

# To Transform the World (5 of 5) With Peace and Harmony

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**Gil Fronsda**

Good morning or good day. It's remarkable how I speak from the time zone I'm in. Please forgive me if I want to be able to be inclusive of all time zones.

So, hello everyone. Thank you for being here as I do the last of these talks on To Transform the World. I offer these talks in the context of the national U.S. elections next week, with all the divisiveness that currently exists and the sense of conflict, maybe impending conflict that might be coming. I offer this talk with confidence that it's not necessary to succumb to despair, paralyzing fear, hatred, or ill will. We can be confident.

I want us all to be confident that we can make a difference to make this world a better place. And we can do so in small ways. We can do it in our communities, with our friends, our neighbors. And of course, it's nice to do it more widely. There are people who are going out in all kinds of political parties to get out the vote, to be actively involved in political action to support the election and candidates. There are ways of lobbying governments. There are all kinds of ways of changing the world. But for me, the most important thing is that we start with ourselves.

We don't lose ourselves in the actions we take. Back when I was young, there were people who were very active in the anti-Vietnam War movement and with all kinds of civil rights issues. And some of the people got deeply discouraged because the organizations they were involved in and the people they were working with were so divisive. There was so much inner conflict, hatred, anger, and greed going on that they felt, this can't continue this way.

One of the reasons some people came to Buddhism was to find an alternative. And I do hope that we find it here. One of the alternatives is to appreciate that if we want to change the world for the better, we have to change, too. We have to be the change that we want. If we want a peaceful world, we have to be peaceful. If we want to have a world where there's no hate, we have to stop hating.

The deep inner work that Buddhism sometimes is criticized for — creating a lot of people who are maybe too passive or not involved in the civil life of our culture — is not true. There are a lot of people coming here to the Insight Meditation Center, for example, that I know have practiced here for many years and are transformed, who then go out and are doing all kinds of good in their own way — joining different organizations and different actions.

Maybe IMC isn't so actively involved because we're a relatively small organization. But the people coming through here do remarkable things in the world. Hopefully they bring with them their transformation into goodness and freedom, so they can act in ways that they are agents of change by how they are as much as by

what they do. One way of folding all this together that I've done this week is that it can be summarized, "Love so that others will love. Be peaceful so others will learn to be peaceful. Give so others will trust generosity. Respect others because offering dignity, offering respect is contagious." And then today's message: Speak the truth with love, peace, generosity, and respect so that it transforms people's hearts.

Don't only focus on policy and action. We really want to change hearts so we understand how to live in harmony. Actions from our hearts can come from love and generosity. If we want to be the change that we want to see in the world, we have to be able to speak the truth. This is where the action is. Speak truth.

Speak truth to power. What power? The power of love and peace. The power of being peaceful, non-conflictive, and non-contentious. Speak with a generous spirit, generous to the people we speak to. So they feel our generosity, care, goodwill, and our concern for their welfare. Speak with respect. Speak in a way that sees others with dignity. Treat everyone as dignified people. It's not a hierarchy. It's not that some people are better than others, but there is universal dignity. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone is born equal in their dignity. And then, speak the truth. How do we do it in such a way that people will listen? In a way that's cooperative and harmonious, so that people do not feel like we're attacking or lecturing them. But we're inviting into cooperation and a sense of harmony.

When the Buddha talked about speaking, the first thing he said was the importance of speaking truth. The second thing he said was: "Do not repeat what you have heard from others so as to divide people against each other." So don't spread gossip. Don't repeat hearsay. Instead, reconcile those who are divided. Be a mediator. One of my great hopes for Buddhism is that it doesn't take sides.

Buddhism steps into conflict in order to mediate and reconcile – to find a way for people to work together. And so rather than stepping into one side or the other, Buddhism enters into the middle way to reconcile. I've done that locally by being on Buddhist ethics committees where there was reconciliation work to be done. But the instinct of people was not reconciliation punishment. The instinct was blame, which led to more divisiveness. The question is how to reconcile so that everyone is inspired by the reconciliation. How to find a way forward so that everyone feels cared for and benefited. I believe that's the way to slowly change the world, by creating rich soil for the seeds of goodness to sprout.

May we find a way to promote cooperation, harmony, and truth-telling. May the values of Buddhism emphasizing love, peace, generosity, respect, and truth be something that guides us. And more than simply guides us, but gives us tremendous confidence. Confidence that these qualities can be the foundation and basis of how we live our life. These qualities heal us from our own anxiety, fear, hatred, ill will, sense of overwhelm and victimhood in this world of so many challenges. Let us become the producers and the confident manifestations of goodness. Let us trust goodness and wholesomeness more than we trust what divides us.

I appreciate very much this chance to speak to you. None of us knows what's going to happen in the United States elections next week. I'm going to be teaching a retreat next week. We are very lucky to have Ines Freedman come to teach here at 7:00 am on the You Tube channel. It might be the first time Ines has come. Ines is one of the senior teachers at IMC. She is one of the really strong foundations for what we do here in the Dharma and the cooperative world of IMC and IRC (Insight Retreat Center). I feel very fortunate that she's coming. I've been trying to get Ines to come for a long time. And the more we can have Ines, the better.

I will see you the following week, and we will continue to find our way.

Thank you.