I'm seeing a child in someone show up, when they’re angry or where they feel left out or where they're responding, in what to me might be inappropriately, to a situation. It's not they are not a human being. It's an aspect of them that is coming up. That is a hurt part of them that needs to be loved. And so in that moment, I was able to actually love myself. I felt a bit shy to be honest. I felt really embarrassed that I was having these feelings. Especially when I was coming to help support facilitate this retreat for other people. But actually it was a reminder that actually we all suffer. How about you?

(PH): Thank you, Joe. I love it. You're able to be so authentic in this podcast. I still get to to understand you and support you. Isn't it interesting that the complexes, the three complexes, that we practice to transcend. It will always find its way to sneak in: inferiority, superiority, equality. I want to be equal as them. Am I good enough? Or I'm better than that. I think, collectively, we knew that this retreat was different, because it was by invitation. Everyone coming in, it's not the same community that comes to Plum Village, where it's from invested aspiration. But this is on trust. So, we don't know the response of everyone. And when you don't know, your mind creates a lot of scenarios. It's very easy to go down the path of ‘things will go wrong’. And preparing yourself for the counter moves in order to make things better. What I learned is to learn to dance in the present moment. And also, to trust the Dharma and the transmission of wisdom that has been sown into all of us. Because in that moment, it's not you that you’re transmitting. You're transmitting the wisdom. You're transmitting the old texts. You're transmitting the collective insight from generations. And that can never go wrong. As long as you are authentic to it. You also make a vow, as a teacher, to be a student to those words. All of us ,who were on the panel to give Dharma talks: Brother Phap Linh, Sister Hien Nghiem (Sister True Dedication), Sister Lang Nghiem, Sister Trai Nghiem, and myself. We spent almost six hours curating the flow of the talks through the five days plus orientation, so six days. And we didn't stick to our preparation. Because you have to also be in the present moment while you are offering these teachings. You have to feel the collective energy. And you have to dance with it. That's where for me, I understood another layer of present moment. A present moment in a space, where you have to be free from even your preparation. And then to trust the transmission of so many different wisdoms that are there; that you can just pull out and offer, and still be authentic to it. So, that was a very beautiful dance I got to experience — from the Dharma talk that I gave, to the Q&A that I was a part of, and then to the music evening that we offered. We prepared a few songs, but we saw the collective energy. All of these friends, who were, from day one, everybody, even us, had different masks on. And now, we're all just being a happy, big community. It was just like, ‘let's keep vibing with this’. We were pulling out all the songs that we brought along; some that we didn’t even perform during the concert. At the end, Sister True Dedication was so skillful in channeling the energy. Because I also had that thought that after the last song, which was “I vow to Live This Day with Love”, the energy was sky high. We were about to blow the roof off. I was like, ‘should we just end now?’ And we all looked at each other, and we're like, “Namo’valo, Namo’valo”. We gotta bring it back. And the way she wove the energy with her direction of how we're going to bring all this joy and transfer it to love and compassion for ourselves; to honor ourselves and then to honor our loved ones, who may not be here. We now need to transmit and transfer this source of love and compassion; and then transfer this collective energy to the darkest places of our community, of the world. In order to not hold it just for ourselves, but to share this merit, to share this energy. It was just so profound. And all of this was unscripted. It was present moment, wonderful moment. The present moment is your canvas. And your mindfulness and your body, speech, and mind is your paintbrush that you paint and draw with. So, I think, for myself, the learning was to trust the wisdom. And not to be selfish. Like at that moment, it's not about you. And then to deepen my understanding and my growth in the present moment.

**Outro**

(JC): Brother, thank you for the sharing. I think we're both still in a bit of jet lag. So, if this podcast made absolutely no sense, then please have compassion for us. But I think it was beautiful. Thank you for your sharing, Brother. You can find all previous episodes of our podcast on the Plum Village app and also on Spotify, Apple podcasts, and all other podcast platforms. If you like what we're doing, then please subscribe to ‘The Way Out Is In’ podcast on any platform of your choice. It'll be really lovely, if you have the time, to leave a review, if you feel inspired. And that will help others to discover the podcast series.

(PH): You can also find all previous guided meditations in the ‘On the Go’ section of the Plum Village app. This podcast is co-produced by Global Optimism and the Plum Village app with support from the Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation. If you feel inspired to support the podcast moving forward, as well as the international work of the Plum Village community, please visit www.tnhf.org/donate. We want to thank our friends and collaborators: Clay aka the Pod-father, our co-producer, who we met up with in Toronto; Joe, our audio editing; Anka, our show notes and publishing bodhisattva; Jasmine and Cindy, our social media guardian angels; as well as Brother Nien Thung, who is our sound engineer today.

(JC): As well as Kata, who is the creator of the Plum Village app and has been a constant supporter. Thank you everyone for listening and see you next time.