



Hello, my name is Dawn Scott. I'm laughing because I'm still here on the coast of California. It's a beautiful day, and you can probably hear the woodpecker in the background just doing what woodpeckers do, so that'll be a part of our time together. It's beautiful here today—it's a bit overcast, and the sky and the ocean look like they've melted together.

Wherever you are, wherever you're practicing, wherever you're living, I hope that you're well and safe. I hope that your loved ones are healthy and protected. I also hope that the people that you don't know in your neighborhood and your communities and everybody who lives near you are safe and protected and that the basic necessities of their lives are met. I hope that they come by the basic necessities with ease.

I welcome you to the second week of our exploration of *khanti parami*, complete patience, full and mature patience that's made robust by our intention to alleviate the suffering within our own hearts, minds, and communities. Patience that's made mature through preparing to uproot, alleviate, and wear away at the greed, aversion, and delusion within our own hearts and minds.

This week, I want to turn our hearts and our attention to patience as forbearance. Patience as forbearance can be such a boon and ballast for us during really turbulent, rocky, difficult times like the times that we're living in with the global pandemic, vaccines and variants, political divisiveness, the climate crisis, and the gender and racial awakening and reckoning that we're experiencing.

Forbearance is such an antiquated word. We don't hear it used all that often. You can think of patience as a protection—a protection against your own reactivity or in the face of another person's reactivity. You can also think of it as self-restraint in the face of injury and insult.

I want to share with you some words from the Buddha where he's encouraging his disciples. He's really cheering them on. He's encouraging them to live into this nonreactivity and forbearance. He says, "If others abuse, revile, scold, and harass you, on that account, you should not entertain any annoyance, bitterness, or dejection of heart."

Now, I don't know about you, but when I hear that I think, "That's a tall order. That's really difficult to live into." And it's difficult to live into because it can be so hard when we're the object onto which someone is unleashing their disrespect. When we're the object of another person's seeming disrespect, disdain, hostility, or impatience, we react in all kinds of ways. We can meet aggression with aggression. We can collapse or freeze. Sometimes we want to pull away and run. Sometimes this is an energetic movement; sometimes we literally turn and run.



All of these reactions aren't helpful, especially running, because there are instances in which it is appropriate to turn towards the harm and the injury and set a very clear, firm boundary that's born of love and wisdom. It's the wisdom that sees karmically, "This is not good for you. It's not beneficial for you, and it's not beneficial for me, so this needs to stop."

We recognize how unbeneficial it is for everybody involved. Again, it's compassion for ourselves and for other people that mitigates the greed, aversion, and delusion running through the heart-mind stream. Again, patience is filled with this intention of compassion and liberation and is brought into maturity.

This is patience as forbearance: not running, setting a very firm and clear boundary born of the recognition that this isn't beneficial for anybody involved. Patience doesn't mean that we allow people to walk all over us. I really love the practice of patience as forbearance because it helps me to broaden the repertoire of my responses in really challenging, difficult situations.

Complete patience as forbearance is a commitment to non harming. When others are shaming us, blaming us, insulting us, or disrespecting us, we just recognize that they are suffering. Again, we just recognize that they are suffering. Or when we encounter a situation that isn't to our liking because it doesn't meet our expectations or because we're sustaining some loss or sorrow, some blame or disapproval, we just recognize that there's difficulty. When suffering is present, when difficulty comes knocking, which it inevitably does, why compound the suffering or the difficulty with our own reactivity?

There's this beautiful image of patience that I shared with you from an ancient text called *The All-Embracing Net of Views*: "Patience is an ocean on account of its depth, a shore on account of bounding the great ocean of hatred." I'm looking at the ocean right now. So vast, so deep.

"Patience is an ocean on account of its depth, a shore on account of bounding the great ocean of hatred." In this image, we have patience being likened to an ocean, a metaphor for that which is vast and limitless. It's really the equivalent of our experience of the universe: boundless and vast, i.e., inexhaustible. Just think of that: that as we cultivate patience, we're tapping into this inexhaustible reservoir of benevolence that helps us to meet injury and insult without causing harm.

Now, the second part: patience is a shore on account of bounding the great ocean of hatred. Not only is patience vast and limitless—it's inexhaustible, and it has strength. It has the strength to actually contain our reactivity and our anger. You can think of patience as serving as a protection against the corrosive effects of reactivity and anger.



Anger and reactivity can be so seductive. In the moment, it can just feel so right—we can feel so justified in unleashing our anger and blindly acting out on our reactivity. And I think the reason it can feel so right in the moment and we feel justified is because it's a way of discharging this intense inner discomfort of having been insulted and the hurt that comes from that.

One of my favorite humans is Lorraine Hansberry. She was a playwright, activist, and thinker. She was very erudite. And just to give you a sense of who she was and who she is—I say "is" because she continues to live on in those of us who are inspired by her life and her work—I want to share some of her words with you. She said, "I care. I care about it all. It takes too much energy not to care. One cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know the miseries which afflict this world."

As you can hear, she was really sensitive, attuned to, and knowledgeable about the injustices of her times. She was born in 1930 and died in 1965. She was a person dedicated to using her considerable gifts as a writer, her very radical, radiant mind and heart, to see into and reveal the caustic nature of racism. As you can tell from her years, 1930–1965, she died at a really young age at the age of 35. And Martin Luther King, Jr. wasn't able to come to her funeral, but he sent a letter. In that letter, he wrote, "She had a profound grasp of the deep social issues confronting the world."

She really understood the anguish, the sadness, the fatigue that was manifesting as anger for Blacks at that time. In a speech, she names the deep frustration and reactivity that was present for Black people. She named the initial impulse—not the final spirit with which the protests were carried out, but the initial impulse that was animating the protests and got them rolling. She says, "I'm tired. I want to hit somebody."

We can all empathize with that: "I'm tired, and I just want to hit somebody." And the genius of the civil rights movement was transmuting this primal force of anger through the practice of nonviolence and the ability to suffer without retaliation or reactivity.

So nonviolent action is actually forbearance. Nonviolence is an embodiment of complete patience.

I want to read a quote from King. I know we're reading a lot of King these days, but there's a reason why we're bringing him to mind, bringing to mind that whole community and what they represent and stand for within our own hearts and minds. This is from a passage called "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence" where he's finding his way to nonviolent action. King says, "Due to my involvement in the struggle for the freedom of my people, I have known very few quiet days



in the last few years. I've been imprisoned in Alabama and Georgia jails 12 times. My home has been bombed twice. A day seldom passes that my family and I are not the recipients of death threats."

We can hear that and think that's a relic of another time. But there are freedom fighters today like Bryan Stevenson and his colleagues at the Equal Justice Initiative who are in the heartwork of exonerating people who have been wrongly imprisoned for crimes that they did not commit. And in their work, they've received death threats. This is not something from the past. This is not some antiquated thing. This is not some relic. There are freedom fighters still experiencing this today and calling on patience as forbearance.

King continues, "I've been the victim of a near-fatal stabbing. So in a real sense, I have been battered by the storms of persecution. I must admit that at times I have felt that I could no longer bear such a heavy burden and have been tempted to retreat to a more quiet and serene life.

But every time such a temptation appeared, something came to strengthen and sustain my determination. [Determination is one of the paramis.] I have learned now that the master's burden is alight precisely when we take his yoke upon us. [Remember, he's a minister, a man of God.]

My personal trials have also taught me the value of unmerited suffering. As my sufferings mounted, I soon realized that there were two ways I could respond to my situation: either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force.

I've decided to follow the latter course. Recognizing the necessity for suffering, I have tried to make of it a virtue. If only to save myself from bitterness, I have attempted to see my personal ordeals as an opportunity to transfigure myself and heal the people and the tragic situation, which now obtains."

I want to look at a campaign from the civil rights era that is an example of this creative response to personal injury and insult. I learned about this campaign from an organization called the East Point Peace Academy. They train people and they offer workshops in Kingian-Gandhian nonviolence and nonviolent action.

So let's go back. It's April of 1963, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference starts a campaign to challenge the segregation laws of Birmingham, Alabama. They want all lunch counters integrated. They want Blacks to be hired in the department stores downtown. And they want the schools integrated that fall.



To give some context to that last demand of their campaign, nine years earlier, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" is unconstitutional. And then a year later, in 1955, there's *Brown v. Board of Education II*, or *Brown II*, where the Supreme Court says, "OK, y'all need to actually desegregate schools with all deliberate speed." "All deliberate speed" is the language. These southern states were really dragging their feet, so this campaign said they needed to integrate schools this fall.

However, this campaign was not gaining communal support or getting a massive number of Blacks coming out to protest. And this was really understandable. The violence unleashed against Black activists (or just average citizens who were participating in these protests) was often lethal, discouraging people from coming out to protest. As an adult, if you participated in these protests, you risked losing your job. And there was a fragile false peace, what King called a "negative peace," that was struck between the Black middle class of Birmingham, Alabama and the white power structure.

One of the ministers, a very brilliant minister, said, "Alright, we're not getting the mass number of adults coming out to protest. Let's train the children." There was a lot of argument and debate about this: is it ethical to train children? The argument that won the day, a brilliant argument made by this minister, was: if these young children are empowered with the choice to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, then shouldn't they be empowered to actually protest and challenge racism? (Remember, this is a Christian community.)

The point that he was making is that racism has a deleterious effect on the hearts and minds of people, and it starts at a young age. It's already starting to happen to these young people. He was saying that they should be empowered with the choice to actually challenge the policies, practices, mores, and ideology that was and would continue to have an adverse impact on the development of their own hearts and minds.

This is the argument he made, and they went ahead and they trained the children. So it's May 2, 1963, and the aim of this campaign was to overwhelm the jails—to get so many people coming out to protest, so many children coming to protest, that Birmingham wouldn't be able to jail everyone.

The parents were really worried for their children. They were saying, "You've better not go down to that church. Please don't go to that church." But the children came. They came in droves. They came by the hundreds to the 16th Street Baptist Church. Six hundred children were jailed on that first day of May 2. It's estimated that ten thousand children total were jailed within this protest. It



totally took the Birmingham authorities by surprise—by shock, really. It totally shocked them. They weren't anticipating this or expecting this.

I don't want to romanticize this protest. There are children who were jailed. They didn't know what was going to happen to them, so they had a lot of fear running through their system. They defied their parents to do this, and this put a strain on the parent-child bond.

And perhaps you've seen the iconic photos and the footage of these children facing fire hoses, pounds of water tearing at their clothing and their flesh, these very courageous young people facing down dogs that were unleashed on them, and grown men empowered by the state to use lethal force on these young people.

And they endured these hardships. They endured these hardships, and they did it with the spirit of knowing that what they were doing was right. They did so with the hope that their country and their fellow humans would see the rightness and nobility of what they were standing for, the intention that was animating them. They hoped that their country would respond with generosity and support and would also see the rightness of what they were doing. And this rightness filled them with a nobility.

Maybe you've seen footage and recordings of these young people singing and dancing to shore each other up, to keep their spirits up, to remind themselves of the intention and the purpose of what they were doing.

They desegregated downtown Birmingham, Alabama. They did it. And it comes at a cost. I know a lot of older Black people from this era who are terrified. I've seen Black people who were raised during this era in my life now who are just terrified of dogs, gripped by fear. We can romanticize that kind of courage, forgetting that it comes at a cost. It comes at a high cost that can live on in the people who endured these hardships in the name of justice.

This nonviolent campaign was rooted in six principles, and I want to read the third principle to you because it is a way of practicing patience as forbearance. It says, "The nonviolent approach helps one analyze the fundamental conditions, policies, and practices of the conflict rather than reacting to one's opponents or their personalities."

When we call on forbearance in the face of insult and injury without reacting, it frees up our energy so that we can respond creatively. In this particular instance, in this campaign, that energy was used to deconstruct the conditions that created the injustice and the harm.



They used that energy to escalate the situation and to dramatize the injustice and the harm done so that the status quo was no longer tenable for those in the dominant culture who were superficially benefiting from the injustice. They escalated and dramatized the situation with the intention to actually de-escalate so that they could enter into negotiation and start the process of restoring equity, respect, and mutual right relationship and planting the seeds of a beloved community.

This was the genius of the Black-led freedom struggle here in the United States. And this is what's possible. This is the fruit. This is what's possible when we summon forbearance in the face of injury, in the face of insult, in the face of harm. All that energy that would have been bound up in reactivities is actually freed up so that we can respond creatively from our deepest values.

I'm not saying that you need to go out and protest and open yourselves to the lethal violence that these freedom fighters actually opened themselves up to. There were very special conditions that allowed them to rise to the challenges of their times. They trained in forbearance daily. Their direct action was rooted in the philosophy of nonviolence and nonviolent action. This philosophy was strengthened by a deep Christian ethic of love, to which they wholeheartedly gave themselves over because they wholeheartedly believed in it. And they had sangha. They were there for each other.

So they had very special circumstances supporting them. That said, the civil rights movement and these teachings on patience are a part of our inheritance. So what does that mean for us as practitioners?

The children of Birmingham, Alabama trained in patience as forbearance. Diane Nash and John Lewis trained in patience as forbearance. The Buddha trained in patience as forbearance. And we too can train in patience as forbearance.

I'll be sharing some practices for cultivating patience in the last installment of our four-part series. Next week, we'll continue to study and practice with patience, but we'll actually play with another facet of patience, this beautiful gem that we're adorning the heart and mind with.

The next facet that we'll be exploring is patience as gentle perseverance. Until then, I wish you well, I wish you safety, I wish you happiness, and I wish you freedom. Bye.