

# 2015-06-28 Responding To The World With Love

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

I'll finish the series next week around the topic of not self and, and the opposite of that, and how that's important part of the cultivation of practice. The reason I don't want to, I want to talk about something else is because of the momentous events that happened in the last 10 days and, and our world in our society. And they've had a big impact on me and probably some of you. And it just seems like that should be somehow brought up and addressed or talked about in some way. And what has struck me the most about the variety of things that has occurred, and the way that I've been most affected by it is to have witnessed with the power of love and the tremendous capacity of human beings to love and we have the events in Charleston, South Carolina were horrendous acts of murder happen. But they responded to with amazing strength and love and forgiveness by people and, and for many of us, certainly for me, it kind of for witness of a tremendous strength of African American community in this country and how a strength of hard strength of character has developed over centuries of tremendous oppression kind of in the face of it, they responded that way. And to see that love and forgiveness can have such power and in that kind of situation is quite inspiring. shows us an example of hopefully we were all capable of and then the power of love in and now having finally overcome the ban on gay marriages and the many decades long Time of people who have persevered and their strength of holding up and saying, No, we can't be this kind of limitation on the expression of love, that the variety of ways in which people come together, so beautiful to have love and to be have it honored, respected and, and in the way that it is now is a fantastic thing for our society to be celebrated, I guess today's days with the gay prize and walk in San Francisco and what a great day for it. And then it says our wonderful new Pope Francis, came out with this wonderful statement about the environment where it's also the power of love that document is littered with statements about love. And he says that human beings are made to love. Isn't that nice and in a document about the environment. They use human beings are made to love and he begins to document by They by referring to their earth as our sister, mother, that was quite lovely. And so to tap into this love that human beings are capable of, and to choose it is a great thing. And one of the things about these kinds of big events in our society that happened and also small events, but any event is how are we changed by them? And so, are we willing to be changed by them? We could not change at all. And many times things happen and where people are excited and inspired or horrified. And after some days or weeks, it's kind of forgotten. It disappears and nothing's really changed in people's hearts.

Or, we can be changed by being by contracting and becoming afraid or horrified or angry. In contracting in some way, or we can be changed by expanding, our love can expand, our capacity for spiritual growth can grow and our ability to embrace more people can grow and these variety of things, and we

have a choice. And this is one of the important things that makes a big difference in our world is that we have choices, and within our choices we make make a difference. And one of the choices we have is our choice to be willing to change in the face of these things, and to change for the better, to expand rather than contract, to develop ourselves and make a difference in the world than to just be indifferent or forget about it over time. But the willingness to change their willingness to be affected by things in such a way that we change means that we can't just be content with our life as it is. And it also means that we, you know, might require some effort on our part. To be willing to be changed. If we want the world to change, but we're not willing to change, then I don't know if there's any hope at all. But if you're willing to change that, then maybe we can talk about the world changing. So how do we change? And so I think we have these great examples of people who are stepping forward with tremendous sacrifice. Offering forgiveness, I hope you saw some of that the video the court proceedings of the survivors of the massacre, the family survivors, you know, offering in the best way they could, their forgiveness and their love to this the killer. And it was quite touching. And very honest, I mean, some of them talked about being angry, of course, they're angry some of them but in spite of that, trying to find a way to go forward with you know, the central tenants of their religious life, love everyone and forgive. And so I gave a talk Monday night about Charleston, and trying, you know, stumbling along trying to know what to say. And then this morning, I read an email from someone in Charleston who listened to that talk. And that kind of was pretty amazing to me that somehow there's community, you know, there's a kind of conversation going on, right. But I started with someone in that town and, and he said, you probably want to know a little bit about what it's like to live in Charleston right now. And he said that there was an output the whole community said it's half African American half, I guess, white. And the whole community is an outpouring of love and unity. And, and, you know, people are coming together and gatherings and hugging. And he's It was quite a feeling of, kind of, you know, pride in the whole city and But then he said this person said that then when the media got involved and highlighted some of the other things that kind of started creating more division or kind of create a different environment, people there so he could have waited. So actually he this guy says people, he said that people in Charleston wish that they had waited about this thing about the Confederate flag, because that was kind of created a different feeling in the, in the community and the ways and I don't know if that should have waited, but but the important thing I thought was the way in which, you know that we touch each other. I was touched by the events there and I said something and, and someone in that community responded and inspired me with how that community rallied together and gathered and he talked about how it was he he and his family, I think it was kids, that that they were among many people who went and bought nine white roses and brought them and put them I guess out inside the church, I didn't know there was this white rose thing. Nine white roses, I spent some time to be there. So, you know, the question is, do I have that strength? Do I have that ability? Will I meet this with love and forgiveness in situations of that? I'm in the middle of those things, if I'm being faced with hostility and hate and violence in this kind of way, and the American society is filled with stories of people who responded with love. And the civil rights movement is a great one. There's a great quote by Martin Luther King where he said something like, I choose love, because hate is too much of a burden. nicer.

I kind of have this belief that the greater the emotional impact Something has on us. The greater an opportunity is for us to grow in the wake of it, the greater the opportunity for us to find greater freedom, to find ways to expand our heart Even more, to understand something deeper about what it means to be a human being. And I've seen over and over again, people who go through tremendous difficulties, emotional difficulties, tragedies, challenges, and the people who step into it as a way of practicing it tap into with their mind from a step into that kind of a, not exactly a willingness, but to kind of to address it with honesty and resolve and clarity and looking for the freedom looking for the love. Remarkable changes happen. But there has to be a choice to do that. And do you have the choice? Do you have the willingness? Do you have the desire to be changed by what happens in our society in a great story, like

A great man who lived in Cambodia named Maha Ghosananda. And Maha Ghosananda was a Cambodian monk, who in the mid 1960s, went to practice learn meditation in Thailand, practice with Arjun Chah. Jack Kornfield knew him. Jack Kornfield was a monk in Thailand, they lived in the same monastery and, and I think Jack didn't think too much of him at the time. He was kind of a scholar, scholar, monk, and he was in his cabin and he would study a lot and you know, Jack was young and idealistic, a being so he didn't didn't really stand out so much who this person was, but then in because he was living in Thailand practicing he was one of the very few monks who survived the Cambodian genocide. There were 60,000 Buddhist monks in in Cambodia before the Pol Pot in the 1970s and after the after, the Pol Pot period There were 3000 left. So almost 6000 had been killed. So he was one of the survivors. And he was kind of getting it to be the elder by that time. But during that time, there were refugee camps, huge refugee camps along the border with Thailand Burma, and Thailand, Cambodia. And he went there in order to build kind of bamboo Buddhist temples, for the Cambodian, you know, they're Buddhists. And he would walk between them or travel between them and in order to offer some kind of spiritual support. And he did it under threat, because of Pol Pot was still running around and they threatened him, you know, stay away, but he went anyway. And they would build these bamboo platforms about bamboo kind of, like temples or something. And Jack Kornfield says he went along and watch some of this and 10s of thousands of refugee camps are huge. 10s of thousands of people would gather around, a hug or stand on these platforms. temples, and that he would begin chanting any chant that is simple chant. That's from the Dhammapada. And the chant goes, hate is never overcome by hate. Only by love is hate overcome. And now Maha Ghosananda had his whole family killed in Cambodia. And so he didn't make it. Many of the people in the refugee camps had seen and witnessed tremendous atrocities. And to step into that, and have that kind of background and, and evoke the power of love. to evoke love as an alternative to hate. To say that love is the healing of hate, hate doesn't heal hate to repeat that over and over again, to imagine so what Jack says that he's sitting there watching or being present for this chanting over and over again, that thousands of people started to cry. Imagine what kind of something was released. That process Maha Ghosananda, also would travel around Cambodia. dirt and you know, during that time visiting the refugee camps or outside, and then also after the Pol Pot left he back returned to the country and eventually became the Supreme Court, the Supreme patriarch, the primary Buddhist leader of the monastic ordering in Cambodia to help revive Buddhism in the country. But he spent a lot of time walking right up until I think, near the end of his life, he would walk around Cambodia quite a bit. And one of the things he would do is he would pass out copies of the Metta Sutta. Then Buddhist discourse on loving kindness to people which are read you.

So, part of this text says that this is how it says this is how one should reflect. May all be happy and secure. May all beings be happy at heart, all living beings, whether weak or strong, tall, large, medium or short, tiny or big, seen or unseen, near or distant, born or to be born, may they all be happy. Let no one deceive another, or despise anyone anywhere. Let no one through anger or aversion wish for others to suffer. So, this expression May all beings be happy. And this list of all these categories is meant to be not just people, but all living beings, all kinds of creatures are included in our love and our care and our desire for their happiness and welfare. And so he would go and teach this they know offer this to the Cambodians who had gone through such come through genocide and then this thing, let no one deceive or despise anyone anywhere? Like no one through anger aversion wish for others to suffer. I don't know what's a taller order? Is it to, to love or to not hate? And what's more difficult? I mean, if you've got, you know, going along just having a nice day, I suppose it's not too difficult to avoid hate, but to avoid being triggered with hostility for some people, it's very hard when people are threatened when their families threatened when their lifestyles threaten their welfare is threatened when their communities they're threatened. Some people get afraid some people pull in some people want to attack some people get hostile some people in that threat and some threat sometimes is real. It's

actually violence that's done. And so you know, some people feel it's completely reasonable to have hostility because How we create the boundaries when we take care of ourselves. But to avoid hostility, or not succumb to it, or to maintain our love, and to treat all people, all beings, as someone who deserves to be happy means that we don't close ourselves up in a narrow boundary of this is my family. This is my little village, this is my my people this is you know, my country this is, but rather to have the boundaries open and consider all beings as part of our family. One of the really important parts of the practice of loving kindness is that we take our capacity for love. And we start with what we have. We start with the love that we have, whether it's to, you know, the classic ways to ourselves, but apparently here in america that's a little hard so that the assumption Back then the old days is that of course you should love yourself that's kind of taken for a given but our life is becoming more complicated. I know some people start with their pet, you know anywhere you can. And but you start there, start where you have it. And then the task and sometimes the, I think the remarkable task, maybe a task of a lifetime is to take our capacity for love. And not to deny any of it, but to expand it. So not deny the love ignite you might have for your family, but can you expand it to your neighborhood, not to deny the love you have for your whatever your people are your community, your church or whatever, but to expand it and keep expanding it and so do the work to include eventually all beings and clear the instructions in this doing this expansion process in Buddhism is also To do this for our enemies and, and it says tech say, Well, if you don't have any enemy, then you should be content with that, you know. And we're here and they're here in the West, when people teach this, you know, include your enemy, the idea of enemy, you know, for some people, it doesn't quite work here in the West. So Western teachers now refer to it as a difficult person. So, probably, very few of you have enemies but, but you can probably think of a difficult person yourself.

And so you want to love that to open up and, you know, include that remarkable step this thing. And, you know, it's, we I think it's one of the characteristics of many religions, these sin parts of it. The parts that inspire me the most is though, is that tremendous call Love universal love. And it's there in Buddhism, Buddha. I read recently that some people think that the Buddha was one of the first of the religions to begin champion universal love rather than something that's more tribal and you know, your people open up this way to include everyone. I don't know if it's true but you find certainly find in Buddhism the emphasis on a tremendous importance of love and but the radicalness of it, the thoroughness of it, that goes beyond what we think we're capable of. So loving or enemy, for example, the Buddha said that if, if a monastic, one of his key followers does not have love, they are not following his instructions. Love is kind of like foundational, to have kindness to have goodwill. And then remarkably, in this kind of way, that maybe religious people Have hyperbolic and just really exaggerate something to make a point. But maybe it wasn't an exaggeration given what happens we see what happens in our world. He says that if bandits capture you and begin severing off your limbs, then if you give in to hate, you are not following my teaching. Instead, you should see if you can generate goodwill to those people. Now, that's is that ridiculous? Is that ridiculous? There's a story, a story that's told many times now of a Tibetan monk, who was imprisoned by the Chinese for many, many years, and you know, probably brutal conditions. Finally was released or is able to escape or something and made his way to Dharma Sala to have an audience with Dalai Lama and Adi Lama asked him are you Danger when you're in prison, and probably meant, you know, was your life in danger or something? And the monk said, Oh, yes, I was in danger. I was in danger of losing my compassion for the Chinese. And that's something. So where was he being tortured? there, there's been a lot of in the news about this man named down in Denmark, per se, who was one of the founders of the church. And that's where this killing happened. This church was one of the first African American churches started in America and 1818. And it was a radical thing for them to start the church because black people, African Americans were not allowed to congregate together at that time. And they had a church that was run by white people. And then when the white leaders of the church decided to build a barn or something on top of

the black graveyard in the church, that black left the church and started their own. And then Marcus was one of those. And he's been presented as someone who started to revolt, or was about to start a revolt, and therefore he's executed. And now there seems to be some doubt about whether that was really the case, or whether that was all kind of trumped up against him. But the remarkable thing, in terms of this kind of capacity, I mean, I'm sure he knew what was in store. You know, people started this church, the Emanuel AME Church. They were arrested. They were whipped. Some of them were given a choice of whether to leave town or stay, I got jailed for a month. And someone decides to stay. You know, there's their community. And so he was tried, and, and the descriptions of that guy survived from the time of the trial was that he remained remarkably calm and composed. Stand up right through the whole trial that kind of love this expression yeah sounds sort of kind of strength of character in the midst of in the in the face of probably tremendous hostility and atrocities. And so when the Buddha says you know, even if you get caught by bandits you get your arms gets severed is it is, you know, maybe it's a little bit over the top exaggeration, but these things happen in our world.

And what happens to us as practitioners, I hope for all of us, mindfulness practitioners, is we get a first hand experience. Meaning we get we experienced in ourselves, the difference between hate and love. And we see the tremendous as nothing to the king said the burden of hate on our own hearts, with how challenging it is, how we contract, how painful it is, and how it doesn't serve us. It doesn't help us. It doesn't do any good. It's choose too much. Difficult to have it, we would want to do that. And there's an alternative. And the alternative doesn't mean that we deter love or staying open and not succumbing to hate does not mean we don't take care of ourselves. But maybe we take care of ourselves. We take care of a situation and confront and justice in a way that has a much better and lasting effect in our society. Hate isn't overcome by hate. Hate is only overcome by love.

So I think that with all these things, with the African American response to their oppression, and how they their dignity and strength, is something that can inspire all of us in our nation and we can grow and become better people. Because of it as a way of honoring what happened and being changed to appreciate the beauty and the great value of people who love each other, regardless, regardless of their sexual orientation, or maybe because of it, for gay people to love each other, and over these last decades, over the last centuries, you know, tremendous violence, sometimes to the point of death you know, it's a it was a frightening thing to come out. And to then people to come out and share their love with our societies a better place because of it the better place where love is stabilized and recognized and given a place for all of us to share and, and to, to really celebrate what we have now as a way to be changed by it and then to not kind of feel like Well, that's it's a done deal. But to realize that there's still limitations and to support others to offer our support and our love and not be content, the fact that you know, a fair amount of people might be liberals who already believe in gay marriage and gay rights and these things and, and because we believe in it. We don't do anything you've tried arch, it's not our job, but to offer our support and our love for others, and then the environment.

The, again from the Metta Sutta discourse on loving kindness, the Buddha says, As a mother, who had risked her own life, to protect her child, her only child. So this is where we start with what's close in what we have. So, towards all beings, one should cultivate a boundless heart with loving kindness, for the Whole world should win cultivate a boundless heart, above below and all around without obstruction without hate and without the ill will. So with loving kindness for the whole world, all beings in this world and so how do we express our love? How do we express our care goodwill for people on the other side of the globe for animals and creatures for the globe itself? Can we love it? And I think this is one of the big tasks that's coming up. Do we are, does our instincts towards self preservation for are taking care of ourselves for comfort for getting what we want? For having material possessions all these things? Is it stronger than our care and compassion and love for the world we live in? And one of the reasons why



this is so important now is because we're a global village. You know, I got An email from Charleston, right? Amazing. And to me to feel how close you know the connection might be is and, and these things come back. And so this is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect the law in which way, the interdependent nature of our world is getting clearer and clearer for all of us. And we don't benefit as individuals by being self serving, to only taking care of ourselves. We've been in the, in the, in the collective comments that we all share. Each of us benefit when we share when we do play, we cultivate and care for the comments that we all share. It's a hard lesson to learn, you know, where, you know, take care of myself, know and take care of others. So I'll end with probably the most common teaching that Dr. Ilama likes to give that a Lama says, if you want to be happy, have compassion for others. So let's live in this world together and try to find how to love each other and maybe make that a central themes of our life. So thank you. And we have 10 minutes before the end. So, ample time, extra time on didn't time to be friendly to each other. I know that that's you know, not you know, it's one thing to listen to a talk about love. It's another thing to you know, live it. But to those of you who would like to have the time, I think be really great before this potluck. Everyone's invited to stay for the potluck. Whether you brought food or not, please stay just great. But to turn towards the people around you and say hello to a few of them and greet them and if this is your first time here, IMC belongs to the people are here so belongs to you.

So you could say hello, you could welcome if you're new Welcome the old timer. Thank you