

2018-06-18 Expanded Heart As It Relates To Current Immigration Issues

Wed, 9/2 11:19AM • 38:45

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, world, children, conditions, shutting, country, parents, mindfulness, overwhelmed, happening, expanded, important, heart, suffering, feel, buddhist, policy, read, practice, united states

SPEAKERS

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Teachings of the Buddha. one of the kind of instructions that he gave was, he said at one point, make yourself a refuge for all beings. I think it's a beautiful statement, the idea that you would be a refuge for all beings, somehow I'm not sure exactly what that would mean, practically. But the word that is used in this particular English translation for refuge can also mean safe. Make yourself safe for all beings. And for you or us or me or all of us, to be a refuge to be someone that place where it's safe, where people feel safe, they feel like they can be included and held and perhaps in their trials and tribulations feel there's a refuge to come where they can breathe and find themselves and put down some of that burden or the struggles of fear that people have. So what do we do with this expanded art so For me these last few days, one of the things that's in my heart, cracking my heart bit is the plight of these refugees coming across the border from Mexico. And perhaps, being sensitive to this is more acute for myself since I'm an immigrant as well. And so, you know, I have a little bit immigrant experience. And I came to this country as a child, and to come as a child, not speak the language, come as a child and I wasn't ostracized, but somehow in not speaking language, not speaking correctly. Being an outsider. You know, it was tough sometimes. And I had a pretty pretty, pretty easy time at it overall. And so now we have these children who come to the edges of this great country, a country which does have a history, a mixed history of all kinds of things. And mixed history of being welcoming and mixed history of being a very unwelcoming mixed mixed history of supportive for some people and probably we'd say much more than and supportive for others, actually. And so we have these people, these refugees coming to this country. And so the question is, in my expanded heart, what what what, what now? How do I respond? How do I so one of the things that I feel is important in circumstances like that is to be a witness. So, you know, my life is pretty full. And it was pretty easy for me to just kind of glance at the headlines of all kinds of things and, and he said, Well, you know, okay, let that be and but to be witnesses to, to know what's going on. And for this particular issues I glanced at the headline seemed this was something that to be mindful of to be present for. And this in doing so, it's an example of applied mindfulness, applied attention. Applied presence is one thing to sit and meditate or yourself and learn how to be mindful or not be present, learn how to maybe let go of your stress and be settled. But there's also applied mindfulness where we take it and we actually choose to apply it in a certain direction or a certain situation to show up someplace. One of my favorite, favorite quotes from my first teacher was he said that Mahatma Gandhi, nice Mahatma Gandhi said this way that the Buddha taught the importance of sitting, sitting in meditation. Gandhi thought it was important where you sit. And I love that saying, because sitting and meditating is a pretty, you know, an offensive thing to do. It's not like we're in conflict with someone. But if you like I've had friends who sat meditated on the train tracks to Livermore labs here in California back in the early 80s, when there was research being done there for

because of weapons. So they're just minding their own business meditating. You know, well, you know, they're not arguing with anyone and they were here.

So the idea that to where we sit, kind of, you know, where we put our attention What we attend to is very important. And where we put our attention is extremely important that we choose to put our intention. Because we live in a society in a culture, where there's people who get paid a lot of money to take your attention as a hostage or to grab your attention. And, you know, and, you know, it's they're pretty clever at getting your attention. And, you know, it's hard to surf the web without having some of these ads and things kind of grab you. And so the idea of being the master of one's own attention to be in control of this precious precious resource and not handed over to someone else. So they choose what you pay attention to, but to apply it for yourself. And so for me, I decided to apply it a little bit to studying about immigration and studying I'm not just reading the news about this particular event. Because sometimes I feel that the news is interesting, but you know, it is kind of you know, No matter what side of the political spectrum you really read, I get the feeling it's a little skewed. And so, you know, what's what's really going on here. So then, you know, to dig under the surface and find out more of what's happening and I think is to bear witness to what's happening. And then and then what about the call to action or by doing something? And so, you know, what am I going to do about the immigration and the border? You know, it's, you know, it's, it's a little bit perplexing, you know, what, what choices do I have? And do I now suddenly, not only learn a little bit about it, but what else, you know, whether it's some of the things I can do. And then Fortunately, I got an email from a Buddhist teachers in this country where I think they're noticing that a number of faith traditions around the country, we're in faith leaders, we're composing letters in criticizing what's happening in the border with separating children from their parents. And, and so I read the letter and said, I can sign this and I was happy to sign it. And then, you know, I don't know if it's just more than just a drop in the ocean of people protesting, but it felt important not only to bear witness, but to somehow speak up and have a voice that'll make them so this was the letter that came in that. As of this afternoon, I think there are about 160 Buddhist teachers who have signed it. As Western Buddhist leaders, we unreservedly condemned the recently imposed policy of separating immigrant children from their parents at the US Mexican border. Over the past few weeks, thousands of children have been inhumanely taken from their parents, by US Customs and Border Protection and a policy that has condemned by the United Nations and many international human rights observers. Indeed, no other country has a policy of separating families who intend to seek asylum. Wherever the legal status of those attempting to enter the US, separating children from their parents is a contravention of basic human rights. Parents seeking asylum make long, dangerous and arduous journeys, in an attempt to find safety and well being for their precious children. ripping these vulnerable children from their parents is cruel, inhumane, and against the principles of compassion and mercy espoused by all religious traditions. From a Buddhist perspective, it is the close bond between parents and children that nourishes not only the physical well being of children, but their psychological health and moral formation. I'll stop halfway through I'll stop now. The impact that our children growing up experience, you know, goes on for decades as a Buddhist teacher and meets lots of people and talks to people. It's just you know, I've kind of in awe of how deep children's experiences children go through war children's who go through big separations abuse, trauma has children, the way in which goes on and on and on. My father in law was a teen when he was put in the German concentration camps. And he survived. That's why I knew him is my father in law. He died a few years ago, started about five years ago.

And so he died some What? 60 years, so 70 years after World War Two, and he died, partly because of World War Two. He died still the victim of a war and he was still probably still be alive. Now, if it hadn't been for that war, for him personally, what happened to him as a child is such a big impact that that impact lasted for some 70 plus years for a long time. I talked to someone today, whose father was in

the Japanese internment camps here in the United States. And his experiences of being a Japanese American here in this country, both during the war and after the war, affected her very deeply. And it continues to this day. The you know, we know that here in the United States, the experience of the Civil War still lives in a kind of very difficult way. And so when children go through this issue of you know, coming to the border, they're already homeless already probably challenged, to get to the border to a country which historically has given asylum and so port for many people and they're separated from their parents, quite young children, it's very painful and frightening, not understandable. What kind of conditions are we setting up for the future. So, in Buddhist approach to living life or to looking at life, understanding life, if you want to think artistically, the Buddhist way of thinking is to think about life and point of view of conditions and conditions is a whole array of things that that are kind of in the background that are they have to be there for other things to happen. The world of conditionality of conditions is much bigger than the world of cause. So cause is usually very scenario kind of the proximate cause the proximate condition, I think that's most, you know, impactful for something to happen. But there's many conditions that spread out all over around that are necessary to be there but are so distant that we don't even think that they have a role. And so you know, what is this? So, in Buddhism, we want to take care of conditions, not just the causes. And if we all the blame causes look at causes, we might miss some of the important thing that should be done. And so in terms of immigrants coming to United States, I know some of them coming from Nicaragua, Nicaragua and Guatemala, are coming here partly because of the tremendous poverty and war and violence in those countries. But what are the conditions for those, that violence and that the poverty and neck strife with those country some of those conditions that United States was responsible for decades ago and One of the ones in terms of, you know, that I think is, you know, he said like what like right now Nicaragua, there's all this violence with gangs and all kinds of things. And I've read this claim is that a lot of the gang violence in Iraq, Nicaragua, came from America exploiting some of the prisoners that they had in this country, maybe they were illegal immigrants, but who spent years in American prisons, where they were gang ified. That's where they learned the culture of gangs. And so going back to Nicaragua, it was natural to form gangs in there. And they become very powerful there. And now some of the people coming to United States are trying to get away from the gang warfare and violence in their communities. So it's kind of coming around. So if you don't take care of conditions properly, they come back and bite you. So what are the positive conditions we want to set in place? I'm afraid that if we take children away from their parents, and I don't know how many weeks months like times that they're going to be apart. The impact is so big that are we setting up the problems we're going to have in 20 years? What are those kids going to be like in 20 years? Don't we want to create good conditions? Don't we want to create optimal conditions for 20 years from now? We don't just want to have peace today, we want to create the conditions for peace in 20 years. And so we take care of kids, we support them and nourish them and help them not take them away from their parents. So the Buddhist way of thinking is about conditionality thinking about conditions what are the conditions we want to put in place for to foster long term well being for ourselves, the world around us.

And then this letter goes on separating children from their parents and holding them in detention, inflicts terrible and needless trauma and stress on young children that hampers and damages their development causing long term damage. This policy being employed in United States soil is morally unconscionable that such egregious actions be employed as a deterrent for family seeking entry and or asylum in the US. Using the sacred bond between innocent youth and their parents is unjustifiable on any level. We suggest that our current defenders of this policy visit some of these border crossings and child detention centers so they can experience for themselves the present effects of their decisions. It is difficult to conceive that anyone having compassion for our world's children and their families, and their witnesses, such pain and anguish for themselves could continue to uphold such a practice. As people of faith and conscience. We feel it is important that we speak out clearly in defense of basic human

rights at this time, calling for an immediate end to this heartless practice. And doing so we join the voices of many religious leaders and congregations that have unreservedly condemned this policy of separation. This policy is a serious violation of the rights of the children and must be stopped today. So then I was doing some reading about immigration United States. And then I came across a number of places where I read about the economic impact immigration has in this country. And it seems that most of the studies that people have done, it said that all forms of immigration apparently is a positive effect on the economy. So in March of 2017, the current Trump administration ordered a study to be done about the economic impact of immigration in this country because they wanted to support the idea of banning immigration for certain countries and so they directed the Department of Health and humans. Verses to do a study on this topic. And some months later and think July, August, they came, their study was finished. However, when they saw it, they suppressed it. And it was never released. Because the study claimed that every year, the A, the financial benefit of immigration to this country of all kinds of immigration, illegal, illegal illegal, is \$63 billion. So there might be all kinds of services provided to the people or immigrants and you know, money is spent for sure. But the net gain is \$63 billion. But that was suppressed. And so the idea that we'd have constantly is a regular kind of policy of suppressing information, suppressing information over and over again, is kind of astounding. It's not Exactly lying to suppress information. But that but then to go on top of that to go and make claims about what's what's there that are unsubstantiated it seems and then it has to do with children in the faith of children. It seems to me it seems unbelievable that this should be happening. So given this I think it's probably okay to read this passage from the Buddha. Probably. And if it isn't, then I don't know what when cattle are crossing afford if the chief bull grows, goes, crookedly all the others go crookedly because their leader has gone crookedly. So to among human beings When the one considered the chief behaves unrighteous Lee, other people do so as well. The entire kingdom is dejected, if the king is unrighteous, when cattle are crossing afford, if the chief bull goes straight across, all the others go straight across because their leader has gone straight. So to among human beings, when the what considered the chief conducts himself or herself righteously, other people do so as well. The entire kingdom rejoices if the monarch is righteous. So these kinds of issues have been around for a long time. And

and so what do we do with an expanded heart? I think that they're most the thing that I want to most ask for In considering this topic and being here at a meditation sitting is, please expand your heart. Please consider how you can allow your good heart to be touched by the people around you. Consider how you can be sensitive to the situation that people you run into. Please don't ignore people. Please don't. You know us, you know, just go back, you know, don't don't meditate, you know, and that's nice and then kind of rush off to take care of all the other things not notice people. applied. Mindfulness is the fruit of this practice, but you have to apply it and we can apply it to expand our connectedness, expand our sensitivity or awareness of others. And part of the reason why this is very important is That our own inner growth, their own movement towards freedom is partly dependent or greatly dependent on our ability to connect and share this human life with all beings. We have the capacity to expand our hearts. We have the capacity to take the time to have as amplified care and connection and love and concern compassion for the people around us. It's one of the great and beautiful capacities we have. What are you gonna do with yours? Are you gonna let it have a chance to be in the light to come forth? Are you going to apply it? Are you going to take the time and give it priority? And if you do, what do you do when that expanded heart has a heartbreak? Because you encounter the suffering of this world. For me, with this practice data is I became much more acutely sensitive to the suffering of this world that we live in. But I think that was a good thing. I very good, it's very clear I have a particular type moment. In my particular day, particular van particular moment, with it was crystal clear crystallized around this issue. And that was, I was in a Buddhist monastery. And something like Time magazine showed up. And at the monastery, everything all the news was late was old. And so we'd hardly ever get deep in the wilderness. We hardly ever got any news magazines or newspapers, but there are some however,

there was a time magazine. And so I opened it up to the middle of it. And there were photographs of devastated war scene. One more place in the world where people have bombed innocent people and Children and have been, you know, months, maybe a year and a half by that time in on retreat and the monastery practicing can imagine my heart was quite expanded and, and that kind of hit me so hard to see that. And I can say with I think with some confidence that I'm here today because of what happened that day that changed me. So you know if, if this is a good thing we're doing here in Redwood City and so you've been coming for a while. It's because of that expanded heart met the suffering. And I think a lot of you know, my life has been changed. I pride myself personally for the better for that and dedicated myself to wanting to try to support and help the world because of you know, growing out of that particular impact so don't be afraid of expanded heart. Don't be afraid to take the time to stop and take in another human being and feel and smell sense and get to know them. Don't feel like you have more important things to do than to have an expert at a time, more important than expanded heart. That is a witness that is present that cares for this world. It's really one of the best things going. It's a condition for you to thrive and for you to be happy and for you to grow and in unimaginable ways. What are you going to do with your expanded heart?

So, that's what I have to say today. So would you have any thing you'd like to say or comments or questions or anything at all, please?

The main thing I want to say is to thank you for bringing this issue into the Dharma talk right into the conversation of the community. And I think it might be helpful for me as well as for others here to hear about ways to engage, that don't overwhelm us

with this kind of information. So ways to engage without overwhelming. The first thing that comes to mind is use your mindfulness to know when you're going to get overwhelmed and stop. You know have a sense of what your limit is. And when it's good when you feel like you're coming up to an edge where it's too much. And when that's the case, stop, stop reading. Or don't stop reading, and maybe it's appropriate they get overwhelmed. I remember I'm a little bit of smiling inside thinking about this, but I should maybe I shouldn't I remember when there was the shooting all the children killed at Sandy hooks school. I just felt like I mean, I that I was on retreat during that time. And teaching so I was reading the news of this I have to read it wasn't you know, I had to read about it. Even if it was too much. It wasn't like this. This is too important. You have to witness this. And I was reading it and then from zero to 60. I started sobbing. So was I overwhelmed. You could say that but I don't Mind shopping. You know, so what do you mean by overwhelmed? Maybe that's maybe that'll help me understand the question because being overwhelmed is just, you know, you know, there's been sobbing, you know, that's a pretty human thing to do. It's nothing wrong with that. I'm not referring to being moved. I'm not referring to being moved, I'm referring to shutting down.

Okay, shutting down. Yeah. Why? Well, when we do this practice of mindfulness, and we get some skill in it, then there's it kind of gives us a wider range of choice or we can do so one of the things is to become more more sensitive to that movement of closing down and then stop. You know, they think this is that this is too much. And the more sensitive you are the more quote and you're familiar with this in our unfolding, the earlier you can stop. And then if you can stop then you can take a take a look at the situation more carefully and decide what to do next. One decision would be this, this happens too often, I think I need to take a good look at what's happening to me. When I shut down. Let me go off and be quiet for a while by myself and sit and meditate or really bring a lot of mindfulness, which is what happened. And maybe you can learn something about the dynamics of shutting down. Is it fear? Is it anger? Is it confusion? What happens in something something so some and there's probably some relationship you have with fear or relationship with anger? That would be good to understand. So to

take the time to really stop and take a look. Another possibility is to decide that yes, I shutting down. But you know, I think I need to face the shutting down. Maybe I need to kind of allow myself to shut down. But let me try to do it as mindfulness I can. And the mindfulness might not be so great, but let me go through it. Just really see what I can learn and find out I have to go do the do the experiment. Or another situation that might be you know, I have these important conversations I have to have with these people later today, I better stays fresh and clear as I can. So this is not the time to experiment with shutting down or be mindful. I think that I see the symptoms coming. I better stop what I'm doing, and refresh myself, go for a walk, have some tea, talk to a friend or something. So I could not. So I can take care of my life in the way that I need to take care. So those are some of the things that occurred to me. And I don't feel like I'm the expert in this topic. But I bet you know, I'm pretty sure that you've also given some thought to this be free. Should you have anything you want to add that you've learned or what if you felt useful?

I do but the first thing I want to talk about that I learned I learned on Saturday at the wonderful day long here where there are teaching qingyun non violence and Kazu reframed mind This in a very applied way that showed me a range of mindfulness I had not yet considered even in chaplaincy practice. So I think some of it is recorded.

And I found that very useful in facing some suffering of individuals. I find taking breaks and practicing self compassion to be essential. and not being afraid of my emotions are really the two.

There's a, you know, Buddhist teachers talk to a lot of people who get overwhelmed or feeling you know, suffering in the world. I seen a strong correlation between the greater the overwhelm, the greater the shutting down, you know, the greater the deep sorrow and grief that people feel in the suffering in the world is very strong correlation to having unresolved suffering over their own And, and so it's kind of like, not just not recoiling or shutting down from the suffering out there, really, but it's how that resonates or is touching the suffering, it's unresolved in here. And so one of the ways to deal with overwhelm is to take time to really reached out inside of oneself and really try to practice and resolve some of the unresolved, you know, feelings issues that are there. And then it's possible to

in one of the great things, it means mean not not not in a sense for any particular reason, not for the reasons for happens. But one of the great things is to I think, is to have your heart broken, we'd be better off if we had our hearts broken more often. I think it makes us human and touches our compassion and all kinds of wonderful things. So if we can, you know, learn the benefits of not shutting down Just to have your heart broken instead, it's so much better.

Up there. Good.

What very provocative, thank you. And

as you were speaking early on, I thought, well, this all these people that are being put in presence, cages, if people like us reached out and said, we'll take a few of you something like maybe the Quakers do, and I'm kind of new to this Buddhist business. I know there's the Zen people are big on hospice, they're, they're helping people out. Now, I don't know about insight people,

what they do, give me so a group of people call Actively will take responsibility for family of refugees, for example, so that they could be have a space to come to. And

I'm imagining that they need to go into come into communities that anybody who would want to take some would want to have a community around them. And I'm also imagining that part of this is a it's a transition. We don't know where they're going to go. We just know that they're in misery right now. And that they need some relief. They need some help. Who knows what's going to happen in their countries later?

Yeah, it could be. So it'd be great if you want to take the initiative and see if there's people here in IMC who want to organize and want to see if they want to try to support someone. That would be fantastic.

I also thought that

people acting and setting an example.

It's fine to be upset, but it's much more effective to do something

Yes. I don't think it's so useful to be upset. It's also not very useful to upset other people. But there is ways of being active and engaged. That's very important. Sometimes I think that getting upset is a happens because people are not active. If we reacted, we wouldn't be upset. I'm not saying that things are certainly going to say don't want to say things are not right. I mean, things are wrong. But to spend too much time being upset this little bit can be the wrong direction to go if it's if that's as far as it goes. So maybe we have time for one more here in the front.

I just wanted to make a comment. Following on what you said, Hello. I think one of the byproducts of technology has been that there's so much more information that you can get now than you used to before. And one of the things that I have personally struggled with is when you do open your heart out to certain causes, you find that there are millions of other causes out there on social media all over the news. You know, LGBT rights, Rohingya crisis, dar for all these things, and it's very, I think it's a lot easier nowadays to get overwhelmed with these things. And I'm still trying to figure out how to deal with that. I think maybe one thing is that it is okay to not do Something about everything. But

not only is it okay, but it's necessary.

It's a slippery slope, though. So I guess my question is when you do open your heart out, you there is a danger of being overwhelmed of being taking on a lot of burden.

I agree. So, you know, you can make a choice of how much you want to let in, you know, we're not required to know everything in the world. But we want to be good citizens and participate in our world in a healthy way, supportive way. So how much does that take? But this thing about the I said just now about, you know, people are, there's been studies shown that people get less afraid and less angry about what goes on in the world, if they feel they can act, even if it's small acts. So sometimes don't underestimate small acts, you know, small things getting done. So sometimes, you know, some people just do a \$10 and Every time they see a pause that moves them and, and just the little thing makes a difference. Some people what they, what they do is they recognize they take in their the heartbroken what goes on in their world, and it motivates them. It motivates them to try to make a difference to make a better world. But they're not going to pick up that cause they're going to pour that interest in that energy into something they're already doing, I'm going to do that even better. So they're even more motivated to, you know, to do the thing that I'm doing. And, and that's one way to keep it within you know, because also somebody we specialize, right and so, if we specialize then we know better we know situation better, we can get be more effective there. If we take care of everything. We do

everything shallowly and, you know we don't have such a big impact. We need doesn't take a lot of you know, a few a few well educated well engaged people in You can do a lot on big topics, big issues. So if you already have something you're doing, maybe just take what goes on the world around you and motivate yourself to do even better there. Thank you. Great. So, you all have a heart and it's a good heart. Expand your heart as much as you can. And then ask yourself the question, what are you going to what do I do now, with this expanded heart. There's a lot of good things you can do. Your good heart support this world that we live in. Thank you.