



Ted: And our guest today, returning, is Adam Eurich. Adam, welcome back, good to talk with you again.

Adam: Thanks, Ted, it's always a pleasure to speak with you as well.

Ted: So, we're catching up on our last conversation in Episode, I think it was 132, where we talk with you about your film project "Seeking Heartwood," and at that time, the crowd-sourcing campaign was released at the same time as the podcast. You have a big story to tell us about where you are today since then -- that was quite some time ago! [chuckles]

Adam: Yeah, yeah! It was, um, just, just over a year ago now, so -- and thanks again for your help in releasing that podcast the same time, that -- it was -- it was great to get, you know, my voice out to your viewers right as the project started -- because a lot of people wanted to find out more than was just in the website and the Kickstarter video, and I think that, that interview, um, really went a long way, so thank you very much for that. It must have done really well 'cause it, it got me to raise thirty thousand dollars on Kickstarter.

Ted: Awesome! Congratulations! That's great!

Adam: Aw, it was wonderful! I mean, wonderful to get the funds; wonderful to kind of grow the community of people who know about the film; and just wonderful to just see the generosity of people and their desire to see content in media that, you know, reflects Buddhist values and ideas and, um, I think we all feel like this stuff can really help make the world a better place in, in various different ways, so it was nice to be a part of that -- it -- it really felt like I was just a part of something bigger and that was really wonderful.

Ted: Great, and now you've done -- at that point, you'd done quite a number of interviews and you still had a lot more going. Tell us about how that, that process continued.

Adam: That [laughs] process continued much more smoothly after having some funds to, to continue for it so, um, I got to visit a lot of places around the country that uh required me to fly to or take longer to get to so, basically right off the bat I went off to the East Coast and spent, uh a couple of months over there interviewing Joseph Goldstein. Since then I've interviewed about another thirty people and -- and I had expected to interview about ten more after that, but every time I met somebody new and I had a great interview something else would come up and I kind of just let the project go with that, um, and let it grow and grow and, and now I have something of, about sixty interviews with Jodo Shinshu priests to neuroscientists to, you know, these great jhana teachers to, um, wonderful small, you know, Zen group teachers that nobody's heard of but are doing wonderful things to chaplains -- I kind of have all of them in front of me just to kind of -- 'cause it's so -- I -- I talk to so many people it's -- it takes me a bit to remember oh yeah, I talked to this person, that person, and take it all in. Stephen Batchelor, Martine, Tara Brach, Lee Brasington tonight I'd already done.

Ted: In fact the last time I saw -- I saw you when we were together for the secular Buddhist colloquium at Berry Center that's when I finally got to do an interview with Lee [laughs] about the jhanas.

Adam: Yeah, but that's great, that's -- I really, I love his approach, and it's very even-handed, it makes you feel anybody can do it, and he really encourages people to try. And to enjoy the joy that comes with that, so, that's always a wonderful message. And so I went all over the East Coast, came back to the West Coast; I took Richard Gombrich's Pali course and got to interview him, and it just kind of grew and grew -- I'm tapering off now because I have too many interviews as it is, even though I'd love to go another month or two on the road and get another couple small interviews, but it's, it's time to stop and put this thing together now.

Ted: So how much content do you have if you measured it in hours or --

Adam: Yeah over five hundred hours and I -- I've been editing it for a couple of months now and it feels like I've barely made a dent! [chuckles] But that's, that's how it goes, especially in the beginning, and especially in a

documentary like this: the creative process is a lot of going through what you have and seeing what's there instead of making it what you want it to be. And transcription takes a very, very long time.

Ted: Tell us more about the, the transcription itself; I know that, that's been an important part of how this works for you but help us understand, those of us who are not filmmakers -- we have this image or at least I do of a filmmaker sitting in their -- they're in the editing room and they're just watching hours and hours and hours of film and you're, you're also looking at transcriptions -- how's that helping -- how does that work?

Adam: Yeah so I'm looking through the interviews, I'm viewing them and I'm transcribing them and I'm cutting them, kind of all at the same time so that everything's really fresh with me as I'm going through it. I'm writing out what people are saying, I'm breaking it up into chunks and sectioning it off so it'll play well off of someone else commenting on the same topic. And then I use, you know that transcription to build basically a screenplay for a documentary, which is, is definitely necessary to submit to film festivals and things like that, so -- there's a lot more writing than I had expected [chuckle] not just the transcribing but you know describing the transitions and the scenes in-between, and just to push my own articulation for, for how I want this to go. 'Cause I -- I don't know if I'll do the narration for the film but there will be some narration. Um, so that's, that's all got to be written and -- give people a context for, you know sixty different viewpoints on the Dhamma.

Ted: So do you have your high-level outline of different sections of interview or are you still in the process of formulating that view?

Adam: Yeah I do have a lot of that, um, a lot -- and a lot of the past three months, as, going through the interviews, transcribing what they're saying and cutting it up into sections, has been developing that outline. 'Cause it's funny -- I -- I had one outline when I started this project which I had to redo about five or six times and then had a solid one going into the editing process and that's had to change a couple times, and that's just how it goes, so it's, it's a nice thing to play with and dance with -- you really feel like you're, you're molding and sculpting something and chipping away at something that's, that's kind of already there, in a way.

Ted: So Adam in this past year with this additional set of roughly thirty interviews you've done since we last spoke with you -- I'd asked this question in our first interview as well -- what were some of the things that stood out for you that were really either surprising or very meaningful to you personally?

Adam: There's one in particular. Sometimes these interviews get really personal. And I'll have a stock set of questions that I'm asking these people, and, and I'm not trying to manufacture this experience where I'm like, okay, so you'll repeat this question back to me so I can edit it; I'm really going for something sincere and authentic, and when I bring that to the table and a teacher that I'm interviewing brings that to the table, it can be really difficult sometimes, it can be really touching, and heart-warming, and sometimes for me it can be really challenging, especially interviewing some Zen teachers. There's one who I interviewed towards the end and, I guess I brought a lot of -- I brought, you know, two and a half years of traveling and film-making and Buddhism into the interview, and it went in such a way that he was able to help me cut through all of that and get to what I really, what was really in my heart at that time. That experience really changed my life -- it means a lot to me -- and I, I owe him a great deal for helping me cut through all that I'd been pulling together and culminating with this film and helping me let it go. That -- that would be the Number One experience. I don't know if that articulates it well enough for your viewers or if that's a little too vague.

Ted: No that articulates it very well because it says that there's been a progress in your own practice, in your own growth in how you engage with what we call Buddhism, and -- one thing I would like you to do is talk a little bit more about that -- for you personally, your own journey in your understanding and your practice engagement.

Adam: Yeah I mean that's...this has changed everything for me, this project: it's changed my relationship with Buddhism, it's changed my relationship with, with my life; it's radically changed the way I feed Buddhism because Buddhism points back at my life and, and my own experiences. It's not a philosophy, it's not a religion, it's not an institution, it's not just a set of practices. You know there's that old cliché or, or Chinese saying that, you know there's -- the finger pointing to the moon: don't concentrate on the finger or you'll, you'll miss all that heavenly glory. I finally get that, that Buddhism is really pointing to, back into your life! And this has been

really interesting to me 'cause I feel like, in the context of, of secular Buddhism, it's -- it's changed my relationship to religion in general; it feels like religion is meant to be transformative; it's meant to turn you back out into the world. And in a sense -- I'm kind of playing with words here -- it's meant to secularize your relationship with religion. Like, that's religion's job, it's meant to, to take you and, and -- especially Buddhism: it really focuses on putting you in touch with a deeper connection with your experience. And -- if that doesn't transcend religion and secularism and Buddhism then, then I don't know what does, and -- it's something I'm still wrestling with to this day, and it's part of the reason I'm taking my time editing this film because I'm still kind of reeling from all the changes this project has put me through and, and figuring out how to voice them through narration, through scenes, through themes, through emotional content of the movie, you know, I did all these interviews and they meant one thing to me at the time and now they mean something entirely different!

Ted: Yeah it can be a process of growing into yourself, and we think of these religious ideologies sometimes as instruments, as things that we drive or join or become.

Adam: Yeah well at the worst [indistinguishable] themselves, you know, and that's the biggest mistake and folly that, that happens to religion, you know, it turns people back into keeping [indistinguishable] going, um, instead of turning people back into their lives and their experiences, which -- which is so rich, man! I was just -- people have really great lives and, and sometimes we, we miss it for a long time we're not really experiencing that.

Ted: Yeah it's bringing us back to what is and the process and that path we take, twisted and turning and moving all around, is often such a long way that we sometimes have to take to get back to our starting point. Which is just this present moment.

Adam: Yeah!! It's...it's interesting that you have to go on a path and you have to start somewhere, and it has to be a place of confusion, and ignorance, and you have to work through that, you have to have a relationship with that for a while, you have to have a relationship with craving when it comes to Buddhism, you know, when it comes to enlightenment or awakening or, or anything like that. And you have to -- it gives you a structure to kind of view the things you're doing already in your life. And then you get to see it in this structure of Buddhism and it gets to wake you up from that, from the chase and the craving and the confusion. And Buddhism and then help you to see that in your daily life and kind of hopefully have a shift of some sort, of realizing that you have a bunch of ideas about things and those ideas are just that, they're just ideas and abstract concepts and labels that have to do with how you thought of things before and there's a direct immediate relationship that is also there. I can't even say something like one is more real than the other 'cause the words just don't really matter -- I mean the present moment includes everything. That, that Zen guy I interviewed in Cleveland, he told me this great thing, he told me that I was trying to separate ignorance and wisdom. And it was -- that really -- and he was right, and that really changed things for me, that I, I really was still was evaluating things, evaluating my experience, you know, in terms of certain criteria, and -- instead of realizing that all of it was accepted. Confusion is accepted. Ignorance is accepted. Craving is accepted.

Ted: Yeah one of my favorite quotes from Edward Albee's play "The Zoo Story" is, "sometimes we have to go a long distance out of our way in order to come back a short distance correctly." This points to the whole, we, we do need to, to nonetheless have that experience of, as Gotama would say, truly no suffering, and going through that journey, and that progress, and that, that growing period, as painful as it sometimes is, to have that versatility of just being present, with whatever it is, and not getting sucked into the discursive thought about it.

Adam: Yeah and that's, that's very difficult, and sometimes you, you really push far into the discursive thought area just to kind of -- 'cause you've got to do it, you've got to feel the pain of that and how much it takes you away from things, and then you, you kind of learn that lesson, you come back and you sway back and forth. And I don't think you ever settle in a place where you, you don't have discursive thought, you just kind of, have a different relationship with things, you know, with -- different relationship with suffering, with craving, with whatever.

Ted: So as you've been working on the film, uh, you've also been doing a number of other projects, and why don't you tell us a little bit about some of the things you've been doing 'cause I've -- I've run into you in a couple of places [chuckles] happily in the past year. Tell us a little bit about some of those.

Adam: Yeah it's been great, I mean I, I love the Buddhist community, I mean what, what better community to, um, want to contribute filmmaking services to than people who are really, you know, exploring the boundaries of adapting a whole new religion, or, you know, this existing religion to a whole new social setting. So the secular Buddhist conference that we both went to, um, they invited me to come out and film all of those presentations which was wonderful 'cause that's, that's my free pass to see thirty amazing, uh, thinkers and speakers and teachers to speak about secular Buddhism so it was, it was a joy of an experience, it was great to film, you know when I go to things like that and I get to film I really feel like I'm getting to contribute, in a way -- because I, I read a lot of books, you know, about these old ancient masters and it would've been so great if someone [indistinguishable] had a camera, to kind of see their personalities and their mannerisms and, and preserve more than just, you know, their words on paper, so -- I feel like I get to do that, and then now that secular Buddhist, uh, conference, I'm going to turn to a short documentary about that topic of secular Buddhism, which, which will be a lot of fun 'cause a lot of those presentations as you know were about what is secular Buddhism and right now there's nothing I love more than questions. Answers that disagree, that's like my favorite thing in the world right now, that's what I got out of my film and I feel like that's a lot of what happened at the secular Buddhist conference. Doesn't mean there's not progress and growth but that really happens through disagreements and, and dialogue and true conversations and....

Ted: You know that was one of the opportunities you and I spoke about that was, I wish we could have done more with, is that, you film presentations, and that's a, a one-sided teacher -- and brilliant teachers and wonderful people and outstanding authors sharing what they know, and, and their views on things, but some of the most interesting and compelling and meaningful and deep interactions occurred in-between. Tells us a little about that and your thoughts on it.

Adam: Mm-hmm yeah that was great I wish I could have filmed a little more of that but oftentimes people aren't used to having a videographer in their midst, uh kind of capturing everything so I think that, the whole event was so new that we decided not to go forward with that. If we do it again in the future I'd love to capture that because the multi-faceted communication, the two-way communication, the back-and-forth that are interesting and alive and a lot more fun to watch than someone at the front of the room speaking to everybody else. But that's, that's where I come in and I, I mix up those presentations and try to give something a little more dynamic to, to watch, but -- yeah I was kind of kicking myself for not being able to film [indistinguishable] those conversations and it would've been great to have another, you know, camera guy there to get, you know, a couple of different angles and a lot of fun stuff, so it's, it's nice, I want to, I do want to continue to film in Buddhist communities and I want to start pushing limits of what we're allowed to film and seeing how far we can take it and bring it to life. You know I got to go around the country and film certain things, and there was a lot of interviews but there was a lot that I didn't get to do 'cause I didn't have a crew of people, or, you know, people didn't know who I was and I feel like after people see this film they'll have a lot more confidence in, in my ability to really represent the dynamic interactions that go along in these communities and hopefully allow me more freedom to push further -- and further.

Ted: I also ran into you at another event that we tend to attend every year and that's the Buddhist Geeks conference. Tell us a little bit about that and how that went for you.

Adam: That is always just a great experience because I -- you know I have to admit I see a lot of older communities in, in Buddhism and that's one I get to go to every year where I know I'm going to get to see a bunch of green kids, you know who really love this stuff and are enthusiastic about it and want to explore. And speaking to them, to their interest in technology, their interest in how they relate to data and information, how technology can push the limits of understanding what happens in the processes of the brain during meditation, um, and I got to film a lot there, and I got to be the official photographer, which was great. So I was the official photographer and I basically snuck in a lot of filming while I was there, um -- for them, you know, and then they used a lot of that b-roll for their Kickstarter program. So I don't know what happened to that. But then I made just a little short kind of montage video for them, just to give them something back, something, you know, a video, it's basically a Pablo Das music video set in the Buddhist Geeks conference. So that's online, on my website, and probably theirs as well if, if anybody wants to see that. It's just a fun little four-minute thing.

Ted: Excellent in fact for folks listening I'll do my best to embed that in the Episode Page for this episode.

Adam: Yeah that'd be great -- I wish the audio was a little better but...it's a fun video, though. And it gives people a sense of what it looks like to be there a little bit and how much conversations happen at a conference like that 'cause that's what -- one thing I don't know people realize is, it is all about the in-between conversations at these conferences...so -- just like at the secular Buddhist conference.

Ted: Yeah are you finding that that intersection is the fascinating, fun, learning-rich moment rather than talk?

Adam: Yeah. I'm a little tired of one-way communication. I mean I grew up in America, I got to enjoy that for sixteen years of education, um and then going around and, and -- there's a lot of that in Buddhism still, which -- it's not a bad model, it's just that -- I've really learned the value of community through my experiences in Buddhism and the value of open free discussions where everybody feels like they can say something because you -- you can learn something from everybody, you know if you're really open to it, especially people you disagree with. Going and seeing a speaker that you love and you love what have to say is an entirely different experience from having to, you know, really explore something with another person in front of you that you do not agree with and actually don't like what they're saying.

Ted: Yeah one is a validation, another is, perhaps, more rich with growth opportunities. [chuckles]

Adam: Yeah. I [indistinguishable] this group, where I'm at, in Long Beach, a sitting group, that is all about people coming together and focusing on what their questions are. And finding out what are they looking for, 'cause sometimes people show up in Buddhism and we're so ready to tell 'em about craving and suffering and Noble Eightfold Path -- the wonders of dependent origination! But sometimes people need a little bit of time just to experience that place and to find out why they're there and to listen to what's going on in them that brought them there. And that's the kind of platform I'd like to create for people.

Ted: I'll be interested in hearing more about that, when that -- when that gets set up! Come back and talk with us about that! But you have other topics to do first, which is, finish this film so, tell us a little bit about that: what are the steps you need to take next, and how and when might the film be released; how will people end up getting to see it?

Adam: Yeah I've learned a lot more about that recently. So next for me is -- ha! -- as much as I hate to do it I've got to raise more funds. It's...this interesting part of -- I just watched this documentary about film-making, um and I think it was um Marlon Brando who said film-making is ninety-five percent fund-raising and five percent making films. And I'm starting to see that 'cause it takes a lot of time and resources. You know as I plan out my post-production phase there's a lot of things that, that are going to go into it. Um, it'll take me about four to five months to finish the film. I'm going to try to raise some money right now to get this to -- there's a level of polishing that professional films have that, that I'd really like to strive for. I've got great content, I've got a good story, um, I'm making a lot of progress on the editing and this sort of thing, but as I, I get closer to that it would be nice to bring in some professional consultants to help me dot the t's -- or dot the i's and cross the t's and all that sort of thing. But the film should be done in April of 2014. I signed myself up for a two-week retreat, so it's got to be done before that! And that's my reward for getting the film done, is a two-week retreat, so, from there it will go off to film festivals; I've already been speaking with distributors. But you know it's amazing how much things are changing right now, because [indistinguishable] just the technology of how to make a film, and how many people have access to it, but the technology behind distribution. Self-distribution becomes more and more of a viable option as time goes on. And so I may keep the online rights and, and do that and put it on Netflix, iTunes, Amazon; wherever I feel like young people will be perusing, you know, the internet; that's, that's where I'd like to have this film on, you know, and I feel like I can do something that speaks to those people. And then hopefully get a small theatrical release, but that depends on how well it does in film festivals and getting a distributor to, to pick it up and helping me make that push. 'Cause that's -- quite a lot of work and money that goes into that. So.

Ted: Well keep us posted on how that goes, and with any developments with your own sitting group, uh, as that progresses over time.

Adam: I figured out what I want to do next and I don't know if that's relevant to this discussion but--

Ted: Absolutely, what comes after all this?

Adam: So I love film-making and I love Buddhism and I'll keep that moving forward but I need something of a sustainable day-to-day career to keep me going and, and I've been thinking a lot about that for a long time I've been open to what make come next. I think I'm going to become a chaplain! It's something that, that came up after reading Danny Fisher's book and I interviewed him for my film and, the more and more I get into my practice and I grow as a person, it feels like I've been looking for a wonderful opportunity to take what Buddhism has offered me and pour it back into the world and it feels like that's a great environment to do something like that -- to be present for people in their most difficult experiences and -- and really have it be about them. And, and not about me and the thoughts that go on in my head about what religion is, or Buddhism or any of that stuff or -- but just to really be present for people in their most difficult situations. If Buddhism has given me any gift it's that ability to feel like I can really be there for another human being. And I feel like if I could do a little more of that I'd really be happy with, with a life like that.

Ted: And there a number of Buddhist chaplaincy programs that are now available that, perhaps a decade ago might not have been in place, and just general chaplaincy programs as well that are non-denominational to help with that. And so we want to hear more about that as time progresses as well.

Adam: Yeah, yeah sure, but I -- I'll probably go to Danny Fisher's program just 'cause he's great and I, I love what they're doing there, and -- but yeah, it's a huge question of where I'll end up after that, because it's -- you can go at a hospital, you can go to a university, you can do disaster relief -- um, who knows, I may even join the military -- which is just like, I always thought I'd never do that. But I, I never thought I'd make a movie. I never thought I'd consider being a religious professional, I was such a secular humanist for so long and -- but I get to choose what religion means to me. I get to make it about the human element.

Ted: Right. Exactly. It doesn't need to be about the ideology, it's about the people.

Adam: Exactly. Exactly. You know and that's, that's something that the secular Buddhist movement has pushed me towards, has helped me appreciate, that I can have a relationship with the domains that religion normally takes over and I have one that's free of dogma and ideology and kind of the static-ness that that comes with following a religion...religiously.

Ted: Yeah that we don't need to consider these as mutually exclusive aspects to our lives they can still be integral to what we do as people.

Adam: Yeah, yeah, and what we do as people is, is very important.

Ted: Well for folks listening you can find out more about Adam and his work on SeekingHeartwood.com and, Adam, tell us a little bit about what's there and what's coming on the site.

Adam: Sure, yeah, for those of you who don't know, Seeking Heartwood is, is, is kind of my blog where I keep people updated about, uh, the progress of the film, so it's -- it's been a little slow as I focus on editing, um, but hopefully by the time this is up there will be a trailer for the film, which I know a lot of people, um, have been asking me for and would love to see so hopefully I'll have that up; and I'll have some information -- some more detailed information about where the film is at, what needs to happen next, um, there'll be something of a fund-raising kit to give people info on, on what they're contributing towards if they feel like helping make this film happen. And I do have a, a non-profit fiscal sponsor now, um one of the Buddhist churches in California is sponsoring me, so. Yeah, tax-deductible donations for the film, so. That'll be up soon.

Ted: Great. Adam, thanks for joining us.

Adam: Thank you, Ted, always a pleasure to be here.