

Professor Joe Pettit

RELG 305

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Mock Interview Paper

*Meeting Faith: The Forest Journals of a Black Buddhist Nun*, by Faith Adiele

Good Afternoon, Ms Adiele. Thank you for meeting with me today to talk about your experience.

It's my pleasure, I'm glad to be here

After initially deciding not to talk about your experience as a Buddhist Nun, what made you change your mind?

"For years I didn't talk about being a Buddhist nun. The reasons varied. For one, the subject presented two Great American Conversational No-nos: Religion and Race (Adiele, 27)."

Although I gained a lot from my experience I never wanted to offend anyone. "I'd been taught that religion was a private, touchy subject (27)." In deciding to write *Meeting Faith*, I needed to answer an important question, why? I needed to decide if I wanted to move my story, "...out of the realm of catharsis and therapy into the territory of art (293)." I also needed to be able to, "...identify the larger, universal themes that will allow others to join...on the journey (293)."

Once I reached a place where those answers were answered, I decided to write the memoir. "It was gratifying to see it all come together...after its publication, I found myself face to face with an audience wanting the same thing I'd wanted when I embarked on this odyssey: strategies for living life (294)."

How exactly did you end up in a Thai forest?

“There were two reasons I found myself in the Thai forest...first was, surprisingly, comfort. I’d been to Thailand before—my junior year of high school—and the experience had satisfied my lifelong quest for fairness. It was a place where merit was truly rewarded (14).” “The second reason I found myself ordained in the Thai forest...was failure (22).” I was failing all of my courses during my sophomore year at Harvard. “I was told to leave campus for a year (25).” During that year I returned to Thailand, this time on a different journey. I wanted to flee the pressures of Western society and just live free.

**Upon deciding to return to the Thai forest, what did you initially expect to gain from your experience?**

I initially intended to just do research. “For months I’ve read the sparse literature available about *maechi*, planning the Groundbreaking Fieldwork Project on the identities and self-images of Thai *maechi* (35).” “Somehow I’ve managed to compartmentalize my mind into both participant and observer, turning one unblinking eye on this bumbling determined foreign *maechi*.

Anthropologist and detective... (150).” I never intended to become as involved as I had, but I had, “...become enamored of the anthropology of myself (150).”

**What about Buddhism did you find most interesting or appealing?**

One of the most appealing aspects of Buddhism is the sense of equality. “Buddha said, ‘Out of My Mouth there are born four groups’...Ordained man, householder man, ordained woman, householder woman. Each group is equal, their worth determined simply by performance to their respective duty. This is one of the moments I fall in love with the Buddha. From childhood I’ve been addicted to fairness and equality, holding them in esteem over nearly every other value (92-93).”