

# 2003-10-12 Death Penalty

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So the topic for today isn't that I don't really know very well how to present or talk about in this context. I was about 10 days ago, I was approached by Diana Lyons who works for the Buddhist peace fellowship in terms of imprisonment and work in prison correspondence prison bringing mindfulness practice to prisoners. And she told me that this week and this weekend is gonna is a national weekend of faith in action on the death penalty. And all kinds of people around the country, all kinds of people of faith, different churches, and synagogues and temples and stuff are somehow addressing this issue of the death penalty, I think mostly with the idea of opposing it. And this was a movement or initiative started by the Amnesty International. And so then she handed me this big packet of material

And

on this topic

and

on one hand, I was really delighted with the idea of maybe talking about it. And the other hand, I'm not sure how to talk about it in a way that's appropriate for the kind of context we are, and even had thoughts about whether it's appropriate at all to bring it up. And that's for you to decide by the end of today, but I'm gonna bring it up so I guess I thought it was appropriate enough. And,

and

one of the things I teach sometimes, especially in the intro class, Introduction to mindfulness, that what makes a mindfulness awareness sacred is when there's no outside. There's nothing which is considered unacceptable for awareness as an exclude from awareness. We don't pay attention to it.

And often people will divide their life into that was acceptable and not acceptable. I noticed that even in myself doing this last sitting with you all, at some point in the sitting, I noticed that I was trying to accomplish something in the sitting this morning before coming here. A Sangha member has given me a CD she's made for her children, but she's kind of passing around now of meditation she does for children as she falls asleep. And so I've been doing it together my little five year old son. And, and it's, she teaches a meditation where you, you pay attention to stillness at the end of the out breath at the end of the breath. So you need to really still so I just did that this morning with my son who listened to the CD. So notice I was sitting here, trying to go for the steel place, and trying to make myself still that place. All the stuff and it lasted for a few minutes, and then I noticed, wait a minute. This is not what's going on. I suppose To just you know, be present for how things are not trying to make something happen. So then I was present for how I was and I actually felt a little bit awkward, a little bit anxious in that right word, but concerned about this topic and what I might say and, and, and so then I just made the mental note to myself this, this is what's happening, as opposed to that that's supposed to be happening. So even here, there's a kind of very subtle kind of bifurcation between paying attention to something and ignoring other things, excluding something, you know, a sense for something better, something other. And if that's kind of the spirit of Buddhist spirituality, there's no outside for awareness what we pay attention to, then certainly some of the great tensions in our society, some of the great places of suffering and when fault lines of our culture are places we sometimes pay attention to. Also, we include that in awareness. I'm somewhat fond in a maybe odd way or I don't know That we have this anti abortion protests here on the street corner Thursday and Friday morning. If you've never been here Thursday and Friday morning should drive by and take a look and see what we have on our street corner. And the reason I'm fond of that is that is that the abortion issue is one of the great tensions in American culture, great Faultline tremendous amount of tension, say the least around it, hostility and, and,

and

and to have it happen here in our street corner is to kind of, you know, it's, it's we included in our awareness, something we include remindful of, we can't it's not just something you read in the newspaper or something distant, but it happens right here also, and so we include that in their awareness. So, um, find a witness like incense that we include the tension in the in the scope of awareness of our center. So occasionally, I think, you know, to look at something like death penalty, which is also one of the great tensions in Our society is quite appropriate. It doesn't probably not probably not gonna leave any of you bouncing out of here inspired and, you know, you know, filled with joy and delight and, you know, at wonderful spiritual truths. And maybe some of you came here for that today, you know, it's been a hard week and you come get some inspirational talk and death penalty.

So this idea of no outside everything's included, and also has the connotations from you the implications for me, that we try and Buddhist spirituality in Buddhist practice, not to polarize issues,

and not to see issues as black and white is for and against or them versus us. That doesn't mean a Buddhist don't have moral stance that they take and clear, clear ethical stance they take but To avoid the kind of polarization that can happen to me versus you or right and wrong. And so the question is how in mindfulness do we hold an issue like the death penalty in our views, opinions and experiences of it? in a way that's not polarizing, even though we might have clear opinions about what it is. And that's one of the reasons I had was reluctant to bring up a topic like this at a center like ours, because it lends itself to very quickly in people's minds to polarization. And there was some earlier this year there was a teacher who came here and made a comment about George Bush that somehow implied that everyone here was of course against George Bush. And not everyone here is against George Bush. And so that person I think, felt a little bit felt odd, you know, to come excluded and, and then there was apparently some quite I didn't I didn't read it, but I heard My interpretation of what I heard a series of very intense communication on our kind of an or whatever is called when people talk to each other on the one on the email about that apparently escalated quite viciously around this, you know, George Bush in all this in and when I was in San Francisco Zen Center Zen center was living in kind of the inner city where there were these apparently these landlords who treated the slum tenants quite badly. And Zen center was very careful when it got involved in the political politics of the community, not to do something that would alienate the landlords. And the rationale was the meditation hall they had a design center we should be a place with the landlords should also feel welcome to come meditate that the meditation centers everyone should feel welcome that isn't there's not a polarizing place. But then we have real differences and how to how without polarizing do we hold the differences and hold the views and hold the feelings in a way that feels appropriate for mindfulness. And my hope is that one of the contributions of Buddhism or mindfulness kind of thing to American culture isn't about not necessarily ability to solve problems, but very much an ability to hold what the problems are with attentions or what the feelings are in a way that's deeply respectful and allows for some deeper, something to happen when there's deep listening and presence. Some years ago, periodically I have given talks related to the death penalty, usually when California is going to execute someone. And some years ago, we're back at the meta the friends meetinghouse. I, we had one of these evenings. And there was some discussion. I don't really remember much of the discussion what happened However, I've heard that he goes what followed to kind of just stayed with me ever since. So the discussion went on for a while, and maybe it felt a little bit academic, you know, people talk about their views and opinions and statistics about, you know, death penalty and how it works or doesn't work and all that. And then this fellow stood up. And he said, he found himself somewhat in a difficult position being part of the discussion wherever, because he found himself on both sides of the issue. Okay. And then he explained that his brother was on his on death row. And his brother was on his on death row for having killed his parents. So both sides, you know, both the side of you know, personally loves, I suppose, whose brother Can you know, it probably he doesn't want it to be killed. On the other hand, he killed his parents and that sense of out rage or anger? Or maybe I don't know, he didn't say how he felt but but you know, on both sides, how is it to be in both sides and, and I don't think we had much more of a conversation after that a little bit hard, you know, partly out of respect for him, you know what, you know what's going on with him and kind of his current kind of authority when people suffer firsthand that way where people talk, you know, we don't want to talk talk abstractly, then.

You know, if we haven't been touched that touched in that kind of way ourselves. I think one of the one of the times I talked about death penalty was around the time of Polish Class, Class class. And I think maybe after Richard Davis was caught or he was sentenced or something. And that was one of the times. It's been a few times since I've been a teacher. But I've been all choked up and started crying a little bit. couldn't talk. In this role here, and that was one of the one of the times was in talking about that whole situation with politic class. And, and we have this guy, Richard Davis who says, you know, he was sure he was convicted of murdering his 12 year old girl.

And then

he was he was gonna he showed up at a sentencing hearing to be sentenced. And he showed no remorse at all for what he did. In fact, he was ready to kind of rub it in further to cause more harm. And so he was given, I guess, some time to speak at his sentencing hearing before the sentencing. And he got up and what I've read is he gave a rambling talk for about five minutes. And then he said that he did not sexually abused a 12 year old girl because she begged him don't do to me what my don't do don't do what my father has done to me. So his father sitting there and you know, in the courtroom right then You know, a sentencing hearings use case accusing the father of having sexually molested his daughter and his daughter, the daughter. And we talked about rubbing it in, you know, he's killed the daughter. And so not many people in California had much sympathy for Richard Davis.

And I think probably many people felt that he deserved to die that someone like that does not deserve to live.

And

and I know there are people in America who feel that certain people have given up their right to life of being alive as a right, that we can forfeit by our actions. And so I think that the President Bush is one of those people and he said something pretty much that along those lines

so

so there are powerful feelings that come up and there's you know, people who've been You know, family members of friends who serve up survivors of murder, and they have their anger, their rage, their feeling of emptiness, that's, you know, how do you take care of that is tremendous desire for revenge. And then you have people who have equally passionate feelings, for their own reasons, very deeply embedded in their heart, wanting to prevent the death penalty feeling that, you know, it's a travesty and feeling you know, quite convinced that there's a very very deep suffering in society at large and individuals from the existence of something like death penalty in our country. And he was right you know, you know, what's the right way? What is it right to, to execute someone Is it right to not

execute someone you know what's right and in this You know, this weekend is called the National weekend of faith in action on the death penalty. And in my probably inadequate reflections on this kind of topic, my feet my sense is that certain issues, ethical issues, like a death penalty, maybe like abortion, various things, that there is no ultimate authority, you know, unless you have one you like you have a God who provides it or a book or Bible or something. But there is, you know, there is no ultimate authority for some of the fundamental ethical questions around death and life and death, except as articles of faith. And maybe some of you will disagree with me and I'd love to hear that. But there's, you know, at some point, it comes down to an article of faith and article faith that rests on what does it rests on a book that we believe does rest on some higher authority does aggressive legal laws does it rest on logic or the rest on feelings on the heart, there's a rest on understanding of how things work, you know the cause and effect relationship and how things work in society at large. Do we do a cost benefit analysis of the death penalty? Some people argue that they do that argument. And they argue that the cost benefit analysis is heavily in favor of avoiding the death penalty. I read somewhere once that it costs something I forget exactly now, but something the order of \$3 million dollars for a state to execute someone. Well, it costs \$600,000 to imprison someone for life. So that's a big disparity in terms of cost benefit analysis financially at least. And then there people have pointed out that there's no evidence that death penalty has has as cut down on him rates in the states that have it. In fact, there's evidence that anything that it's the eight months after death penalty, homicide rate tends to go up slightly. So it could be coincidence, but who knows? So maybe Is it is it in the interest an article of faith? I think that kind of cost benefit analysis, you know, that's kind of cold way of saying it are quite convincing. Just, you know, many reasons you have, for example, Governor rye in Illinois who used kind of analysis like that, when you realize that a lot of people on death row were falsely convicted. And so enough, people were falsely convicted, that he put a moratorium on death penalties. And until this can be sorted out, I've read that it's in the last 30 years. Over 110 people have been falsely convicted is the right word, but more or less falsely convicted, ended up on death row. It shouldn't have been there. That's a lot. That's a lot of people. And so do we sacrifice the lives of some innocent people, for people who are, you know, not innocent. So that kind of cost benefit analysis exists and, and but one of the most powerful ones is the one the one that says that the pain in the heart of the surviving family members is so great

that

that somehow we have to take care of that pain, they deserve to have revenge they deserve to be appeased, like Mark loss said, you know, after after Richard Davis, you know, kept driving home the pain over and over again, showing no remorse. His conclusion was the only way to have some closure from this was to have Richard Davis dead because then he was going to keep kind of irritating the wound of suffering.

And then there's people who argue, well, death penalty is one thing, but maybe it needs to be limited. Maybe the extent to which is used is so great that it's in so many different situations that you know, it's

really inhumane. So, for example, United States, apparently, as a ninth as 2000, year 2000, United States was one of four countries in the world that executed people who are under 18. And the other countries were China, the Congo and Iran. No, no. Maybe I'm wrong about that. Congo, Pakistan, and Iran, I think, and, and since then, the Congo and Pakistan have kind of, you know, change their mind. I don't know what it means in the Congo, where they seem to have a lot of massacres.

And so what is it for United States to have This you know, laws that are willing to put juveniles to death. So what is it? What is Buddhism have to offer this What does have to do with Buddhist practice? I think one of the things is certainly to feel all this to feel all the feelings and concerns and despair, anger, frustration in all directions, you know, for the other people, the other views and all that and how we feel, but also to feel our own if we've also been the victim of a crime or crime at that level. It happens even in small ways, you know, how do we feel this morning, I used to come down here today. I got in my car drive down here. And I noticed that my sideview mirror was pushed back Oh, so I got out of the car to push it, you know, snap it back. But when just push back, it had been broken. So I suppose some car drove by knocked it down and broken He just kept driving and hitting run. So I'm a victim of hitting run this morning. You know, so how do I feel about that? I certainly had feelings that came up for me. So sort of how do we feel? How do we sit with all this? And I think that the practices of mindfulness are really crucial. Because what mindfulness teaches us is a number of things. One is to hold the feelings to learn how to hold feelings, no matter how beautiful or how difficult the feelings might be, how to hold them in awareness, which is not going to be reactive. There's not going to be swept up in reactivity.

And

then why why is that useful? Because we activity often is gets into further trouble or activity in retrospect, often in situations where we wish we hadn't done that. By not being reactive. It gives us some space to allow wisdom in deeper understandings to surface the movement towards revenge anger that can that can give rise to revenge is often arising out of feelings of emotions. And are there other ways of relating to our emotions then giving into them or speaking to, you know, kind of. And I'm sure there's arguments on both sides for the need for revenge. Just move to the side side of your family survivors. I know there are family survivors who have pointed out that revenge did nothing to them to their pain. They thought it they thought it would. But after the death, execution, they realized not much changed. And I could well imagine that there are people who said the opposite is the only way they had closure in a situation like that. But the whole the feelings and perhaps wait until the feelings of revenge have passed until the feelings of anger have passed or been, no longer dominate. So that's some other movement. can occur, and other other movements that can occur. And I think this is the other aspect that Buddhism has to teach. And that is that Buddhism teaches that the heart or the mind is a process and not a thing. And the heart and mind is is malleable, changeable, it can be shaped it's shapeable. And so how do we shape it? Do we take responsibility for shaping it? Do we help people in shaping their hearts and their minds with a Polly Klaas murder, there was probably



many of you that her father Marc Klaas got very actively involved in in as an activist in this field in various ways. His mother took a very different route and apparently she had a spiritual practice is connected to our she'd been spirit rock little bit and, and her response and her only response but the mindset afterwards She parently was counseled quite a bit by Ram Dass, who came and worked with her and, and you know, so it kind of very different approach where she had a spiritual approach where she tried to process and deal with this in a spiritual way in a personal way that way, the father took it to a public arena as his way of responding to it. You know, both are probably, you know, appropriate in their own way, on way, but there are different ways of doing it. So, Buddhism teaches the malleability, the change ability of the human heart. And if we realize that, then what if we take that into account? Do we sit then and just take our feelings whatever they be as being fixed as having fixed authority, this is the way they are, or are there ways of working in developing and changing our how we are? It's been said that there are two big movements in Buddhist spirituality one is letting go And the other is the movement of development of cultivating oneself. And in terms of ethics, there's the side of the precepts of money, which means to abstain the side of abstaining from things. And then there's bhavati, which means to cultivate oneself. And both those are very important parts of Buddhism to only abstain not cultivate oneself is a you know, to shoot is to a very limited kind of spiritual life. The only cultivate to oneself and not abstain, perhaps, is also very limited and, and short sighted. So to cultivate one to cultivate with one's capacity for compassion, to cultivate one's capacity for kindness, to cultivate one's capacity to let go of holding a resentment of fear is part of what spirituality has offer.

The most famous story that's given around on this topic from the Buddhist tradition is that Aṅgulimāla, who was a mass murder in time of the Buddha, and the Buddha went into the forest to try to stop him from murdering his next victim. And then Aṅgulimāla decided, well, a Buddhist monk is defenseless, has no weapons is committed to non violence, so it's going to be easy one. So he goes out to kill, kill the Buddha. But the Buddha succeeds in convincing them otherwise. And rather than killing the Buddha, Aṅgulimāla becomes a disciple of the Buddha and becomes a monk shortly thereafter, the king whose responsibility is the protection of the people in the kingdom gathers together his army big army because I'm gonna model is considered to be quite dangerous to go into the into the woods And to capture and kill Aṅgulimāla. And he comes to the Buddha and who's living there in the woods and he says to the Buddha, and the Buddha sitting there in you sitting probably on the ground or whatever. And it's must be a hot day in India because behind the Buddha is a monastic attendant, a monk who has a big fan, and he's kind of fanning the Buddha, keeping him cool. And the king comes up to the Buddha and he says, I'm here in the woods to find Aṅgulimāla. Have you seen him given the idea where he is? And the Buddha says, Let me ask you a question. If you had found out that Aṅgulimāla had given up his evil ways, and instead had become a Buddhist monk, among renunciant, what would you do? And the king said, Oh, that in that case, would leave him alone and probably had bowed down back down to him in respect for what he's endeavoring to do. And then the Buddha says, Oh, well, this monk behind me who spanning me is unbelievable. At which point the Kings the description says the Kings here hears stood up, probably out of fear. But then he kept his basically his promise and left Aṅgulimāla alone. So that's a very powerful image, you know, of a mass murderer being left alone because of, you know, becoming green and engaging himself in spiritual life.

We have in America kind of separation of church and state. But we also in America, don't have it. In many ways, and one of the ways, in my view, apologize for my view. But is that because America is a democracy, where we elect our elected officials, that it isn't just like a king who's there who's responsible for the protection of the people, everybody in a sense, in the market, democracy is responsible. indirectly. And so everybody has to make these very fundamental decisions in the electoral process. And so issues that are very fundamental like that rely on faith issues, like abortion or death penalty and things like that, that people have to kind of fall back on, I think, on some very deep places within them. Places of faith based on deep, deep knowing or understanding or whatever. And so in that so because of that, the separation of church and state in America is not so powerful. Maybe we say the separation between state and state There's not so absolute as people might want it.

And

and so in a sense, we all find ourselves in the position of the king. What do we do, when we encounter encounter someone who is genuinely trying to change him or herself, in Muslim was radical in fundamental ways a person can be changed. Is it possible to restore some ways it possible to, to, to create such a fundamental change of heart and human beings in human being, that no matter what the crime has been, that they can again become productive citizens or appropriate to be out in the world or, or certainly not executed? And I think that's one of the things that Buddhism over and over again, tries to teach is that people can be changed. We can change in some deep way. There's another story from The discourses of a man who was sentenced to die. And he was being led through the city to his execution. And there was, I think it was a dot there was a daughter, I think of a wealth, very wealthy businessmen, maybe the king, I don't know, that town is on our balcony watching this men being led off to execution. And she falls in love with him. And so she begs her father to intervene and to stop the execution and let her marry him. So he, you know, she's so adamant about this, somehow I don't know that she succeeded succeeds in her wish. And the guy's forgiven and he marries a daughter and becomes part of his wealthy family, I guess and

and at some point,

he realizes he has access to all this wealth or something. And so he decides he's going to, you know, take off with it. So he, he suggests to his wife to go for a walk up to the mountains and go for pleasure walk. And they come to the edge of a cliff.

And

he's going to push her off the cliff. I guess his plan is to say that some target push to offer something, he gets all the money and gets to go off. So here's someone who was saved from execution only, in a sense to be able to do a crime again.



And

but then, this is a wise woman. And so she says, Oh, dear husband. You know, I'm, I'm weak, I can't defend myself and, you know, no, you can do this. But at least you know, it's the, the, you know, the important duty of a wife to always honor the husband. Before I die, I can at least honor you one last time. To walk around you three times walking around something three times clockwise, and Buddhism is Indian culture as a way of showing respect. So let me walk around you three times, you know, to offer my respect one last time, let me do this one thing before I die, great, good karma, whatever. So she starts walking around him. And when she's behind him, she pushes him off the cliff.

And the Buddha does it when the Buddha hears about this, he doesn't condone this kind of activity. He doesn't say, you know, this was a good thing that she did this or the right thing to do. But he does praise her for being a wise woman. And but it's quite a difference, you know, Aṅgulimāla, and this other guy. One has been engaged in the process of change, personal change, and the other didn't, wasn't it And that change. So is it possible to change? Is it possible to help other people to change? I think what the Buddhist tradition has said down through the ages is that there's no guarantee that we can help other people change. But it's very dangerous to be involved in interrupting other people's karma, or the people's opportunity for the going through their own process of change and working on that. So, there have been periodic times in Buddhist history, where the death penalty has been abolished in favor of things like you know, life imprisonment or other things like that. So those two things, you know, I think what, you know, the kind of the offerings of Buddhism that somehow makes sense for me to speak about today. One is to develop a wise capacity, to hold our feelings to hold our suffering to not shut it down. But to learn how to work with it and open to it in a way that's helpful for everyone concerned, so that the wise action can come out of us. So that that part of us if there is a part of us, that is moved, to be compassionate, or moved to develop our compassion, that part of ourselves which is moved to be changed ourselves. So we become a different kind of person, we become a better person or more, more that part of us. We can try to cultivate that in our feelings and our emotions don't stand in the way of that. And the other thing that offering in Buddhism is this thing about change, the human heart can be changed, and in that the human hearts can be changed. Do we want to give people the opportunity to have that change? Is that something we want to do or not?

So I think I talked too long, and I probably talk too much About my opinions about this topic, which is very powerful for people, and I'm sure there are very diverse views and opinions here in this room. Maybe we can have a little bit of discussion now and as you wish, but we get myself maybe too many times, I apologize. I hope we at least understand that, that that part of us Buddhist spiritual life is too open to what's there, to our feelings and our thoughts and our beliefs, and to examine them and look at them again and again and again. So what discussion Do you have today? Yes, Kevin.

A couple comments. First of all, appreciate having some social sort of activism broaden the ideas or teachings and the stuff we're doing here. Otherwise I haven't seen much of a connection for that here. I appreciate that. Second, Lee, it reminds me of a story or I don't know if it's true, but something some Native American culture, I heard a story coming to me that stated that the current worst criminals are given the suppose treatment of being loved the most. They were sort of set aside in a quarantine area as people who needed more love on the special because they were probably suffering the most sort of online for me. That's always sort of inspiring, different perspective. I don't know if that's true.

Could you hear that?

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, yes. Question about karma. So, for somebody like Mark

Ah

I think it's pretty clear that traditional Buddhist teachings would say that if someone has the intention to harm someone else who intends harm on someone else, that that's negative karma. And one of the Buddhist rationales is many Buddhist rationales against the death penalty, but one is that also for the sake of the executioner, the executioner creates tremendously bad karma that you know just you know if you knew what what it was causing executioners and karmically you're psychically inside, you would never wish it on anyone to do that. That the extreme

with somebody who simply supports Please yes

I would like to thank you

some inspiration settling with my anxiety because the courage to do the best you can

potentially difficult subject and also to relate it to loose principles that might help me when I believe so.  
Yes

Not to you I try to complicate it too much.

Considering the position,

people in the military soldiers who

are on the frontlines

by duty are given the responsibility being execution, telling other people and as we all know, frequently given the orders to, at times kill innocent and many of those soldiers, having families being parents returning home and having to deal with

so the question of soldiers and what about ethical issues around killing and executioner's killing a soldier And their karma and they're coming back and facing their families and a whole whole series of issues there. When I was in Burma practicing with the Pandita. You know, he, I listened to a lot of his Dharma talks, almost every, you know, give talk almost every day. And one of the most common themes for his discussion for the camp came up periodically, was he would tell us stories of soldiers that came to meditate in his monastery. And he has people who came from both sides of the fighting in Burma and people who were the guerrillas fighting the government. And he had government soldiers fighting the guerrillas. And he was described to me, you know, to us, how gruesome their their activities had been. Some of them had tortured other people and killed people and, and, and then they'd come to some point they'd retire or somehow I don't know what they do, but they stop and they would come to the monastery to meditate. And he would talk about how incredibly difficult it was for them to meditate. Because some point in the meditation, they came to a level where they had to face the karma or the psychic imprints or the psychic residence traces of what their actions had been. And, and he talks about how he talks, he would talk very graphic about difficult was physically and emotionally and how those people who saw through those ex soldiers saw through would sit to the point of exploding and at some point, they would explode, I guess something and, and then they would see through the break break through to the other side and to some other level of pieces and breaking through what was going on in their psyche. But at least some of those talks he said when he was talking about some of these individuals, he never really expected them to go beyond a certain level in their spiritual practice in this lifetime. Because of what they've done. You think they could break through a certain level of the holding of the what was going on there, but they wouldn't be able to go much further or beyond a certain point. With Aṅgulimāla, he said he became an our heart fully enlightened, some point. And then he went off into the village for alms because Buddhist monks depend on the food of people who put food in their bowl. And so he's going off for alms. And the villagers recognize him as someone who's killed people, maybe in the village, that village itself. And so they start throwing rocks at him. And he comes back to the Buddha to camp to the monastery, all bruised. And so someone asks are like the Buddha or something the Buddha explains that, in fact, unbelievable is fully liberated. His heart is free. There's no anger or fear or desire that's grips grips his heart anymore, he's really free. However, he's not free of his past karma. And that's still you still have

to live out some of the consequences of that. And therefore, you know, the consequence social karmis Short cause and effect is that, you know, the people in the villages are still angry at him and afraid of him in another place. So there's in the discourses of soldier, it's sometimes translated as a professional soldier comes to the Buddha and says, I come from a lineage of soldiers. And we teach that those people who die in battle, go to a special heaven for the battle slain war warriors. And you agree, and the Buddha says, Don't ask that question. Yeah, yes. Again. Don't do shouldn't ask the question. You shouldn't ask that question asked me that question. And he asks a third time. And when you ask a Buddha a third time he has to answer. So he asked the third time and so the Buddha said, okay, you asked for it. And he says, No, it's the opposite. That Soldiers who die in battle they go to special hell called the hell of the slain choked slain soldiers. And, and there are the reason rationale for that is that in order to die in battle, if you're fighting, you're wishing harm. On the other hand, if you wait as long as you're wishing harm on another, you're creating very bad karma that then creates this kind of consequence. So are Buddhists against it Buddhism then against war or against people serving in the military or being fighting wars like that? Historically, you don't find a lot of evidence of Buddhism's speaking out against the Kings usually spin kings down through the ages, arguing against them having standing armies and there's no evidence the Buddha spoke out against the standing armies of his time. He didn't go to the kings and say, you know, don't don't have armies and

indirectly, it seems to be what he was teaching. And not exactly that but in great pacifism and being peaceful and all that, but you didn't actually come in Make a public stand, you tend to see in Buddhism, a kind of a recognition of, of, there are different realms, and there's a kind of more spiritual side of life. And then there's a more side of politics or state, and that Buddhism is tended to overall, historically stay out of the realm of the state. And that state has to be the state's responsible for protecting the citizens. And Buddhism will offer wise advice for that. But that doesn't get too much involved in real estate, if soldiers they have to do what they do. But, you know, Buddhist teachings are very clear that that's bad karma. You wouldn't wanna get close to that. But, you know, sometimes that's the teachings. Buddhism doesn't want to say that or try to stop that or get in the way overall, the impression I had. But I think that it all changes here in the West, because it's hard for me to imagine in a democratic society, that it's as easy as has been historically in the past, to have this segregation between the state And faith. And you know what I state my non personal conscious conscience. And so I think we're asked in this modern world to face some of these issues in a way we haven't in the past. Yes

concerns please

look at this

speaking

experience that I had when the subject but

and within the village

talking about what they call what they call the American war, and how he was called to do something to take some action

was appropriate for him was to start making calls about people

Recall the story of a woman who was on one of those boats, anywhere over a million million Vietnamese in this, he has birth.

Our image there, and this one boat contains this 115 year old girl and some pirates

attacked the ship. And one of them raped this girl.

And she jumped overboard to commit suicide.

And either himself was on a boat or some people told him about the story and he told us that how

he reacted to that. People were

wanting this person punished. And I'm sure that there were people who added

executed himself. And that's when I first understood the connection about karma

to talk about how if this person is executed, that's the end of their ability to do any growing or changing, to let this person sit with their own feelings and conscience for the rest of their natural lives, is the thing that's going to get that person to think about it and change and perhaps change and perhaps grow up. And isn't that what we really want to have happen? Very, very touched by

the idea that interfering in that way is not the most responsible thing to do that we need to do is

that not their own karma? Do what it was doing.

So, you know, I've been teaching meditation classes and so that person

is now in

the classes about

which he misses a group of people.

And there are about 100 prisoners that were teaching and

I don't know

in general what each of these people has done, but I know that they're there for several life sentences.

They are heavily summers because they've set up set the level for prison so these people are not likely to ever get out.

Thank you. My suspect

intuition So, the most of these men have done something when they were teenagers.

Likely in an urban panic situation.

They self select

out of this class. And

most of these whether they're boys waste

prison decades

my experience with these men is

still touching.

The idea that we would execute

is another side to this



was asked to come witnessed the execution of a high prisoner in Sacramento where

he did in fact carry out that execution. And he said the experience of the trauma

all prisoners and guards

was our

last one and then we'll stop

remembering, speaking that also had flown up to not on flight. And he at one point was Vietnamese veterans many

selves. And one of them said that he had never been able to be in the same room with children

that 617 children

China, Vietnam. And take my mom

basically said 17 children, and he gave the number of children who die every day of starvation. And he said, you can make a change, you can help the children of the world.

Man to become a Buddhist monk itself is like to

say bye.

So it's a very emotional issue all this and I don't know who's here in the audience, some of you I know. But I certainly did. years ago when that fellow stood up and said he was on both sides of the issue. I had no idea that he was in the audience. He was in the in the group. So I don't know who here who is here and what level of of feelings emotions of history of background this issue that anyone have has here. And I certainly, you know, asked for, you know, forgiveness or something like that, for bringing up a topic that may be very painful, difficult and, and, and divisive. And I hope that as we that as practitioners of the Dharma petitioners of mindfulness, that we really can dedicate ourselves to trying to find some way to live in the midst of very difficult issues in a way that's not divisive. That, that we find a way that no one is excluded from our hearts, regardless of what position they have or what they've done in their lives. Ajahn Chah once said, Everything occurs within the heart. So do not have to have no outside but to include everything is is the spiritual direction of the Buddha's teachings. So thank you all very much