

Becoming a High-Wattage Broadcaster of Human Positivity ~ Shinzen Young

00:00:00 This was way back at the end of the Vietnam War. I was living in a Vietnamese Buddhist

00:00:12 temple, but not in Vietnam. It was a Vietnamese ethnic temple in Los Angeles. You may remember

00:00:18 the news footage of the people clinging onto the helicopters in Saigon, trying to get out

00:00:25 and whatever. What happened was that there was this huge influx of Vietnamese refugees.

00:00:36 They were sent to marine camps, dedicated marine camps throughout the United States.

00:00:43 One of the big places they were sent was Camp Pendleton, which is near San Diego in Southern

00:00:48 California. The temple where I was living, the International Buddhist Meditation Center,

00:00:54 was in L.A. It was really interesting to see the marines in action. They realized that

00:01:08 at least half of the people that were coming into that camp would be Buddhist. The other

00:01:15 half would be Catholic, because that's sort of the religious breakdown in the country.

00:01:22 They could handle the Catholic, because that's international. You just get Catholic priests.

00:01:30 But they were smart enough to know that there were Buddhists, Buddhist clergy in the United

00:01:38 States. They were smart enough to, in fact, know that there were Americans that had been

00:01:42 trained in the Vietnamese stuff. The U.S. Marines contracted with the temple, our temple,

00:01:54 to hire a Buddhist clergy that would be there when those refugees arrived. They went out

00:02:03 and they bought Buddha statues. They had these tents set up. It was there for these people

00:02:09 that the night before had been hanging from the helicopters. They were that organized.

00:02:14 That was actually quite impressive.

00:02:17 What happened was that a whole bunch of us went down the morning after the

thing of the

00:02:27 people on the helicopters. We went down on a bus to Camp Pendleton. We could see people

00:02:34 coming in buses. The people we'd seen on the news the night before hanging from the

00:02:39 helicopters were being bused into this. It was amazing to see the look on their face

00:02:48 when they saw Americans of all races in Vietnamese Buddhist robes and able to chant and do the

00:02:55 liturgy in Vietnamese. There's this expression, to meet the Buddha in hell. For them it's

00:03:07 hell. It's the last thing in the world they would ever expect going to the United States

00:03:11 on a military camp. The first thing they're going to see is native-born Americans that

00:03:17 are capable of working within their tradition as Buddhist chaplains.

00:03:24 The reason I thought about this was there were among those refugees a certain number

00:03:30 of Buddhist monks, as you might imagine. They would want to get out of the country if it

00:03:34 was going to go communist. I noticed that among all the Buddhist monks there, there

00:03:43 was one that was young, but no matter where you would see him, he would always be surrounded

00:03:49 by people. He was like a people magnet. His English was pretty limited, but through a

00:04:00 combination of his limited English and writing in Chinese characters, because I can write

00:04:06 Chinese and the monks in Vietnam learn how to write classical Chinese. Through the limited

00:04:13 English and us writing back and forth with Chinese characters, I was able to talk to

00:04:18 him. His name was Thich Dung Nguyen. I said, it's like, what's the deal? People seem

00:04:30 to relate to you very differently from any of the other Buddhist clergy that's here.

00:04:36 They said, well, my teacher taught me loving-kindness practice from the very get-go. Loving-kindness

00:04:43 is a traditional version of the focus on positive feel. From the time he was just a little kid,

00:04:55 he was trained to radiate this out. You could see the objective impact it had on the people

00:05:01 around him. Anyway, at an advanced level, it's not just going to be in your body. It's

00:05:08 going to go out of the body in all six directions. It would be just like a high-wattage broadcast

00:05:15 of human positivity. Sound like a plan? Yeah.