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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So, the reminder that we're going to have this one year anniversary celebration of being here in our center on January 24, to Friday evening, and we'll do it together with doing the installation of the statue that Lorraine pepperell has made for us of my job ID the woman who started with the sense started the nuns order of Buddhism. And it should be a lovely evening we have planned, planned it out very nicely and which would be somewhat different than what you'd expect. And I think quite lovely to help a lot of people come, the evening will be done in part to celebrate women in Buddhism, women teachers were in practitioners. And so that's built into the installing the statue, and I'll talk more about that in a few minutes.

So since we're going to have this celebration statue and celebrating women in Buddhism. I thought I would talk a little bit this evening about this woman who's going to we're going to in shrine, here's the statue of her and why this is happening. My thoughts about it and some of it you already know I think some of it's in the newsletter some of the ideas of it but I thought I'd talk more about it and talk a little bit about this particular person. And also, if you know a little bit about who she is and why we're going to install a statue over here, I think perhaps it will add a little bit more depth to the ceremony we're going to do.

So, the woman's name is Mahapajapati Gotami. Gotami is like a clans name or family name is the same as the Buddha he was Siddhartha Gotama. And in fact, she was the foster mother of the Buddha. And it worked out this way that she had a, I believe younger sister named Maha Maya, who was the was the mother of the Buddha. And both Mahapajapati and Maha Maya were married off to the same man, the same King, Śuddhodana, who was the father of the Buddha, and it was a custom back in ancient times, maybe just I don't know, maybe I don't know maybe it's in the upper classes. I don't know who but certainly was a custom as it still is, to this day in some places in the world have multiple marriages and multiple wives. And it was nothing out of the usual that this man had two wives and two wives were sisters. And as it turned out, Mahapajapati had two children herself, a boy by the

name of Ananda and I'm not sure the woman's name and Maha Maya gave birth to the Buddha, or he took a person who is going to be the Buddha to Siddhartha. And then seven days after the Buddha was born, his mother died. And some people have pointed out that most of the great religious leaders in human history have lost a parent earlier in their lives when they're still children. And so, the Buddha was like this also.

And even though she had two children's of her own Maha Maya took it upon herself then to raise the Buddha. And she nursed him and had that very strong connection of nursing him and raised Him as their own child and eventually Buddha went off to engage in his ascetic practices. And then after he became the Buddha, some years after he became a Buddha, he returned to the whole the town of his birth to it. And there's a whole very stories around what that was like.

And by that time or maybe was later visit back home, but at some point that his father had died. And the Buddha's father, the king, and Maha Japanese is around two children had or the son Ananda had gone off to become a monk, a disciple of the Buddha. And, at this time in the month when the Buddha visited his home place, he gave a discourse talks about some things and a whole bunch of the young men The sutra says 500 decided to go off and become monks leaving their wives behind.

And so here was Mahapajapati. Her husband had died, her son had gone off, become a monk and marhaba job, but he was kind of like a leader of the type, maybe because she was the wife of the king of many of the women in that area, and who now found themselves without husbands. So, what do you do? And this is India, ancient India, where you know, where often your status in society depends a lot on the man you're connected to, and many of you had no husband if you had no father, if you had no No son, then you're kind of, you know, adrift in society. And also, I don't know, maybe being kind of been kind of a queen, maybe her own support was guaranteed, I don't know.

In any case, she knew the Buddha quite well and heard his teachings and perhaps was quite inspired by the possibility of awakening and becoming free. And as their own circumstances have changed, maybe her responsibilities as a wife was no longer needed her responsibilities as a parent was no longer needed. She then went to the Buddha, and asked if she could be ordained as a nun. There were no nuns at that point. And the Buddha didn't exactly say no. What he said was enough. Please don't ask this. So she asked again, And you get the impression that she was a very determined resolve resolute person. So she asked again, and he said, in his way, because maybe he's just not being direct as some people can be, or who knows why exactly. But he said again enough, please don't ask this. And the third time she asked, and the third time he said enough. And then the description says she left crying. And the Buddha at some point, then left the hometown and when wandering around India, and she gathered around her these group of somewhat widowed monastic Li widowed women, and they all shaved their heads as a monastic would do. And got rid of all their jewelry and all their fun clothes and They put on monastic robes cloaks over an enchant, robes of renunciant. And they started walking across India, and they walked 150 miles on foot. And perhaps Mr.

Maha Jaffe after all, she was a queen prop My guess is that she was not that fit. She probably a little bit older and not used to walking a lot. And the in a discourses its explains how she arrived Finally, sometimes you're walking 150 miles to where the Buddha was, and her feet were all their legs were all swollen, and their limbs and legs were all covered with dust. And they came to where the Buddha was and Buddha was staying inside of a building.

And they didn't go into didn't go and find the Buddha after all, he said no three times. And so they stood outside. Crying is a description is tears streaming down their face And Ananda, who is the Buddhist kind of main attendant, came out the door one day and saw these women, you know, he knew quite well because the idea was also part of the same, I think clan with cousin of the Buddha. So he knew certainly knew Maha property is part of his family and some of these local women. And they were all crying. He said, what's in it shaved their heads and they were filthy and exhausted and whatever.

So what's going on here?

And they said, Oh, the Buddha will not allow us to become ordained will not allow us to become renunciant to follow the spiritual life to follow a life pursuing liberation and freedom under him in under his guidance under his teachings, and so an unnecessary Oh, well, let me go talk to him.

And then anessa goes into the building and says to another says to the Buddha, you know, it'd be good thing if the Buddha where he's explained what was happening, these women are out there to be good thing if the Buddha would allow women to be ordained. And the Buddha said, the same thing he said enough, don't ask this question. So an under asks again. And the Buddha says the same thing. And then under asks a third time, and the Buddha again says enough, don't ask this question. At which point and under doesn't give up but he decides he has a change, tax change destroy strategies. So he asked the Buddha, is it not true that women have the capacity of becoming fully liberated, fully enlightened? And the Buddha says, yes, they have that capacity, it's possible for them. And is it not true? That muhabba japery Was your foster mother, that she nursed you when your own mother died and raised you as her own child? And the Buddha said, Yes, that's true. And then under says, well then I think would be really good. If you would ordain these women and then entertainer. And so he says, The Buddha said Oh, right. They can be ordained, provided or she can be ordained if you provided your takes these eight rules. Because monastics have 227 rules so they can live by. If he lives by these eight rules, then she can become a renunciant. And they were very controversial these rules that the Buddha gave, because the rules had to do with mostly had to do with rules of basically being subservient to the monks. rules like a one of the important things in the monastic tradition is that seniority is very important. So like if you are someone who is your day and the day before you an hour before you, you better bow to that monk, because he's more senior than you. And so in amongst meet, they always make sure you know the date and the time with ordinations, to make sure you know, you know, who should be bowing to who. And so the Buddha said that, no, none no matter how even she's

been a nun for 100 years, should be more senior than the most junior novice monk. And no, none should ever admonish a monk or teach a monk. The monks can teach you to admonish the nuns and no, nuns are always to be ordained. Have a joint ordination always has to be a group of nuns. And in Google monks together in order to make a valid nuns ordination, whereas monks, they can just men can just ordain each other if they're monks, but women had required having them among the male monastic monastics present for that their their ordination and their eight rules like that. So they're quite controversial. And then the Buddha said something that lives in one tradition we have in other traditions, he didn't say this. He said, If women had not been given the ordination, my dispensation, this teachings that I have read would have lasted 1000 years. But now there are only last 500 years because we've allowed women to be ordained. So anyway, and under goes outside and says to my property, the Buddha says has agreed you can be ordained provided you accept these eight conditions, which is of course I'll accept them no problem she was quite happy about this. And, and then and then the Buddha told and under that now, you can go out and also again and give kind of nuns ordination to all those women who are with Maha property. And they received more formal ordination Mahapajapati it was just enough for her to agree to those eight conditions. The other nuns tradition says kind of a much fuller ordination. And in fact, it was little bit controversial A few years later where the other nuns said, Mahapajapati, he wasn't really ordained as a nun. So they had to go back to the Buddha and he said, No, no, she really is. And so, in a sense, her determination was responsible for the nuns order. She led these women there and got the whole thing going. She then continued in her own practice, started her practice, and then became fully enlightened became one of the fully enlightened disciples of the Buddha realized We don't have much records of her. There's a famous little discourse where she asked the Buddha question to give his teachings in brief. And he gives her eight points by which you know, the Dharma. And that's it. I don't have it with me that's a very interesting little teaching.

And later she she asked some Buddhists some other questions, and she got involved in some controversy that happened. But so the nuns order started, and it's been said, I don't know if it's true or not, but it's been said that this was really the first order of women no nonsense, nuns in the history of humankind. And so the Buddha opened the door to women to incense open the door after saying enough a few times, for the women to do that kind of life, live that life. And it's a beautiful life to be renunciant It's a beautiful day. Be able to devote one's full life to the practice and in teachings and study and purifying the heart in the mind and realizing our capacity for enlightenment. And then there was for many years, many centuries, a very active and vibrant nuns community in ancient India in Sri Lanka and different places. The record seemed to indicate that about two to three centuries after the time of the Buddha, that was kind of like the, the, probably the peak of that vibrancy that in the second and third century BC before the Common Era. There was lots of records of the nuns being very much involved in the religious life of the times very active. Lot of nones existed. Were a lot of women were ordained, and there was a vibrant tradition. Women's literature, championing possibility we've been practicing and, and during that time, but two 300 years after the Buddha, there was a long poem that was created called the Maha jeopardy. Song, I guess. And it was a song or a poem, long one talking about Mahatma Joffrey. And in that her status, it gets elevated to be almost equal to that of the

Buddha. She's a lot of the ways in which the Buddha is talked about in the classic discourses kind of very high status very highly revered as the founder of the religion, Mama job, but he has the same position and deeply honored. And so it's kind of like she held that that is part of the position the Buddha held for the community mapa job but he held that position. Someone they revere, they tried to emulate they lived up to they were inspired by it was kind of a one female role model. So no noticed in the early to mid 90s 1990s. Long before we even dreamed of having a center that the meditation centers around the country, some of the ones I knew, were beginning to put female imagery, female statues and things in their meditation halls and in their halls of worship. The San Francisco Zen Center had done it in the 80s. And spirit rock was doing it. And I think once I counted in their meditation, I'll be the old meditational spirit rock. There was one guy in the hall, there was a Buddha. And then there were if you looked around, they were, you know, four or five, six different images of women. But they were all mythological or archetypical images, they were mostly bodhisatta first for the Mahayana tradition of Luca Tesh for Kuan Yin beings like that and There's a strong feeling that we needed to have some kind of strong image of a woman as a role model as a suggestion that women could also practice and inspire women. There's a beautiful story, or a beautiful, very touching story. And I recounted the story to someone last week. So back up a little bit and tell you why I recounted it to her. She had gone off to as a quite a young woman. I'm not sure when but to Dharma Sala, where the Tibetans are an exile, Tibetan government isn't down the line was there. And she was, I think, very inspired by the Tibetan teachings she received there. But she was very disturbed by the misogynist languages that often appeared in the teachings and the texts that she was being read. She was studying. And so she was just talking about how disturbed she was by that. And then I told her this story and I think had to do with Tenzin Paulo who was looking around another bit famous. Some of you might have read her book. In the early 90s, there was a meeting a conference in Dharamsala with a lot of the more senior Western Dharma teachers of different traditions, Tibetan traditions and tradition, Vipassana tradition, and was kind of the first time they all met the different traditions met as teachers talking about what it's like to be teachers and offer support to each other and do what teachers do when they get together. And at some of those meetings have lasted for many days. They flew all the way from Dharma Sala to meet the Dalai Lama came came and attended was part of it and discussed it. And at some point, the this Tibetan Western Westerner who was a nun, I think it was Tenzin Polman, went up to the Dalai Lama in front of everybody and said, Darla, I would like to teach you a new visualization. No. And he said, okay, and she said, you know, close your eyes. And now imagine that you're going to receive teachings from a great, great, enlightened teacher, who happens to be a woman teacher. And you come to where the great monastery is, and you walk in and you come into the Great Hall, were teaching it and be going to be given. And someone receives you at the door and says, oh, we're so happy to see you glad we're here. But please, all the men can sit here in the back of the hall. And of course, you can, you know, practice as well as everybody else would please sit here in the back. And then you look around and look at all the paintings and all the walls, and they're all women. And there's a woman teacher up there and there's a woman statue up there of the great founder of the religion. And it should be done. She went on that kind of theme kind of, you know, reversing the role right? And at some point in dial a llama started to cry. And then he said we have to change this He kind of got it, you know, from that kind of what it was like. And in fact, in the 1980s in

America, and the circles, I was traveling in Buddhists in Buddhism here in California, I think elsewhere also, there was quite a strong women's movement was there still is a little bit but it's not as it doesn't have the same strength as it I think it had in 1980s. And there were a lot of women gatherings and meetings and conferences, women in Buddhism, things and books were produced. There was a magazine that was back then, about women in Buddhism. And I think it was a real need, because of the sexism, the gender imbalance that happened in many different ways in the tradition, when I came to Tassajara in 1980, it was just kind of beginning to change there. And there were some women who really speaking up and and, you know, said you know, this is, you know, women should be allowed to be assigned To be mechanics and plumbers and given positions to be directors and so slowly, you know, when I was there Tassajara very quickly, when I arrived, there was this kind of breaking down to the sexual barriers that existed Tassajara but, you know, coming out of Asian culture coming out of American culture, it's not so surprising that Buddhism is influenced by society and culture it's in and so, sexism of societies is part and parcel of its own, you know, how people organize themselves. So the women's liberation movement and all this made people sensitive to this, and by 1980s, things were starting to happen. By the mid 80s, late 80s, there are a lot of these big meetings and, and, and then also by the 80s, I think, or there was a time also when women with first time were starting to really become teachers in the, in the Buddhist tradition in the West, and that had, you know, you know, opened up a lot of doors and I could just continue somewhat into the 90s but I don't feel That. My sense is that that need is there was a real strong need in 1980s for that. And my own sense is that there hasn't been much need for that. Because I don't see a lot of that happening anymore. As a way, there's still a little bit here and there, but I don't feel the same strength of it all. I tried here to have to encourage women's groups of various types we had a day long, some years ago, and with a longest for women, invited down with the spirit rock teachers who puts on these kinds of women retreats. And I think it was a very lovely day, as I was told. But the impression I had is, I mean, well, it didn't seem like there was a lot of like, I don't know if I tallied the right word, but it seemed like it was like, a strong need wasn't like people were like, Oh, it was great. And let's do it again. And I can't wait and you know, was just like, oh, that was, you know, it's nice. We did it. I don't know. I don't know what to say exactly. But it just didn't. it you know, it didn't seem and then I've tried since then to encourage women's meetings and stuff and it's a little bit strange for me to Encouraging it. And you know, I'd like to go but when I can't get myself invited, and

so, but they could they could kind of it didn't really have seem to have a lot of behind it. So my sense is that the need that existed in 1980s is not here. I've tried in my role as a teacher to be sensitive to the issue. And, for example, you know, I'm kind of a guy. So, you know, I represent men, and for better and worse. And so, I try to I try to, for example, when I invite other people to come and teach, I certainly try to have you know, when I'm gone things to have equal number of men and women, my preference is actually to have more women than men come and be teachers for our group, because I'm a man because I teach I teach her so much less so my mind I don't know how well the track record is but that's that's a thought of mine. I try to be careful with the language and stories that I use. Six, seven years ago, someone told me, he realized that almost all the stories you use and people you quote are men. So, you know, so thank you. And so I'm sensitive to these things. But, you know, I

don't know how well I've managed to mean not sensitive enough, I'm sure but they're they're rumbling around in my mind that I need to be careful. What I feel now in the late 90s, and early part of this decade, what's been happening is, I don't feel like the women's thing is so important anymore. Now you can you can disagree with me very quickly if you'd like to. But what I feel what's happening now is the same energy, the same interest, the same vitality, the same speaking up and challenging the status quo is happening around people of color. And that's maybe an unfortunate word but that's kind of the word that self selected word by a certain group of people. Most of people in American Buddhist circles like we're in, most of them are white, and a fair amount or middle class. working class people are relatively not well represented. And, and as we probably know, all of us know, hopefully you should know, you know, if you're a different color, a different ethnicity, different nationality of everyone else, everybody else is sometimes difficult to come in into situation, you can be uncomfortable, but more so if the teachers are talking about the Dharma, and implying that, you know, through their little examples or know about us, and as soon as you know, he's talking about examples that have only reference to, you know, their own particular niche and one particular group of people don't feel comfortable about that. And so it's so there's a lot of vitality, a lot of interest now, to have to raise this issue of diversity issue. In the Buddhist circles and spirit rock, there's a very vital group of people who are coming up with all kinds of ideas and suggestions and putting on retreats and challenging the teachers. And in fact, teachers had a meeting with the Diversity Council spirit rock on September 10, of 2001. That was apparently quite strong. And then we're going to do it again on January 27. They said, We have to meet with you some more, because there's things we need to work to tell you. And there's a wonderful man named, I don't know I've never met him but filmmaker named Lehman. Lee Lee one mood one. Demon WA, he produced a great movie called the first movie called The color of fear, which we showed here some years ago. About five six years ago. I was concerned about this issue of diversity, and how it plays out in our community. So we had a day long event on a Saturday, we showed his movie and we had a facilitator who was trained by Lima Anwar to come and talk about diversity in our group. And some of you I think were there.

And

and now he has a new film called last chance for eating to preschool. And he's gonna have a showing at spirit rock, I believe they just happen or is it happening this Sunday, this Saturday or Sunday, Sunday. 2pm is during the day. Anyway, he's going to be there showing his film and, and if it's as powerful as the first film, I think everybody should see it. And I'll try to see if we can get it, get it down here, get a copy and have it show up down here.

And so this whole issue of diversity of course, is something which is very confused. for American society, it's certainly a lot of pain involved. And you know, it's very confusing for me and I've tried over the years to somehow certainly think about it, but address it a little bit. And still uncertain about how we as a group, and now especially now we have a center and I feel even more responsible about how

we hold ourselves and how awake aware, sensitive mindful, we are the causes and conditions that we live in and how we act and our intentions, our blindness. It seems all in the spirit of Dharma practice.

So

So I go back then to I'm going off on some long tangents here are long to come back. And so spirit rock and other places had these archetypes and Mahayana figures and mythological figures, women, and I thought it was fine. It was quite inspiring in many ways. But I thought the terrible tradition that we're part of is kind of a Don't want to, it's kind of, like, it's much more, it's an ordinary tradition. It's known by other people as the lesser vehicle. And which is kind of derogatory, but, you know, we're quite happy to take that we're happy to be lesser and best friends, you know, and the ordinary and, you know, not be as great, that's fine, you know, not have the problem that a lot of the problems that come with greatness. And most of us are kind of conceited anyway, so it's kind of helps our conceit to be told that you know, you're lesser. So it's, you know, it helps us they do that, so we're happy for that. And

so,

but it's kind of like, more ordinary tradition. It's more kind of down to earth kind of thing and doesn't have much emphasis on, you know, gods and celestial figures and bodhisattvas. And it's kind of like reality as it is and learning how to be present forward seeing it as it is and Discovering the spiritual realm in the reality actually actually is rather than kind of some flights of mystic fantasy fantasy. Not that Mahayana is that way but but I guess I said the wrong things you have to be very sensitive to what you say. He can't relax. But that's okay. It's okay because I'm, I'm a Zen Buddhist priest also. So I'm talking about us me.

So

so so I thought it'd be a you know, really good for us to have a historical person to hold that role as a female role model for that possibility to kind of hold that possibility of women as practitioners, women as teachers. And so the statue that Lorraine has made his statue of mapa Jeopardy teaching That's in juxtaposition in a sense to a silencing of women's voices down through history. And we don't know we know very little about about about the great women teachers have existed down through the centuries, the life of women of nuns. And, in fact, the nuns order died out in Buddhism in Theravada Buddhism around the 13th century, and no longer exists in its original form. And in Lorraine went to see john Syndra, this Taro button, which is called a nun, which is not really technically a nun. But she's, we treat her as a nun, she, but she came to to teach with a year in our center earlier last last year, when she was here, Lorraine that the artist went to see her to see what a Buddhist nun looks like, and talk to her about it. And, and Lorraine was very john Cinder was very clear that that, you know, enlightened women nuns are always very composed, you know, recompose themselves resettle concentrated

center until the statue should be that way. But Lorraine taking artistic license didn't share that view. And so what she created was a statue that's actually leaning forward quite a bit is not composed in sense of being balanced was leaning forward and has her hands in a teaching mudra. And her mouth is a little bit open. And I love it because it's kind of like for me, I don't know what Lorraine was thinking about me it's represents this woman who's leaning forward into the world. And it has some passion or some interest and dedication, some involvement with reaching forward to teach people to help and to be entities and kind of in the world rather than removed from it or held back. And that she's teaching her mouth is open and she's teaching. And, you know, again, in contrast to historically what at times has been a silencing of women's voices in Buddhism, and certainly in other places, too. It's it's not inherently a problem in Buddhism. It just And

so I hope that the statue will inspire us all about the possibility of ordinary human beings becoming free and liberated. Sometimes the Buddha seems a little bit too, too much for us to emulate. And I hope that Mahapajapati also then becomes a representative of the many, many women who are disciples of the Buddha, who, who became renunciant, who became enlightened, either as nuns or as lay people. And there were many of them. And we have actually the records of a good number of them, what they taught and what they said and feel good about their lives. It's quite touching. To read the lives of these women and their suffering they had to address the women who lost their only child or lost their husband lost, the whole family died and the grief of that Sometimes it's sometimes it's easier to enter the spiritual life when you have that kind of loss, because your deepest attachment has been taken away from you. And so that, you know, gives us kind of a freedom then, because the worst has already happened. It's easier to let go further than and there's stories of women who were who were prostitutes. And then there were stories of women who were courtesans being much higher level very respectable, kind of prostitutes of the times, and all kinds of stories, but it's very the stories of these women is one story I read today of a woman who was a nun for 25 years. And she writes in those 25 years, every thought I've had is about sex. You know, she celebrated right 25 years what pain so she's gonna be paying, you know, and but then the end of the poem is describes her enlightenment. She's finally gets free. She said screen says Beautiful stories of freedom. Some of the stories of freedom kind of don't quite as often a good match for what we think spirituality is about necessarily, but in the kind understand the context and what it meant. There's one kind of nice one, I think it's kind of cute. Think of it what you want, but she says, she's kind of, She's so happy and she's become free. Just I'm free. I'm free at last, free, free of three things, the mortar, the pesto and that old husband.

So who knows what her life was like.

So

and then at the last thing I'll say kind of is that at the task at the Zen Center in San Francisco, coming from a Chinese tradition, a lot in Chinese Culture honoring the ancestors very important. And so, one things that happened in Buddhism in China much more than in India and other places. lineage

became very important and chanting the your lineage from yourself back to the Buddha and the Buddha to you is what they do every day. And so for example, I have this lineage paper because I was ordained in the Zen tradition that traces the lineage the call the blood lineage lineage from the Buddha, down through the centuries from one person to the next Buddha gave the teach the transmission to Mahākāśyapa. Mahākāśyapa gave it to Ananda, Ananda gave it to, you know, of course, down to Nagarjuna, and Bodhidharma and then Master Dogen and down to him down through the ages. And some of it just mythological. They just made it up, because the Chinese wanted to have a lineage chart. But historically, I'm inspired. I'm inspired by the idea of it, that Buddhism is handed down from warm To warm hand that Buddhism passed down from, you know, the living contact of one person to the other. And the fact that they were, this lineage paper that I have is there's about 92 people in it in the line lineage. And there's probably about, you know about that number of people here in this room. So that's how many people separate us from the Buddha. Because that kind of, I think, is quite quite something that's not very far away. And makes it much closer. So at the Zen center, they chant this lineage. And about some years ago, they said, Wait a minute, these are all guys. And they felt kind of stuck because, you know, you can't just kind of invent unless you're Chinese, you know, you. See, I blow it. For that kind of statement, I apologize. But anyway, it's a little bit harder in the modern world where we have we kind of are much more set of scholars. Criticism scholarly, you know, in best sense of the terms, when it's hard to just kind of invent things. We can't just kind of invent a living lineage that goes back to the Buddha for women. So with a Zen center was, they didn't do that. Or what they did was, they took all the names of all the enlightened women who were disciples of the Buddha. And they made that into a chant that they do, I think, most mornings, and they just chant those those. Those names, and I think we'll do that as part of the ceremony is will chant those names while those women so those women are still even though they live 2500 years ago, their names have not been forgotten. Some of their stories have not been forgotten. And the examples that they attained the ultimate goal that Buddhism points to is not forgotten. And my hope is that notice that we become a center, a community, that we are a center and community where no matter who comes through the door, they will find that they will be inspired that day to, if they wish, can follow the path of practice to becoming fully free.

So, it is nine o'clock, what I like to ask you ask for your patience for maybe five minutes or so. And I'd like to hear because I don't know how this was for some of you. And I would like to have a chance for some of you to respond to what I've said so far. And maybe I'm not going to respond in return much because of the limited time but if some of you would like to say, you know, response, something troubled, you guys said or seemed inappropriate or some comments, yes. The 24th. So the following. As I've invited, there's about half a dozen or so women teachers who I've invited to come and be part of it. Yes, I remember that you were assigned to by I

think it was Jack Kornfield. to, to do a little book of something

about women women's teacher, right. You tell us

about that story. I think I might have told a story some years ago that we had. I think we I don't remember so well anymore. But it's a little book that I helped Jack edit called teaching teachings of the Buddha. I did a lot of the work for it. He hired me to do it. And so that's kind of how I did it. And at some point, I was horrified to realize that it was all guys again, because well, it wasn't just teachings of the Buddha. It was actually all kinds of teachings down through the history of Buddhism of different teachers and stuff and with all these male teachers. So when I realized that I very quickly in the back Jack said, we can't do this and then try to find out some way to include some of the voices of the women. And so there is some now in the book, the books available still, I think so. Yeah.

And so some of these poems of the early Buddhist women are in that book. Yes.

How we feel, this is not the first time.

For me, it's that emotional level that is disappointing. And it's not only Buddhism, so kind of,

I get this feeling of

kind of keeping away from old religions because of this gender specific attitude.

So she says she says she's very uncomfortable and want to stay away from religions, because it seems so prevalent religions some way in which the doors are close to women. And now in Buddhism also, in some ways, hearing the story of the Buddha. And there are different interpretations of this story. It sounds on the surface. Remember I said he didn't actually say no, he just said enough. So, you know, is that just a polite way of saying no. And there are different interpretations. And one of them is I don't I'm not very satisfied these interpretations, but one of the classic interpretations is that, that saying enough, was meant specifically wasn't said what it was not saying. And so for example, a tradition which elevates the Buddhist to being almost omniscient, we'll say the Buddha knew that He was going to have a anons order that way. Because he did he didn't have it, he wasn't gonna do something he, you know, he didn't know he was not going to do it so I get that confused

and and but the

but he's saying enough was specifically come up a job buddy that she was a queen she was used to getting her way and whatever that that if he had said yes to her too soon that she needed to be somehow humbled or something or be willing to kind of something. So it was kind of up to you saying no to her temporarily in order to kind of humble her I suppose. So when she come back the second time, I guess, and ask again that then, you know, she'd come in much more humble almost eight. So it's not a very satisfying interpretation but 30 interpretations. And people like to believe the Buddha was not misogynist or didn't, you know, wasn't against women in any kind of way. And certainly he had

a lot of women disciples, and he spoke very highly of his women, some of the women women in his circles and, and certainly respected their capacity not only to become enlightened but to become teachers. And he did, you know, allow for the nuns or to happen at some point. But then down through the history of Buddhism, certainly has been a lot of doors close to women and women treated as second class citizens and in the Buddhism and stuff like that. And hopefully we don't see that as inherent in the practice, and in the profound teachings of the Buddha gave, but rather has to do with the social conditions, the cultural conditions that we all, you know, live it live in, in some of them, which we're still probably playing To

someone over here

The other thing that's been said about this is that back in ancient India Can you conditions were much harder for women in all kinds of ways. And for women to be renunciant wandering around alone in India without any kind of protection, which some people think was you know, was kind of unheard of it was kind of like no one in the right mind thought this was a safe thing for people to do. And I saw that in Thailand to this day, where one very famous monastery in the jungles where I stayed in Buddhist monastery. The men had these nice little nice to a nice okay funky but little cookies, little huts deep in the jungle very nicely off in the jungle and be by yourself. And the women had to stay in this compounded area that had this fence and barbed wire around it. And it was explained that it was simply not safe for the women to be out in the jungle by themselves. In fact, there was a lot of problems there, there was, you know, we regularly had our little cooties broken into and things stolen. Even though the doors were locked, there was a lot of theft and a lot of violence in the area. So there's some feeling wasn't safe for the nuns there too, you know, they had to kind of be protected. So the Buddha part of his reluctance had to do with that. And, and part of this those conditions those rules had to do with the cultural conditions at the time it was acceptable.

Yes, please.

Yeah. And so either we have the counterfeit version these days,

or

with a terrible edition itself, then I haven't studied these texts, but the commentaries started late much later after that. thousand years, try to explain how this can be teaching still continue. And the Buddha was somehow because Buddha is never wrong. So what? You know, how does that How did that work out? I don't know those explanations, but, but I do know that if you study the history of Buddhism, it's relatively common to have a prophecy for how long Buddhism would last. And, and so there was like the 500 year prophecy because of this woman thing. And then but then and then they became after five after 500 years, there's suddenly these these mysterious texts arose, it said it actually was going to be 1000 years. And then at some point, leftist humor centuries, went on, it became 2500 years or

5000 years. And so it's very convenient religious people find very convenient ways of you find in a cave or, you know, you have this revelation and, and, you know, things are said right again. So it's very interesting how the progression is 500,000 5000 you know how long the Dharma will last. And, and this is very complicated teachings around this 500 year thing. One idea is that after 500 years, there's the number last Sony is purity. 500 years now it begins to kind of decay for 500 years. And it gives it that gives you 1000 years, and then another 500 years, it's the counterfeit Dharma, that's the word to 1500 year cycle. But then the question of the people in ancient in old time Asia was from when do you start counting, because they didn't have the same kind of, you know, interest in chronology as we do, especially coming out, especially coming out of India. And so there's various calculations of when the counterfeit Dharma was going to start. And it turned out for Japanese Buddhism, this was a big thing. And they decided at some point in the 1200s that they were living in the in the age of the counter. At dharma. And this was a time when no one when the practice was no longer efficacious that no one could practice anymore in order to become unliking, who simply wasn't possible anymore. And so then there was various. This is a very important teachings in Kamakura, Japan. And so then various schools of thought arose in Japanese Buddhism to counter that idea. And one of them is kind of a somewhat of a Lutheran view of liberal. liberation by grace. Yes, it's true, you cannot become enlightened anymore. You can't, you can't practice you can't. Self power, you're using your own abilities to become enlightened, it's no longer available to you. So when you have to rely on what they called other power, hierarchy in Japanese, and, and other power was this celestial Buddha called Amida Buddha that you had to go through and you couldn't do due to a good work. She couldn't You couldn't, you know, he had to chant his name, but you couldn't change his name in order to get saved. You said the chant his name of pure faith, and then through His grace, you would be saved. So, Grace rather than good works, that sound familiar? Those of you who are Lutherans so Buddhism is quite complex, and a lot of different strategies, a lot of different responses to the causes and conditions of its time. And here we are in Redwood City, in the peninsula, with our own causes and conditions and our time and place. And my hope is that we try to become as mindful and aware of all the causes and conditions and all that conditioning that we that has, that's present for us as practitioners, including that which is unseen today, that which was invisible to us. So make the invisible become visible, for the well being of all beings so that all people may be happy and free. Thank you