

Dear Beloved Community,

We're delighted to share with you the film *A Cloud Never Dies*, along with resources to help you explore and respond to the questions raised by the film.

Background

Narrated by actor Peter Coyote, *A Cloud Never Dies* is the first authorized biographical film made about the life of our teacher, Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Weaving together original video and photographic archive, this film depicts the rise of a young humble Vietnamese monk who became one of the world's most influential and beloved spiritual leaders, inspiring millions to practice mindfulness to find peace in themselves and in the world.

This film was commissioned by the Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism and created by Thich Nhat Hanh's monastic historians and community members, together with Max Pugh and Marc J. Francis, who produced the feature documentary, *Walk With Me*.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, who passed away in January 2022, was a global spiritual leader, poet, and peace activist, revered throughout the world for his powerful teachings and bestselling writings on mindfulness and peace. His key teaching is that, through mindfulness, we can learn to live happily in the present moment—the only way to truly develop peace, both in oneself and in the world. Called 'Thay', by his students, meaning 'teacher', he was a gentle, humble monk – the man Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr called “an Apostle of peace and nonviolence.”

Vietnam War

The Vietnam War (1954–75) was a protracted conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States. Called the “American War” in Vietnam (or, in full, the “War Against the Americans to Save the Nation”), the war was also part of a larger regional conflict (see Indochina wars) and a manifestation of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. (Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*)

Nonviolence

Nonviolent civil disobedience is both a practice and strategy. It rejects the use of physical violence. Nonviolent practices have proven to be powerful tools in numerous movements for independence, government reform, and human rights. It includes the active withdrawal of people's consent and cooperation with repressive systems and unjust laws. Examples of successful nonviolent campaigns include the struggle against British rule in India led by Mahatma Gandhi; the struggle for labor rights in Poland led by Lech Walesa and Solidarity; and the civil rights campaign in the U.S. led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Visit <https://plumvillage.org/> to learn more about Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh and to find a Sangha (community of practice) near you.

Preparing to View the Video

In preparation for viewing the film, dim the lights and consider lighting a candle or offering incense in an area away from the viewing screen.

If viewing as a group, ask everyone in the room to turn off their electronic devices.

Invite the audience to come to stillness and enjoy some quiet breathing, letting go of their busy thoughts.

Technical Recommendations

Please use the biggest screen and best sound system available. When screening from YouTube you will have multiple options for non-English language subtitles.

The YouTube URL is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRObW9noiVk>

Sample | Opening statement for groups meeting as members of a Sangha

Note: Consider whether you wish to have a brief silent sitting meditation before or after the film. Keep in mind, as always, the comfort of the Sangha.

(Invite the bell three times.)

Welcome to this special Sangha screening of *A Cloud Never Dies*, the story of our beloved Thay's life and teachings. This is a beautiful moment because we are together as a family, as Thay's continuation. We are here for each other.

As you watch the video, notice words or phrases that stand out for you. What messages resonate with you? What facts surprise you?

The film is about a half-hour long. After the screening and a brief break, we will reconvene to (enjoy some tea, and) have dharma sharing about our experience of the film.

Sample | Opening statement for groups less familiar with the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh.

Welcome to this special screening of *A Cloud Never Dies*, the story of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh's life and teachings.

Our teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, whom we also call 'Thay', taught us how to enjoy the sound of the bell as a reminder to come back to the present moment. We use the bell to help us relax our body and become aware of our breathing. In our practice, we stop whatever we are doing when we hear the bell and breathe consciously three times, to release the tensions in our body and mind and return to a cool and clear state of being. Let us sit in a comfortable position and enjoy three sounds of the bell now before we start the film.

(Invite the bell three times.)

Whether you are already very familiar with Thich Nhat Hanh, or just learning about him for the first time, the video may bring up some emotions and thoughts for you. Note these feelings, as they arise, for possible sharing later. Note also any words or phrases, spoken by Thich Nhat Hanh or the narrator (the actor Peter Coyote) that strike a chord or stand out for you.

The film is about a half-hour long. We invite you to remain, after the screening, to (enjoy some tea, and) engage in group sharing about the film and your own experience with the teachings of Buddhism and our beloved teacher.

After Viewing the Video

(Invite the bell)

Sit quietly for a minute or two, if possible.

For public groups, invite everyone to stretch their legs. Turn the lights back on.

For Sanghas, proceed as you would normally to facilitate dharma sharing.

Questions for Personal and Group Reflection

For Sanghas:

What do the words ‘Thay’s continuation’ mean to our Sangha? To each of us personally?

For All:

What feelings came up for you as you were viewing the film?

Possible replies | Questions about my own life; sadness that Thay has passed; inspiration to become more engaged or deepen my practice; peacefulness.

Why do you think the film is titled ‘A Cloud Never Dies’?

Ideas | Discuss Thay’s teaching of ‘no birth/no death’; a cloud transforms into rain, a river, a cup of tea. How is Thay like a cloud?

What did you find interesting about the film? Why?

Possible replies | The archival photos; Thay as a young monk; Thay’s education and role as a leader; the narration, music; hearing Thay’s younger voice.

What words, phrases or images stand out in your mind after viewing the film?

Answers will vary.

What would Thay’s Engaged Buddhism look like if he was a young monk today?

Ideas | Protecting Mother Earth, mindfulness in schools, peacebuilding, community-building

How do you think Thay’s legacy will continue? Did you see or hear anything in the film that inspired you to learn more about mindfulness and interbeing?

(Note: Public audiences may also have questions for the facilitator, which can be answered to the best of the facilitator’s ability. It is always OK to say, ‘I don’t know’)

Engaged Buddhism

The film isn’t only intended to inform viewers; it’s hoped it will also inspire people to take action, in keeping with Thay’s teachings on engaged Buddhism. After watching *A Cloud Never Dies*, viewers may ask: what can I do to be Thay’s continuation and to be an instrument of peace? Following are several suggestions, compiled with help from our lay dharma teachers, for you to consider:

- **Book Discussion:** Using one of the books listed below under Selected Resources, form an online or in-person book discussion group to explore more deeply the Fourteenth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing and Thay’s non-violent activities during the Vietnam War.

- **Walk for Peace:** Schedule an outside, silent walking meditation for peace in your community. Before your walk, invite the bell and consider reading one of Thay's poems (such as *Call Me by My True Names*) or a passage from one of Thay's books. Afterward, consider forming a circle, dedicating the merit of the walk to all the victims of war and violence (including the perpetrators), and invite participants to share from their hearts anything that may have noticed along the walk, inside themselves or around them.
- **Write Love Letters:** Thay and Sister Chan Khong often wrote "love letters" to political leaders, addressing them as brothers and sisters, and asking them to choose the path of peace when considering legislation and leading their country or state. If you are part of a Sangha, consider coming together to write letters to your political leaders, always keeping in mind that loving kindness opens more hearts (and doors) than anger and criticism.
- **Commit to Right Action:** The Plum Village Community offers the 5 and 14 Mindfulness Trainings to support ethical and peaceful living. Regularly reciting these precepts, alone or as part of a Sangha, can provide nourishment and support as you determine how best to speak and live in a world struggling with violence and despair.
- **Join Hands with Additional Good Friends:** Thay's students have much to offer the peace, environmental, and racial justice communities. In return, we have much to learn from other groups working on these subjects. Look for opportunities to work together in mindfulness as friends on the path!

We are practitioners in Thay's Mahayana tradition. We have chosen the bodhisattva path, dedicating ourselves to relieving suffering and increasing understanding and wellbeing. Right now, there is a perfect storm of intersecting social crises brewing: war, assaults on democracy, a continuing pandemic, a vastly unfair global economy, deeply damaging systemic racism, the erosion of trust in governments, the persistence of life-stunting unhealed worldwide trauma, and the ecological devastation that threatens so much of life as we know it.

In Thich Nhat Hanh's recent book, *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet*, he writes: "I propose that we need another dimension, the action dimension ... the realm of the bodhisattvas, the kind of energy that helps us bring the ultimate dimension into the historical dimension so we can live our life of action in a relaxing and joyful way, free from fear, free from stress, free from despair."

So one could take the view that meeting this compound challenge is what we bodhisattvas have been training for. Our practice has so much to offer a suffering world. Many Plum Village practitioners are already doing wonderful things in the arena of socially engaged practice; many more want to. One question, then, is how might we organize ourselves to do a better job of intentionally offering our practice to a suffering world? What might we do or create or publish or offer more systematically? What are each of us called to do?

There are several engaged practice initiatives that have emerged in the Plum Village community to support us along our path:

- [ARISE](#)—Awakening through Race, Intersectionality, and Social Equity.
- [Earth Holder Community and its Beloved Community Circles](#)—mindful action for racial and climate justice
- The E.M.B.R.A.C.E. Initiative—looking at trauma-informed mindfulness practice and resiliency
- [Wake-Up](#)—the home base for younger practitioners, 18-35 years old
- [Chrysanthamum Sangha](#)—a gathering place for LGBTQIA+ practitioners
- [Wake Up Schools](#)—a training program to apply mindfulness in school settings

Links to Learn More

[Plum Village Website](http://plumvillage.org) | plumvillage.org

Plum Village, near Bordeaux in southwest France, is the largest international mindfulness practice center in the Plum Village tradition, and the first monastic community founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in the West. Plum Village is where Thay has realized his dream of building a “beloved community,” creating a healthy, nourishing environment where people can learn the art of living in harmony with one another and with the Earth.

[Plum Village Online - YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/plumvillageonline/about) | www.youtube.com/user/plumvillageonline/about

On this YouTube channel can be found Dharma talks, guided meditations, songs and chants from Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village monastics recorded in mindfulness practice centers such as Plum Village Practice Center (France), Deer Park Monastery (CA) and Blue Cliff Monastery (NY).

[International Sangha Directory](https://plumvillage.org/about/international-sangha-directory) | plumvillage.org/about/international-sangha-directory

A Sangha is a local community of mindfulness practitioners who gather to meditate, to share their joys and difficulties, and to encourage each other on the path of practice. Meeting regularly with others to sit and share together is a precious way to cultivate our understanding and compassion and to re-establish our deep connection with others. We encourage everyone to join a Sangha near you, or participate in activities with a community of mindfulness practice so you can profit from the collective energy of mindfulness, peace and joy.

[Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation](https://tnhf.org) | tnhf.org

The Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation is a U.S. nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization founded by Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. Donations to the Foundation spread the mindful teachings and practice of Thich Nhat Hanh and supports our mindfulness practice centers and initiatives around the world in fostering peace and transformation for people, animals, plants and our planet.

[Parallax Press](https://parallax.org) | parallax.org

Parallax Press is a nonprofit publisher founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh that published books and media on the art of mindful living and Engaged Buddhism. Parallax Press is committed to offering teachings that help transform suffering and injustice.

[Books by Thich Nhat Hanh](https://www.parallax.org/brand/thich-nhat-hanh) | www.parallax.org/brand/thich-nhat-hanh

Thay is the author of more than one hundred books, and is one of the best known Buddhist teachers in the world today. Previous best-selling books include *Being Peace*, *Peace is Every Step* and *The Miracle of Mindfulness*.

[The Mindfulness Bell](https://mindfulnessbell.org) | mindfulnessbell.org

A journal of the art of mindful living. *The Mindfulness Bell* is an inspiration and teaching resource for those practicing mindfulness in daily life. Each issue features a recent teaching by our teacher, Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

[The Plum Village App](https://plumvillage.app/) | <https://plumvillage.app/>

Offering guided meditations, deep relaxations, teachings, and other resources for your mindfulness practice from Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and his monastic community.

[The Way Out Is In Podcast](https://plumvillage.org/podcasts/the-way-out-is-in/) | <https://plumvillage.org/podcasts/the-way-out-is-in/>

Co-produced by the Plum Village App and Global Optimism, with support from the Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation, the series offers rich conversations about Thich Nhat Hanh, the Plum Village tradition, meditation, and meeting life's challenges from a foundation of mindfulness practices. The podcast is co-hosted by Brother Phap Huu, Thich Nhat Hanh's personal attendant for 17 years and the abbot of Plum Village's Upper Hamlet, and Jo Confino, who works at the intersection of personal transformation and systems change.

Resources about Thich Nhat Hanh's Life and Monastic Community

[The Life Story of Thich Nhat Hanh \(Plum Village Website\)](#)

[Fragrant Palm Leaves: Journals 1962-1966](#)

[At Home in the World: Stories and Essential Teachings from a Monk's Life](#)

[Learning True Love: How I Learned and Practiced Social Change in Vietnam](#)

[My Master's Robe: Memories of a Novice Monk](#)

Film | [Walk With Me Online](#) | [Vimeo On Demand](#)

An intimate visit deep inside Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village monastery. Filmed over three years, this visceral film is a meditation on a community determined to develop a deep sense of presence, not just for themselves but for all those they love.

Mindfulness Practice Centers

The 11 practice centers and monasteries listed below were founded by Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and all practice in the Plum Village tradition under his guidance. Our centers are open throughout the year, for short or long stays, to learn the art of mindful living.

United States

[Blue Cliff Monastery](#), New York | [bluecliffmonastery.org](#)

[Deer Park Monastery](#), California | [deerparkmonastery.org](#)

[Magnolia Grove Monastery](#), Mississippi | [magnoliagrovemonastery.org](#)

Europe

[Plum Village Monastery](#), France | [plumvillage.org](#)

[Maison de l'Inspir](#), France | [maisondelinspir.org](#)

[Healing Spring Monastery](#), France | [healingspringmonastery.org](#)

[European Institute of Applied Buddhism](#), Germany | [eiab.eu](#)

Asia/Australia

[Asian Institute of Applied Buddhism](#), Hong Kong | [pvfhk.org](#)

[Thai Plum Village International Practice Center](#), Thailand | [thaiplumvillage.org](#)

[Nhap Luu Stream Entering Monastery](#), Australia | [nhaplouu.org](#)

[Mountain Spring Monastery](#), Australia | [www.mountainspringmonastery.org](#)

Note to Facilitators:

Page 1 of this document can be used as a handout.

Participants can use the reverse side to make notes.

2 April 2022