

# Still Crazy after All These Years

## A Letter to Subud Vision

By Husain Chung

*To the editors:*

Many of your visions and suggestions about the Subud organization are well expressed and commendable. It would certainly have been great if you intelligent, articulate members had been around forty years ago in the Sixties when I was feeling and thinking what you are all expressing today. At that time, I did not suggest and promote the idea that the Subud organization should revamp their rules and guidelines (probationary period, etc.). I simply ignored them and did not bother to debate, argue or write what I felt and thought.

I was opened by the late John G. Bennett in 1958 in San Francisco, to do the Subud latihan as an individual for my own needs. After I was opened, John asked if I had any questions, and I asked: can I do this alone and can I turn others on to this? He said, 'absolutely' to both questions. I was then living in Big Sur, California as a public school principal-teacher in one of the last one-room schools, with seventeen kids from 1st to 8th grades. Rain or shine I drove from south Big Sur (Jade Beach) over 400 miles round trip twice a week for group latihan in San Francisco. After being made one of the first helpers (which at that time I thought meant that I needed extra help), I drove to S.F. *three* times a week.

In the beginning of Subud in America there were no rules, no do's and don'ts, and no literature. Just let go, surrender and go with the force, however and wherever it moves you. Well, for a young Big Sur pot-smoking bohemian nudist (before hippies), this was a cool no-brainer. I discovered that it took me thirty minutes for my thoughts to cease, and only then could I feel the vibes moving my body. I figured I must have been a low spiritual retard. So, naturally, anything that was good, I began doing three to four times daily for at least an hour each.

By the second month I had probably done a hundred latihan — all in the nude of course. I started with growling, screeching, barking, and crawling like different animals — the monkey was my favorite. Then came weird noises and nonsensical gobbledegook: sounds, like speaking in tongues, issuing forth spontaneously; followed by jumping, running, leaping, and rolling on the floor; then chanting and singing and screaming obscenities; and finally silent, soothing, peaceful, tai chi-like dancing. From our small mountain cabin my wife Barbara (later Lusijah) took our two infants a hundred yards into the forest because my behavior was freaking her out. Fortunately, I did stop chewing peyote and quit smoking reefers — I didn't want to be too relaxed and stone happy because I wanted to really experience what the latihan surrender itself was all about.

On the second week I went to Partington Ridge, where Henry Miller lived, to tell him about Subud. His old friend Alan Watts was there, totally drunk; both had been up all night. Before I could say anything, Henry poured me a glass of wine and said he had just received something that might interest me. He knew I was into Gurdjieff. 'Chung,' Henry said, 'this is the first copy, hot off the press; the editor wants me to review it. It's by one of Gurdjieff's students.' He said I could keep it. It was John G. Bennett's *Concerning Subud*. After I told them about Subud, they both graciously turned it down, but promised to recommend it to their fans and

students. Both kept their word, and later several students and fans of Miller's and Watts' did join Subud — I met and spoke about Subud to some of them at a party on Watts' houseboat in Sausalito, CA. I brought in a lot of beatnik friends from Big Sur, San Francisco, Haight Ashbury and Hollywood.

At that time I certainly did not believe I was joining a Subud 'group'. I never have been a joiner of groups, because I had no interest or need to follow or conform to any group or organization. I feel the same way today, that I am a free, independent human being. I was not trying to be a rebel. I just happen to be what I am as I am — responsible only for my own decisions and the consequences of my life actions.

I did not even bother to ask anyone's permission or approval to do whatever I decided to do. I did not, have not and do not to this day believe I have to get approval for any of my thoughts, feelings and contemplated actions. If I believe what I am doing and where I am going is right, then I will find a way to do it. In the whole history of man and his great ideas, concepts and processes, his incredible inventions and creative arts, the most notable movements and revolutions — social, political, spiritual, and religious — were all, for the most part, started, created, or inspired by one exceptional human being with the courage to do what he felt, in war and peace, in good times and bad.

Thus, I opened my Episcopal reverend, my work boss, supervisor, and three co-workers (employees), who did the exercise in my apartment. I have done latihan with the criminally insane and schizophrenics in the asylum. I have opened and exercised with a lifer in prison for a whole year. I brought my mother and sister to be opened by Elizabeth (Bennett's companion) and Ibu. I opened my father in the last hour before his death. I have opened more than one woman, and have done the latihan with a small group of women. As a Psychology faculty member I opened and exercised with my students in the university. I opened my best friend 2,000 miles away via a tape recording of my latihan. I had a café in Missouri and opened African Americans and college students.

In the late Sixties I taught group psychotherapy and psychodrama at Pepperdine University and briefly at Stanford University, and started the Psychodrama Theatre of the Human Institute in Los Angeles and Palo Alto, CA. I worked with thousands including therapists, artists, musicians, attorneys, drug counselors, teachers, M.D.s, psychiatrists, dentists, chiropractors and body healers, Stanford and other college students, realtors, contractors and a few professors. I used to openly and honestly share my life adventures and tell them about my spiritual experiences in the latihan of Subud. I never held back, but spoke honestly the whole truth. Several hundred of my students eventually got opened in Subud.

I started the Palo Alto Subud Center which had over two hundred active members, the largest center in the world in the late Sixties. In the early period there were no Subud groups in Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, San Jose and Arcata, CA until the Human Institute students and I went there. The Human Institute was the first Subud life-changing enterprise, where I opened the whole staff and financed all to see Bapak in Santa Monica.

Naturally, I got tons of flack from some Subud fundamentalists who demanded that I turn in my Helper's Card, but I told them I swallowed it a long time ago. So, they asked Bapak to excommunicate me for bringing in so many hippies (mostly Stanford students) who they felt were not 'properly' opened and contaminated with Chung's psychodrama. An interesting scene I never told anyone: when those individuals complained to Bapak that I was 'mixing' psychodrama with the latihan that brought hundreds to Subud, Bapak chuckled and asked them: 'How many people have you brought to Subud? None? — And you want Bapak to make

Husain leave Subud for starting new centers and bringing in so many new members?’

In a private interview Bapak then suggested to me that after my students were opened in Subud, I should ask them not to attend any more psychodramas so that they would not confuse the latihan with Chung’s psychodrama. After some newly opened members heard this, many left Subud and the Human Institute, which hurt me very much. Shortly thereafter I quit and closed down the Human Institute. I was deeply hurt by the complaining members. In later years I regretted having shut down the Human Institute and leaving Palo Alto — I disagree with the Boss on how this was handled. For over thirty years I did latihan alone and stopped going to group latihan and congresses. I did not even attend Bapak’s last California tour.

Just between you and me — I suspect I’ve enjoyed being in one long Subud ‘crisis’ for the past half a century. One would think I should have mellowed after all these eighty years, but I have a suspicion that I’m just kidding myself thinking I can be an ordinary, normal person. Recently I have done three psychodrama workshops, and published a memoir of my spiritual journey — ***God the Therapist***, a true story of a man’s search for his soul — and as a result four more individuals have joined Subud after reading it. (The book is available on Amazon.com.)

I’m back living in Palo Alto and am looking for a large warehouse to restart the Human Institute, the Friday Nite Psychodrama Theatre with a tea house, and the weekend psychodrama mini-marathon. I recently married Lusijah Rott, a Stanford staff scientist, long-time Subud helper and one of the founders of Seven Circles (Subud) Retreat, who is in training to become my psychodrama partner (presently getting her Masters in Transpersonal Counseling Psychology). I have given some serious thought to what I will do this time around if my students become interested in Subud. Am I willing to taste the slings and arrows again? Not really. I’m crazy but not suicidal. My work has been infused with the latihan and this impacted many people. Was I supported? No. I was reviled because of the stupidity of fundamentalist thinkers, who had the arrogance to feel that they knew whether people were being introduced to Subud or receiving the latihan in the ‘right way’.

As Lusijah has said, grace and the gift of the Divine force is God’s monopoly, not Subud’s. If Subud collectively doesn’t permit or allow this grace to flow to humanity, that grace will find other avenues. I have thought perhaps I would quit the Subud organization and start a new one. There would not be any helpers, committee or organizational structure, no literature or Subud talks or lectures. After a year of doing the latihan, any of those newly opened could join the regular Subud organization if they wished.

As an Asian American (one of the first of the few in white Subud America), I believe American minorities do not feel comfortable in predominately white organizations, particularly in the U.S. My other idea is to invite myself to minority churches and organizations like African American, Mexican American, Korean American, and native American Indian spiritual centers, and help start latihan groups in their spiritual centers that will be their *own* latihan group — initially not merging them with the regular Subud organization. Again, no rules and no Subud literature — just pure latihan.

Crazy? I tried real hard to adjust and be normal, but I guess it was delusional to think I could change people’s perception after all these eighty years going round and round and round the blinding freaking sun that can drive anyone berserk, nauseous and delusional. But, as I said in the beginning, I can only be what I am as I am, no more no less. A stranger on an alien planet.

If anyone has been offended by my approach, I'd like to ask them to consider this question: if you knew for certain that you had only thirty days to live and you happened to be the last surviving Subud person on earth, what would you do to keep Subud alive after your departure?

\* \* \* \* \*

[http://www.amazon.com/God-Therapist-True-Story-Search/dp/1462006876/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1318277912&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/God-Therapist-True-Story-Search/dp/1462006876/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1318277912&sr=8-1)

The new re-edited *God the Therapist* is the true story of Husain's spiritual journey of half a century: inspiring, hilarious, real Subud experiences from the early days when Subud first arrived in America.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBKy-D-olb8>