My Heartfelt Gratitude to Professor John C. Raines
By Tavivat Puntarigvivat

I first met Professor Dr. John C. Raines when he visited Mahidol University in Thailand in 1987. I was then an instructor at the Comparative Religion program at Mahidol University. While in Thailand, Professor Raines helped me in the process of applying to the Ph.D. program in Religion at Temple University. In early January 1988, I came to Temple University in Philadelphia and met Dr. Raines for the first time in the Department of Religion at Temple University. The first words he said to me were: “Welcome to our very cold weather!” Although the weather was very cold that winter, I felt warm in my heart because of the warm relation I had with Dr. Raines, my academic advisor.

Professor John C. Raines opened me up to a new perspective and methodology on religion and society—particularly the global market economy from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed. Professor Raines constructively guided me through my graduate courses, independent studies and dissertation writing. His creative and challenging guidance was the pivotal power in shaping the direction of my Ph.D. dissertation, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s Dhammic Socialism in Dialogue with Latin American Liberation Theology. His careful reading and stimulating suggestions helped me clarify the analysis and critical evaluation throughout the dissertation, in which I have attempted to present a kind of Buddhist Liberation Theology. His academic work, particularly his books and papers on social and economic ethics, provides the background for my understanding and my academic perspective.

After my graduation in 1994, I had a chance to welcome John Raines and his wife in Thailand, when he gave a public talk in Bangkok. I visited John Raines when he was a visiting professor in Southeast Asia—including Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and Jakarta and Yogyakarta in Indonesia. In 1997, John Raines invited me to join a research project in the U.S. on women’s rights from different religious male perspectives. In 1999, John Raines, myself, and other researchers presented our research at the Congress of World Religions in Cape Town, South Africa. Outside of our academic activities, I had a chance to join John Raines and his wife to climb up Mount Table in Cape Town. It was an impressive experience for me to do such an intimate activity with my beloved professor and his family. The research project ended up in a book named, What Men Owe to Women: Resources from the World Religions, edited by John C. Raines and Daniel C. Maguire, and published by SUNY in 2000, in which I contributed a chapter from Theravada Buddhist perspective.

John Raines has been encouraging and supportive of me throughout my academic career both at Temple University and beyond. On this special occasion, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Professor John C. Raines who has always been the source of my academic inspiration.

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