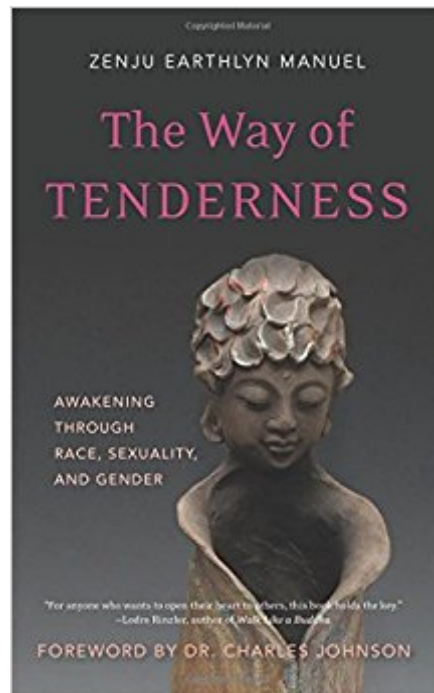


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# The Way Of Tenderness: Awakening Through Race, Sexuality, And Gender



## Synopsis

“What does liberation mean when I have incarnated in a particular body, with a particular shape, color, and sex?” In *The Way of Tenderness*, Zen priest Zenju Earthlyn Manuel brings Buddhist philosophies of emptiness and appearance to bear on race, sexuality, and gender, using wisdom forged through personal experience and practice to rethink problems of identity and privilege. Manuel brings her own experiences as a lesbian black woman into conversation with Buddhism to square our ultimately empty nature with superficial perspectives of everyday life. Her hard-won insights reveal that dry wisdom alone is not sufficient to heal the wounds of the marginalized; an effective practice must embrace the tenderness found where conventional reality and emptiness intersect. Only warmth and compassion can cure hatred and heal the damage it wreaks within us. This is a book that will teach us all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Zenju Earthlyn's book will spark the conversations on race, gender, and sexuality that will move Buddhism in the West to a place of accessibility and inclusivity. For anyone who wants to open their heart to others, this book holds the key." (Lodro Rinzler, author of *Walk Like a Buddha*) "Zenju Earthlyn Manuel knows both the tyranny of conventional appearances and their ultimate nature. She knows that in order to tread the path to ultimate insight we must use the whole of our ordinary, conventional selves. In this way, our race, gender, and sexuality become sites for our awakening rather than illusions to be transcended. Read her lucid and honest words with attention and with

tenderness." (Jan Willis, author of *Dreaming Me; Black, Baptist and Buddhist*) "Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, one of only a small number of African American Buddhist priests, has written a transformative invitation, a breathtakingly courageous and heartfelt call to bring our full humanity to our bodies, our pain, our wounds, our differences to the path. Her "way of tenderness" is a way of acknowledging and healing the hatreds in our own hearts and in the world. I am filled with gratitude for Zenju's embodied and compassionate revisioning of Buddhist teachings. This is a groundbreaking book, the beginning of a whole new conversation in the dharma." (Florence Caplow, coeditor of *The Hidden Lamp*) "This is such an unusual book! Yes, it's a Buddhist book, and yes, it's about race, sexuality and gender as crucial entry-points into the teaching (rather than false identities to be sloughed off). But it's not what you think. Zenju Earthlyn Manuel writes with such gentle poetic intelligence that the reader's experience of the truth she tells feels more like a caress than a jab. Of her own difficult experiences, Earthlyn has forged a wise and profound equanimity to the Way of Tenderness." (Norman Fischer, author of *Training in Compassion*) "Reverend Zenju illuminates many aspects of the First Noble Truth which are invisible to and occluded by the dominant culture of Western Dharma. She does so with force of Truthfulness and the tenderness of Grace. In this way, the offering of her teachings are both the Path and the Fruit." (Larry Yang, core teacher at the East Bay Meditation Center)

Rev. Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, PhD, author, visual artist, drummer, and Zen Buddhist priest, is the guiding teacher of Still Breathing Zen Community in East Oakland, CA. She was raised with two sisters in Los Angeles after her parents migrated there from Creole Louisiana. She is the author of *Tell Me Something About Buddhism* and contributing author to many books, including *Dharma, Color and Culture: Voices From Western Buddhist Teachers of Color* and *The Hidden Lamp: Stories from Twenty-Five Centuries of Awakened Women*. She lives in Oakland, CA.

I had the reaction that this was the first 21st Century expression of the Buddha Dharma I have encountered. A torrent of truth, but utterly fresh. Recommended at the very least for everyone who practices Buddhism in a community.

Zenju Earthlyn Manuel tackles the most important issues for any religion or spiritual practice of our time. She helps us to see why Buddhist and others shouldn't keep walking over the bodies to get inside the temples to meditate or pray. We fail to be one until the pain and suffering of others often

caused by spiritual policies is understood and acted upon. I am happy she had the courage to do this.

Beautiful, courageous, insightful. Buy this book and read it!!!

Thank you, Zenju for your personal testimony on Zen Buddhism.

Excellent

This beautifully written book takes on the subject of the intersectionality of race, religion, sexuality, and gender with honesty and with a relatable voice that is easy to invest in. Beautiful binding, too. I love the texture of the cover.

This is one of the most powerful books I have ever read!

Zenju raises an essential point - Buddhists correctly identify our incarnation into bodies as a temporary affair, and tend to de-emphasize the temporary aspects of the body in favor of focusing on eternal truths. We do not have a permanent identity, identity is fluid, not just from incarnation to incarnation (if you believe in that sort of thing), but even within a lifetime, as your body ages and changes, and your experiences shape your "identity" (as much as any such thing truly exists). So, the danger is in ignoring issues relating to the body or identity as unimportant, even engaging in willful blindness about issues of race, gender, and sexuality as uncomfortable, and therefore safely shoved to one side as irrelevant. But Zenju - a bisexual woman of color - points out that we engage with the truth while incarnated in bodies, and our bodies and the things we do with our bodies shape our incarnate experiences. "Race" does not exist scientifically speaking, and is an illusory, fleeting thing according to Buddhist thought, so can't we just ignore "race"? That is a trap, because to do so is to be unjust, and to ignore that the experience of race (as a social construct, if nothing else) has as much reality as any experience in the body. Our experiences of "race" affect us, cause us to act certain ways, be treated certain ways, which is pretty powerful for something that isn't truly real (which, I suppose, could be taken as exemplary of a certain line of Buddhist thought on ALL experiences in the body) . . . Quite a powerful, and often uncomfortable, book.

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