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SPEAKERS

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So you know today is my favorite American holiday because of celebrating Martin Luther King. And the and I wanted to since the beginning of the year do what I usually do at the beginning of the year is to talk about the core teachings of Buddhism out of which all of Buddhism comes, which is the Four Noble Truths. And these are the four noble truths that are the insights what is seen, sometimes is actually called a vision of freedom of how to become free. And, you know, as with Martin Luther King was champion was freedom for people here in United States and abroad as well. And he was a person who, you know, in the surface was thinking he focused on, you know, political freedom, external freedoms people to feel unafraid and their life to be to have a life where they were unafraid of their children when what happened to their children, because the children, rather than being into children being raised in situations which was threatening even to their lives or threatening them to poverty was a life where their children could be raised. And with possibilities and justice. And so it's easy to see Martin Luther King as being about kind of external. But he pointed, I think, to some phenomenal capacity of the human heart to the human mind in being an apostle of non violence. That I mean that's really the one of the reasons why we have a holiday. And it's I don't know if anybody else in the world who's Maybe and maybe in India, they have holidays for Gandhi. But for someone who's, you know, really stood out as a champion of non violence, to have that celebrated is quite something and he I think he understood quite well, that in order to fight or struggle and nonviolent way, it required a lot of from the heart from the inner life. Something had to be very different in there than how the heart The mind is usually operates. There I met on retreat, and many years ago now, I was teaching retreat and this woman, the retreat told me her story of the Civil Rights days of going to the south to be part of a protest for civil rights in standing on a street corner with a group of other people protesting and these white, I suppose the racists came along in the pickup truck and jumped out of the pickup truck and beat them up. So the next day she said, she told me next day they went back and stood the same place. And the same people came and beat them up. Must probably went wasn't so bad. I mean, they come back the next day, but I'm sure was bad enough that you said the third day, they were standing there. And the same people came along in the pickup truck and jumped out. And one of the same men who had been punching them up before, stood above her with his fist, ready to hit her in the face. And their eyes met. And he looked her a looked into her eyes and he said, What are you doing? What are you doing, you know, three days in a row showing up so I can beat you up. And she explained, and that was the end of the violence, there was kind of a meeting of those two and they had a discussion, talk. I don't know what the long term consequences was, but to have the ability to stand there and receive this little violence and not retaliate, to be willing to go back again. And again, I think requires a tremendous amount of inner strength, and something inside that has to change. And I think Martin Luther King and his, you know, people he worked with, power they did was prepare people and get ready for this interchange that had to happen. And he talked about in his famous speech, I Have a Dream speech about the redemptive value of undeserved suffering.

I'm not a champion of undeserved suffering, then we should go looking for it. But the idea that it would be redemptive in certain search stances are the idea that somehow be transformative in certain circumstances is quite a phenomenal teaching in a world where people often run away from the suffering or deny it or attack other people for do something. But what does it take to be able to will be willing maybe what he meant was that people are willing to march and have dogs attack them and bullets. Shoot. I knew people who were threatened with lynchings and so horrible time and what is it to stand up against that with tremendous inner resolve to transform and change something deep inside? So the freedom of the of Martin Luther King must have been both external political freedom and deep internal freedom, spiritual freedom to climb liberation. And I believe that if you look at Buddhism, it was On the surface that primarily it's internal freedom, to see inner freedom of the heart spiritual freedom. But I believe that that inner freedom translates to external freedom translates to an external expression into the world, which I think is quite hopefully is revolutionary, hopefully will help transform our society. And perhaps Martin Luther King started from the outside in and Buddhism starts from the inside out. I don't know if that's true, but it's a simplistic way of seeing it. Maybe they meet on the streets, in the protests, against injustice, and I hope that's the case. The Martin Luther King is supposed to have said or wrote, an individual is has not started living until he or she can rise above the narrow confines of individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of humanity. And so that's also expresses some interchange You know, how do you change your view of yourself in the world. So your life is not only focused about your individualistic concerns, but somehow your vision is wide enough Your heart is big enough that the concerns of your neighbors of your city of your nation, or the world is also part of your scope of what you look at and they're concerned about.

So the Buddha focused on freedom and the kind of, you know, most kind of maybe essential freedom they did point to, was the freedom from what he called tanha. And tanha is a Pali word Buddhist word. That literally means thirst, and thirst I think of as a powerful word, you know, when you're thirsty, you know, just, you know, not only thirsty kind of, you know, your mouth is thirsty for water. But, you know, we use it as a very powerful word like the thirst For power thirst for money, you know to be driven in a strong way. And so sometimes it's called craving that are translated in English as craving. And I sometimes think of the word as being almost synonymous with synonymous with compulsion or drivenness. That the when the mind is driven when their mind is operating under compulsion, especially compulsion, when something in our inside of us gets contracted and tight and constricted, on fire agitated, that we suffer, that comes with suffering. And part of the reason why we suffer is because of that compulsion. We can't just tell our minds or hearts please stop doing that. You know, that's enough now. You know, I've been angry at my sibling. I've been angry at my coworker a bit angry at my boss for you know, long enough now. It's been five years. And it's time to stop, please. You know, sometimes things fade away or think sometimes things do change. But you know, it's sometimes not so easy to drop things or sometimes the thirst sometimes that people have is better translate better referred to as addiction. And we know that we have a society that's plenty of addiction in it. And addiction also is a compulsion that people can't stop they can't let go of. And whether it's addiction to alcohol or addiction to television or addiction to fame, or it's a lot of things addiction to entertainment, stimulation, always being busy. addiction to Facebook, addiction to, you know, violence. There's many things people are addicted to, they just can't kind of stop doing.

And we see that people who meditate because I think meditate meditation I think is very humbling. I hope it's humbling and good. way, if you if you don't humble yet, you're probably not meditating. humble and humble in the sense that you can't just, most people can't just say, you know, mind, stop thinking about that. You know, you might be have success for half a second or a second. And there are times when it comes right back and comes right back we can see and maybe a more subtle level, the

operating of compulsion, addiction, craving this thirsting. And this, this thirsting is a source of the Buddha said of suffering, partly it's suffering itself, that contraction, the constriction of it, but partly it's suffering because it leads to suffering. So that thirst or that addiction or the craving for power, can cause a lot of suffering in oneself and also in the world around us. That craving for status. Then we, you know, we want to be seen a certain way, and then maybe we're seeing that way for a short while and then something happens or fortune changes and we don't have our status anymore. And so that loss of identity becomes something very painful. And so we cling on to wanting things to be a certain way. And things turn out to be different. That clinging sometimes in sometimes it's referred to as rope burn out if you hold on too tight and the rope, you know flies out, you burn your hand. So, you know, the first noble truth of Buddhism is a truth of rope burn. And because it's the truth of the suffering that comes when you holding on tight and so the second noble truth is that this has to do with clinging or craving this holding on tight this compulsion. And the first noble truth is that if you do that, you'll get rope burn, heartburn, brain burn, but you know that so it said, it's better said than that, you know, there's that craving The cause of suffering was very interesting, I think, is that he did not use a pronoun to talk about the Four Noble Truths. He did not say, yours, you, you, you have suffering, and your suffering comes from craving, or me I suffer in my sickness and comes from craving. He just said that there's a truth of suffering. There is suffering in the world. There's also beauty and joy and delight, but there also is suffering. And there's also and it's and if you want to uproot that suffering, if you want to live a life free of suffering, you have to really understand the root causes of that suffering. And he said, the root causes is the craving. And so and so, but if you if a person has uprooted has brought an end, the compulsive qualities of the mind, the craving of the hearts, then that person does not have within him or herself. The source the seeds, the momentum to offer. So for example, if I don't you know, you know what say, if you know, I'm teaching, I'm teaching all of you right now. So to give back your very practical immediate example. So if my identity is tied with all of you thinking them a wonderful Dharma teacher, and I sit here, I don't make any sense. My wife wants to hurt me give a Dharma talk once. And she told me afterwards, that didn't make any sense. So it has been known to happen. And so if you know if I'm clinging to having all of you think I'm a wonderful teacher and like me in all kinds of ways, and I give this disastrous talk, then I could suffer unduly I mean, it's okay to feel regret, feel smell these people. I said, all the people It's unfortunate. And I, you know, it's okay to feel bad about that. But you know, to have my identity, you know, clinging to have to be this kind of person that everyone has to see me this way. It's just a headache or clinging is all kinds of things people cling to. So but if you don't cling, then that suffering is not going to happen in oneself. But this is the remarkable thing about the Four Noble Truths. One of the remarkable things if the person has matured enough spiritually, that they can live a life without clinging or grasping. That person then will not be the cause of suffering for other people. And that is a phenomenal gift of someone who has, you know, maturity and Buddhist practice.

Because, you know, we look around the world primarily when we see how much suffering humans caused to each other. And if you go behind the scenes, behind the scenes, into the hearts of the people who cause suffering. You don't think you have to go very far to see craving of one form or the other and greed, you find hate. You find a certain kind of clinging that comes out of fear and that can cause harm to others comes out of conceit. It comes to like the clinging to these radical separation of self and others that charges others or pushes others away. Someone who doesn't cling doesn't doesn't have those things. And so, you know, the, they might do something accidentally, that might hurt someone. But someone who has matured in this Buddhist spiritual bears rally will not be the source of suffering for other people. It doesn't it doesn't mean as it just said that they're not the condition for the suffering. If I put my come in here came into the hall today into the center today and left my shoes in front of the door. thought leaders you know, threw them off at the door that came in and just and then some of you walked out the door and tripped over my shoes and fell and you know, hurt your knee. You hurt it, you know, it was my accident. I wasn't paying attention to where I put my shoes but you know, but and you

know, I was partly the cause or the condition to cause for you condition for you hurting your knee. But if you're, if you suffer because of that. What if in the Buddhist kind of analysis of suffering, what's what how Buddhism defined suffering is not the inconvenience. It's not the physical pain of hurting your knee or the inconvenience of having to limp to work tomorrow or something. The suffering comes from the grasping the clinging that you your mind falls into as a result of that event. So it might some people might grasp on and cling to blame. So even like cling to a sense of being a victim, some people might cling to the sense of identities. How embarrassing I just practice mindfulness for 45 minutes. And then I didn't notice the shoes I tripped boy, I'm you know, mindfulness failure. And I can, you know, I should never go back to IMC, you know, or that may take up skiing with a big ski boots, or something. But the, the, the idea that the clinging the grasping is something that comes from the person who does it. And this is part of the very, I think, very challenging, and sometimes for some people, very offending teachings of Buddhism, the way in which Buddhism emphasizes we're responsible for our own suffering. And it takes a tremendous amount of courage and strength, to be willing to turn around and look deeply at ourselves and be able to cast Where we respond where what our responsibility is for suffering, it doesn't exempt people outside for their responsibility. I'm still responsible for having put my shoes there. And I need to apologize and make some amends, perhaps. But I'm not responsible for the suffering that arose out of it. So, you know, to say that is a delicate thing to say, because people hurt so much. Some people have such tremendous deep, deep suffering, that has really, it's clear Genesis in terrible things other people have done to them. And to kind of point to their wound and say, well, you're responsible for that wound. You know, just put salt in the wound. But this is what Buddhism is pointing us towards, and at times at times to go and tend to that wound and see how can we relate to In such a way that we can become free, free from our clinging free from our grasping free from the way we tighten up or freeze up, or close down, or numb out. How can we become sets at our heart free? How can we open up? And so that's really you know, one of the primary tax tasks of Buddhism and the Four Noble Truths really points to that. So it puts your noble truths are the truth of suffering. There is suffering in the world, the truth of the cause of suffering, which, as I've said, is craving and then the truth of the possibility of ending that suffering through the cessation

of that craving. And this is really the good news of Buddhism, even though it's said in a way that you know, it's not poetic or inspiring. It says that, in that in that craving, the craving that produces suffering, craving can be brought to an end. And when that craving comes to an end, the suffering that comes from that craving can also end as well. You know, it doesn't it's not it's not a statement that is, you know, full of rejoicing and happiness and delight and peace in itself. It is kind of a technical statement. But that's really what it's pointing to. It's it's pointing to a possibility that in Buddhism is called Maha sukha. Great happiness. Great happiness of a Buddha is the happiness of having ended the movements of the heart, the addictions of the heart of the mind, and did the clinging Socratic grasping and with the great the great audacious claim of Buddhism is that it can be done completely. It can be done in many ways. It can be done in stages, and certainly can lessen the craving craving and grasping, but it can also be done completely And so then, but it's not an easy thing to do. And so this is where the preparation is important where the where the practice is important. And so that people who have a vision of the possibility that freedom and the value of that freedom then become interested in what does it take. There are some people who expect it to be instantaneous to be quick, the quick approach sudden enlightenment, I think the more realistic thing is a slow and steady, slow and steady path of growth and development, and might have its quick moments, sudden moments, but the slow and steady engagement and a path of practice that we walk in traditionally, you know, the wording in the old days is to walk walk the path to a steady, ongoing walk. And, you know, and it's really I think it's a lifetime kind of path to walk on. And so this is a path that helps us with this process. of coming to an end of clinging. And so it's a path of having right division is quite the word is right. It's often used these eight eight to a full steps. And the word right you know, people react to the word right. But it's kind of it's it has the same

meaning of the word, right? As when you say that you have the right tool for the job. So you have a carpentry job. And, you know, you need a right tool you're doing, you need a saw, you don't need a measuring stick. And so you know, you need the other you need the right song, for to actually do the job if you're gonna. So it's, you know, in that sense, it's right, it's the appropriate, it's the one it's the appropriate task is the appropriate activity for the purpose of coming to the end of suffering. So the first is the right division. And so and so to have a vision of a possibility to revision or insight into our intuition. have freedom to have a vision to see and to have a view a way of seeing a perspective where we begin looking at our life through the perspective of the Four Noble Truths. And it's and I think the reason for this why the Buddha formulated this way is he was, in some ways very efficient. He wanted to have the clearest, most direct route to freedom, independent of the kind of complexities that can arise when you have religious metaphysics. When you have bringing in supernatural beliefs, when you bring in beliefs that cannot be proved, beliefs, which are in some ways, authoritarian, you know, or some tradition says this is the truth and the only truth. The Buddha, you know, didn't present a path that required that kind of belief or required authoritarian kind of obligation to a tradition or teachings or whatever. But rather, he pointed to the Most direct non metaphysical, non supernatural pointing to something which in a sense is very ordinary. And something I'm sure all of you, in your life have experienced and know in particular, certain situations, you probably all of you have seen, how you've suffered, and how that suffering came because of what you're holding on to. And there's probably been a few times in your life where you saw that this is not worth it, and you've let go. And in that felt the relief of that suffering. And even my little kids know how to do that occasionally.

So the direct route is to have this vision type of understanding. This is what we're all about, and not getting sidetracked by a lot of other metaphysical beliefs, ideas we don't understand or can't believe or can't understand, supernatural Things, there's deities have no role in Buddhism, I mean, there is a kind of deity Buddhism has deities, all kinds of deities, but they have no essential role for this for the path of practice. And, and so the Buddha was pointing something very simple. But then the implications of it are quite profound and challenging when you realize how deep you can go. And then the next two, that's right vision right to you. And then there's a right intention to have the right aspiration or intention to have the right kind of sense of purpose for what my life is about what I'm trying to do. And I think one of the profound, really profound treasures in everybody's in every human being is the intention or purpose, which they set their life to be about. And I think it's a really profound thing to reflect deeply about what a person's most profound or most significant intention they have around which they want to organize their life and many people don't spend Time to really consider that they just kind of follow along with what society family tells them or the direction that society gives them more. Or there are many too many people don't have the opportunity to think that ask that question or themselves, because they're struggling, just cope. get by in life. But ask deeply, you know, what is my deepest intention and to have an intention that supports us in this, I think beautiful path of freedom, freedom from suffering. And then, and then, you know, it's not going to come free freedom. It requires being making an honest assessment of how we live our lives, and then beginning to live a life that is in harmony with the freedom we want, or live a life that's in harmony with living undriven and addicted, not craving, not caught up in greed, hate delusion. And so what are those ways of living that we have to start living? So one of the ways is being careful with our speech. So the third step of the Eightfold Path is right speech. So start paying attention to how we speak and not speak lies. Chances are that if you lie, for the most part 99% of the time, I'm sure of lies. It's motivated by greed or hate, or fear. It's some kind of clinging, some kind of thing where it's stuck on. And so to start, is just to start training ourselves not to lie is a training to move towards freedom and away from not being free. And then there is right action to not only speech but also how we act in the world. And so we try to act in the world. So we don't cause harm in the world. We don't steal. We don't engage in sexual misconduct that can cause harm. We don't engage in drugs and alcohol. That too, you know, can make people People do things they later regret. And so because all of those things, chances are that if you engage in them, chances

are that you're been you're in bondage by something, chances are that you're caught by some forces within you. It's not easy to see how we're caught because sometimes we're very quick to feel the impulse to act in ways that can in somehow feel that we're justified in it. Feel that what comes from me, it's deep inside and, you know, I know what's right or, but really, we're kind of caught in the vise of greed, hate delusion, fear many times. And so start acting in the world in ways that is in harmony with being free, not acting neurotically. According to the precepts. Buddhist morality, Buddhist ethics is not meant to be kind of a pure Tat, puritanical because then it just replaces one form of clinging with something else. But, but to begin exploring our actions, seeing how can I come from a place of freedom inside, rather than from a place of being caught.

And then there's right livelihood. So this is for submitters, as many people it's a big part of their life, their livelihood, how they get their livelihood, and then to have a livelihood also that's in harmony with the movements towards freedom. And to have a have, I like to think of it as having a livelihood, which doesn't express your greed, hate delusion fear, but also doesn't harm other people. doesn't limit other people's freedom doesn't put other people in bondage because other people to suffer. It's a beautiful thing to be concerned with right livelihood, but not an easy thing, given how complicated and interconnected our society and works are. And then then the last steps to the full path. really have to do with this too. Now in Word To the heart or the mind. And this is where meditation is becomes really important that meditation allows us to develop a sensitivity, the clarity, the stillness, the calm, that allows us to see clearly what's actually motivating us, what makes us tick, what makes the inner life work, why we say what we say, what we, you know, why, why we do what we do, and a deep deep way, and to understand the subtle which can also mean the strongest clings, grasping, grasping spheres, hates greed desires that we have inside. And that takes a lot of again courage and stillness to sit still and see it all. But it also comes along with touching into some of the most beautiful aspects of the human heart and mind. Meditation opens the door to phenomenal experience of Joy, of peace of well being, of wholeness of integration, of peace, of insight of wisdom. And, and it's quite something to do this path that's supposed to lead us to this inner freedom that leads us to these beautiful, beautiful APMs beautiful qualities of the human heart are right there to be found and developed and cultivated and discovered. And so these last steps of the equal path is right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. And so that, you know, in some kind of shorthand, it's usually focused on this inner development focusing within.

And so one of the things that happens with this inner development is that as we begin releasing and letting go of how we're contracted or clinging or closed or previous occupied is that, you know, we've become more sensitive, more awake, more aware of the beautiful qualities within us. But also, it comes with a greater awareness, a heightened sensitivity and awareness to the world around us as well. And it comes with a heightened sensitivity to the suffering that is in our world. And you don't have to go very far to encounter a lot of it. And so, when and it's the you know, for some people so but awkward initially, to start having kind of the crust of the heart, the self preoccupation, the strong sense of us and me versus you, us versus them that kind of can keep the channels of communication the channels of empathy from operating beautiful cleanly. Sometimes it can seem like it's too much, we experience suffering around it too much. But generally from people who didn't feel like they experienced suffering too much, it's like over By suffering in the world, it's because that suffering is is touching places inside of us where we're still stuck, still clinging. If we're not clinging, then we still experience suffering quite strongly, but it washes right through or doesn't stick anywhere. And then, my hope, my belief, my confidence, is that if you can do that, if you can be such a person who has freed yourself of clinging and unable to share with the world, the world, the suffering of the world, then I think that we start, we have the capacity of being a gift this world whether it's a gift to support to our neighbor, who's struggling, or the whether it's marching in the streets, whether it's, you know, trying to do something about the poverty

in our country or the world whether it's you know, there's a whole range of Things a person might do. But it's really my hope that the people who engage in Buddhist practice will some point in the course of that practice some point become bright lights for the world and some play at some point, live their life in some ways to make a difference, wider difference in this world that we live in. That Buddhism is not meant for us to kind of become enlightened hermits but rather to become someone who becomes we take our light with us into the world, and try to make a difference in some way. And my hope is that the freedom that Buddhism brings an individual allows us to do that work in the world, whatever way it might be. With choice And delight, they become something that's easy to do, because it just feels like it comes from the fullness and the wholeness or the warmth that we have in our hearts. If Buddhism has, you know, one of the one of the things I associate Buddhism with mostly, mostly the one thing I associate in terms of, you know, working in the world, making the difference in the world, I think of Buddhism as operating person to person, more than person to political policy. And so, the warmth of our hearts translates to the warmth in our hands. And so the idea of Buddhism is, or freedom or compassion, or, you know, this, this one or this light that we have, and it can be transmitted, warm hand to warm hand, one person to another. And so as you go about as you get up for meditation as you go about new world You might consider the warm hand to warm hand what is what is it that's conveyed from you, that goes out into this world. And may Your your hands your metaphorical hands, the warm and supportive and helpful to you and to all beings. May all beings be happy. Thank you