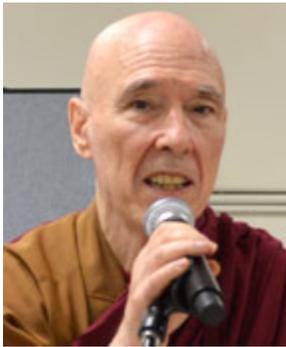




Conscientious Compassion



By Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi - The inspiration and ideal behind BGR is a quality I call conscientious compassion. Conscientious compassion differs from the type of compassion that remains content to passively bear witness to the suffering of others and send benevolent wishes for their good. It merges altruistic intentions with a deliberate and durable commitment *to action*—action guided by moral vision and the ideal of a more just, harmonious, and peaceful world.

Conscientious compassion springs from the recognition that in an interdependent world, the fate of each of us is tied to the fate of all. Through compassion one feels the suffering of others as one's own. Through conscience one is willing to take personal responsibility for the well-being of others and do something to transform the conditions of their lives. Conscientious compassion looks to the least and lowest: to the poor, the violated, and the most vulnerable, who are also usually the most powerless. It moves one to rescue them in the face of war, violence, poverty, and oppression. Even more, it moves one *to tackle the causes* responsible for these adversities, and to affirm the rights of all people to a life of material security, peace, and freedom.

I see conscientious compassion as arising from the confluence—the flowing together—of two subsidiary values that complement and reinforce each other. One is a commitment *to justice*, the other is *love*, a heartfelt concern for the good of others. The sense of justice is grounded on the premise that every human being possesses intrinsic worth, an inviolable dignity that must be respected by everyone else and by the institutions that express our collective will. It follows from this premise that all people equally possess certain inalienable rights, rights that belong to them simply by virtue of their humanity. Whether white or black or brown, whether male or female, whether in America, Europe, Asia, Africa, or anywhere else—each person is endowed with an inherent value that cannot be diminished, compromised, or denied.

To accept justice as a guiding ideal means that one is ready *to stand up against injustice*, to oppose policies, programs, and social forces that threaten to deprive people of the rights and security they should enjoy by reason of their humanity. The commitment to justice inspires a willingness *to resist* the perpetrators of injustice, however powerful, wealthy, and influential they may be. One resists, recognizing that in the long run and in the deepest sense the triumph of justice is beneficial to all.

But the commitment to justice also calls for constructive action, for positive deeds, however small, that contribute to creating a better world. To realize justice in this sense, two things are required. The first is to ensure that people can access the material requisites of a fulfilling life, above all nutritious food, clean

water, a safe home, sanitation, and a healthy environment. It also entails establishing the conditions for economic security and protecting the vulnerable against violence and social oppression.

The most fundamental requisite, however, is to see that people are fed. Thus many of the projects that BGR sponsors provide food aid to victims of chronic hunger and malnutrition. We do so by sponsoring programs that offer food directly to the hungry, that provide the poor with ladders up from poverty, and that help small-scale farmers obtain the resources they need to grow their crops more successfully, in harmony with the natural environment.

While the first imperative of justice is to enable people to survive healthy and secure, the second imperative is to enable them *to flourish*, that is, to live abundantly. For people to flourish they must be free to pursue their aspirations, realize their potentials, and actualize their unique talents and skills. Providing food and other means to physical security is a first step in this process. When one has to struggle every day against poverty and hunger, one's development will be stunted and one's potential will be left untapped.

But providing the means to physical well-being is not sufficient to enable people to flourish. The key to helping people realize their potentials, at the most basic level, is *education*. Education draws out the potentials buried deep in the mind that would otherwise remain untapped. It sheds light into dark corners, nurturing seeds that have not yet sprouted. It opens the doors to a fulfilling life, a life of richer meaning and purpose, and equips one to benefit one's community, country, and the world.

It is for this reason that BGR sponsors programs that provide education to poor children, especially girls. In many countries today, education is still not treated as a universal right but as a privilege, and as a privilege given to boys over girls. Yet it is our conviction that girls have as much potential for a life of meaning as boys, that they can make just as valuable a contribution to their societies and thus merit the opportunity to receive as full an education as boys.

One example of how we promote education for girls is the GATE program in Cambodia. GATE stands for Girls Access To Education. The program provides rice support to the families of poor girls on condition that they permit their daughters to remain in school. Almost all the girls who start in the GATE program in high school complete their secondary education, and of those who do so, at this point about a hundred have continued on to college. These are girls from the poorest stratum of Cambodia, an extremely poor country that had been ravaged by decades of civil war. Without the sponsorship that GATE provides, these girls would have been forced to drop out of school and go to work to support their families. A high percentage might even have wound up in brothels, bound to a life of shame. But now, with the sponsorship we provide through our partner, Lotus Outreach, these girls are enrolled in college, studying to become teachers, doctors, nurses, accountants, engineers, and policy-makers. Hopefully, they will become leaders and agents of change in their communities.

The second factor integral to conscientious compassion is love. Love softens the harsh tones of the call for justice, and draws forth the urge to act straight from the heart. The word "love" has many shades of meaning, ranging from the shallow to the profound, but what I mean by love here is a deep, heartfelt concern for the well-being of others, an abiding wish that they dwell secure and happy. This type of love ideally extends toward all human beings, even those unknown to us, based on a recognition of our common humanity. It springs from the understanding that every person is a center of subjective experience, a distinct pole star of an entire world, one particular turning point of the universe. To protect each person is therefore to protect a world.

The salient characteristic of love might be summed up in the word “solidarity,” the feeling of unity with others. The sense of solidarity is rooted in the realization that every human being shares with us the same essential nature: that every person wishes to live and not to die, to be happy and free from suffering, to pursue their ideals and achieve their aspirations. When one develops love based on the sense of solidarity, one endeavors to extend to everyone the same concern that one would extend to one’s own mother, father, son, or daughter: to protect them from harm, to redeem them from suffering, to establish the conditions for them to live happily and at peace.

When the commitment to justice comes together and coalesces with the spirit of love, what results is conscientious compassion—compassion stemming from an assent to the hard demands of justice and from an ardent wish for others to flourish and realize their fullest potential. This has been the inspirational ideal of Buddhist Global Relief since our beginning. And we intend to keep it in the forefront for many years to come.

This is a written version of the extemporaneous talk Ven. Bodhi gave at the gathering after the New York Walk to Feed the Hungry. The video of his talk can be found [here](#).

Bolstering a Food Budget for Hungry Kids in Haiti



By BGR Staff - The This past May BGR approved a six-month renewable grant to the [Art Creation Foundation for Children](#) in Haiti, to bolster its food program, which a budget shortfall had forced to be cut in half. The Art Creation Foundation is an arts-based non-profit organization created for the personal growth, empowerment, and education of children in need in Jacmel, Haiti. The Foundation provides art instruction, tutoring, medical care, daily food and water, and educational expenses for students in the program. Its mission is "to build a passionate community of future leaders, visionaries, and dynamic thinkers who are empowered to better their lives and their world through the arts and education."

For over six months the Foundation had been operating with a 50% reduction in their food budget, which forced them to cut their food program services in half and stretch out what was left. Where they previously

were able to provide the children two meals daily—their only meals of the day—they now could provide only one meal, and that meal was of lower nutritional value.

In May BGR approved a six-month renewable grant to enable the Art Creation Foundation to return the feeding program as close as possible to its full level. The grant enabled the Arts Foundation to keep the feeding program going over the last six months, providing the kids with consistent and healthy meals so they would work harder in school and play harder in life. With the revival of the full feeding program, the children began quickly showing greater concentration during after-school study and homework sessions. Their mood also improved.

But the feeding program provides far more than just food. Without the feeding program many of the children would not show up at the Arts Foundation, and as a consequence they would no longer be attending school. Not attending school only further feeds the cycle of poverty and limits their ability to grow into independent adults.

The feeding program also helps to keep families together. Owing to poverty, families in Haiti have been known either to give a child over to an orphanage, or, still worse, to give up a child as a [restavek](#)—a form of modern-day slavery in Haiti by which children are given to relatives or strangers to serve as domestic slaves, performing menial tasks for no pay. This fate affects one in every 15 children in the country.



Here are testimonies from a few of the kids:

Jovin is 10 years old and in the third grade. Prior to joining the program he would sometimes get a meal a day, and often go without eating for days. He ate when food was available and he didn't know when that would be. He says that since he began eating at ACFFC he doesn't worry daily about when or where he

will eat again and he says he now eats foods that are good for him. He says that eating every day, and knowing that he will eat everyday, means he can do better in school and he can pay attention. He doesn't have to think all the time about being hungry.

Kenderson is 9 years old and also in the third grade. He says that before joining the program he never knew when he would eat and sometimes would go for days without a meal. Since joining the Foundation he knows that he will have "good and healthy" food every day and need not worry. He says that he will "forever be grateful" that we got help to feed all the kids again and he thanks you for helping us.

Yelva is 8 years old and in the second grade. She said that before coming to the Foundation, the only way she would eat was by begging her neighbors to let her have some food. Sometimes people would give her something, sometimes they did not have enough to give. Often she would go for days eating nothing. Some days she would go work for the food vendors and in return they would give her "the gratin" or leftover scraps. Now, she says, she can eat at ACFFC every day. She does not have to beg anymore and she isn't disrespected by people.



Walks to Feed the Hungry 2015



Walkers in San Francisco

By BGR Staff - On Thanksgiving Day the BGR Walk Season for 2015 came to a close with a small walk in Los Angeles organized by board member Tom Moritz. This year walks took place in ten locations in the US. The first was held in Kensington Park in Michigan. This was followed by walks in Houston, St. Louis, San Jose, Seattle, San Francisco, New York City, Willington, Connecticut, and Philadelphia, and concluded with the walk in Los Angeles.

Each walk is the result of months of careful planning and preparation. The process kicks off in early August with the initial team discussions, and involves the combined labor of walk coordinators, liaison people, cooks, monitors, photographers, a treasurer, and many others who fulfill still other tasks. Behind the scenes are the executive director Kim Behan and assistant director Carla Prater, advising the walk coordinators to ensure the walks go off without a hitch. All the work is done on a voluntary basis.

This year, BGR's founder and chairperson, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi, joined five of the walks. In late September he flew out to Michigan to lead the [walk in Kensington Park](#) on September 28th; he also gave three Dhamma talks in Ann Arbor and Lansing. In mid-October he traveled to Seattle, where he gave a talk at the Seattle Insight Meditation Center and led the walk on October 17th. The next weekend he joined the [San Francisco walk](#) on October 24th, and after several talks in the Bay Area, he flew back to New York in time for the [Riverside Park walk](#) on October 31st. He then joined the [Connecticut walk](#) the following Sunday, held at the Lao Buddhist Temple.

Outside the US, a walk in England, organized by the New Buddha Way, took place earlier in the year. In [Entebbe, Uganda](#), a solidarity walk in support of Buddhist Global Relief was organized by the Uganda Buddhist Centre, under its founder, the Ugandan bhikkhu, Ven. Buddharakkhita.

We deeply thank everyone who contributed in any way to the walks, whether by joining the walk team, participating in the walk, or simply by making a donation.



Walkers in Uganda

BGR Wins Grants from Foundation Beyond Belief

By Carla Prater - The Foundation Beyond Belief is an organization whose mission is “to demonstrate humanism at its best by supporting efforts to improve this world and this life, and to challenge humanists to embody the highest principles of humanism, including mutual care and responsibility.” Although the organization is non-religious, they “seek the best expressions of non-secular worldviews and have funded effective, non-proselytizing charities based in all five major world religions.”

BGR was a beneficiary of grants from the Foundation in 2011 and 2013. In an email to BGR’s Executive Director Kim Behan, FBB’s Humanist Giving Program Coordinator, A.J. Chalom, announced that BGR has been chosen to receive beneficiary status from the Foundation for the first quarters of 2016 and 2017. These grants are given in appreciation of our “hard work in feeding the hungry and developing strong access to food.” This status will include grants in the range of \$9,000–\$10,000 for BGR to use in support of its projects. The grants are to be given in the middle of April 2016 and 2017. For a third time we thank the Foundation Beyond Belief for their generosity, broad-minded ideals, and recognition of our work.

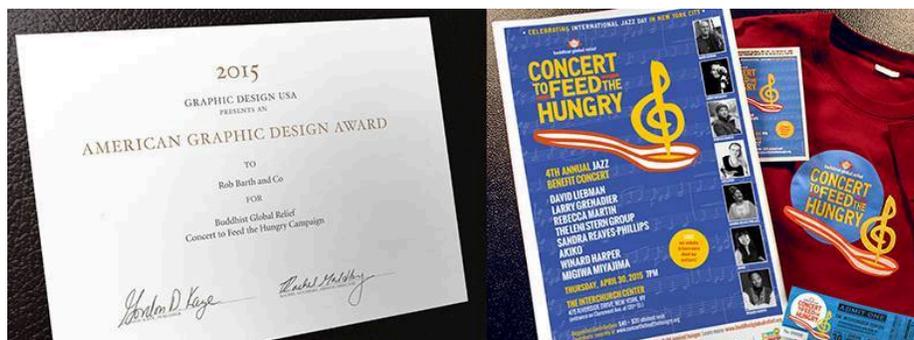
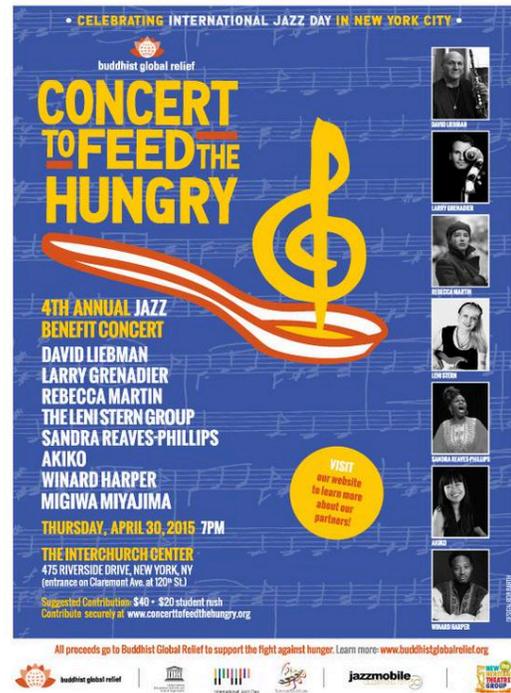
“Concert to Feed the Hungry” Graphics Win Award

By BGR Staff - The promotional campaign for Buddhist Global Relief’s “Concert to Feed the Hungry” was recently recognized with a 2015 American Design Award. Designer Rob Barth of [Barth and Company](#) received a Certificate of Excellence from competition sponsor Graphic Design USA. According to the sponsor, the annual event attracted “more than 10,000 entries from around the country, with a highly selective 15% recognized for excellence.”

In response to the award, Rob said: “For me, better than the award is the fact that the campaign successfully promoted the concert and helped raise awareness of world hunger and fund BGR’s efforts to feed hungry people around the world.” It was Rob Barth who also designed BGR’s award-winning logo, which over the years has been applied masterfully to our promotional materials by our team of talented professional communications designers.

Graphic designers play a major role in shaping cultural attitudes, political advocacy, and consumer spending, and in these capacities their work can be used for both harm and for good. Ethicists in the graphic arts community, well aware that design is a double-edged sword, have been urging graphic artists to use their gifts responsibly. An article titled “[Ethics and Social Responsibility](#)” on the website of the Professional Association for Design reminds designers that they work within “a much broader system of moral values and obligations—not just how we do our work, but what it is that we are doing in the first place and the impact it will have on the world.” The article urges graphic designers “to contribute to the betterment of all and to ensure abundance, diversity and health to future generations.”

Through his work for Buddhist Global Relief, Rob Barth has certainly been living up to this commitment. We all congratulate Rob and thank him for his valued contribution.



BGR at the Combined Federal Campaign



By Sylvie Sun - Since early October, BGR volunteers have attended the Combined Federal Campaign's (CFC) annual charity fairs in the New York City area. The mission of the CFC is to promote and support philanthropy through a program that is employee focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all. CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, with almost 200 CFC campaigns throughout the US and overseas raising millions of dollars each year. Pledges

made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season support eligible non-profit organizations that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world.

The CFC campaign season this year was from September 15th to December 31st. CFC's target goal is to raise \$1.9 million from federal employees in New York City to support philanthropy. BGR was invited to present its mission and activities at various federal workplaces, including the Postal Service, the Treasury Department, the Department of Homeland Security & Uniformed Services, and the Department of Agriculture. Each event was well organized by CFC staff and volunteers from different workplaces. Some of these charity fairs were joined with health fairs, others were highlighted by a bake sale or raffle tickets in order to raise more funds to donate to participating organizations. This was the second year for BGR to participate in the CFC in the New York area, and we received a very warm welcome and response from the campaign organizers.



How You Can Help

Interested in volunteering for BGR? By joining our team you will meet others who share your values and are working to put compassion into action and help create a better world. Some volunteers need to be located in a particular place, but most can work from home, wherever that may be. Please check the list of Volunteer Opportunities on our website and contact our volunteer coordinator at miroehm@buddhistglobalrelief.org for further information.

As always, donations to BGR are welcome. You can donate by PayPal or credit card on the [BGR website](#), on [FirstGiving](#), [Hopsie](#), or by check mailed to:

Buddhist Global Relief
2020 Route 301
Carmel NY 10512, USA

Thank you for your help!