

attention. The word “renunciation” is charged: it can conjure images of self-deprivation or seem anti-pleasure. But that’s attachment talking. Pleasure is fabulous and healthy, but the Buddha described *grasping* at pleasure as like being in debt. Attachment gives away our power to whatever fleeting experience we are craving in the moment, and is really the exact opposite of enjoyment. Renunciation takes our power back.

Renunciation unbinds the heart from the pain of attachment, but it is also the foundation of real care for others. As we learn to limit our consumption, both material and social, individually and collectively, we challenge our addiction to always getting what we want. In the open space that then appears is a peace that is fundamentally deeper than the satisfaction of getting our way for a few moments. Without this peace, the fire that burns our hearts and communities can never be put out.

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SEAN FEIT OAKES, PhD, teaches Buddhism and yoga at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and East Bay Meditation Center, focusing on the integration of meditation, trauma resolution, and social justice.



## Darkness Is Asking To Be Loved

by ZENJU EARTHLYN MANUEL

**B**y now we have lost the tiny sense of peace we created for ourselves. Our composure is an idea long gone, reflected in the grinding of our teeth and locked jaws.

If you are still holding up trying to meditate, I invite you to fall down. Fall down on the earth. Come down here and smell the sweat of terror on your skin, overpowering the scent of agarwood. Come down on all fours and greet the darkness that reeks of death, reaches out its desperate hand, and asks to be loved as much as we love the light it gives.

Come down here on this earth and breathe for those gasping for air. Hear each scream as a bell that never stops ringing. Bury your face in the mud of this intimate place, in this shared disease and tragedy.

If you have nothing to say, now is the time for the deeper silence that does not apologize or seek something kind to say. And yet the deeper silence is not quiet. It whispers in the dark and wakes you from the nightmare.

Come down here and be still on the earth. Let loose shame, rage, guilt, grief, pain, and make a river of it.

Come down here. Catch the love poems hidden in the shouting, watch the unfolding of the seasons from the ground, look up at the sky. And when it hurts from being down here so long, roll over and see what you couldn't see from the other side.

Breathe out loud. No particular posture needed.

Fall down onto the earth. Fall off your soft cushions. Come down here. Come down here, where the only lullaby tonight will be the sound of your heart drumming the songs you were born with.

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ZENJU EARTHLYN MANUEL is a dharma heir of the late Zenkei Blanche Hartman and author of *The Way of Tenderness: Awakening Through Race, Sexuality, and Gender* (Wisdom Publications).