One Earth Sangha

Practice Is Disruption

Kristin Barker in Conversation with Valerie Brown and Marisela Gomez

This conversation was part of One Earth Sangha's EcoSattva Training: Becoming a Force for Nature. Join the latest version of the EcoSattva Training: Fostering Courage, Forging Community and Loving this World.

Kristin: Well, hello, friends here we are in session seven, and boy, we've been through a lot together. You've been on quite a journey so far in the EcoSattva training and now arriving in this moment where we're having been really in the depths of uncertainty and hopefully using all the blessings that have come your way through your practice, through mindfulness, through the Dharma, through Earth and relationship and ancestors in that bottom of the U, now emerging and continuing through sensing our way into what does it mean to be alive with a pulse, a human being on this Earth right now. And I am so excited to have two people with us who are very much trying to offer some guidance for how that might work for them, their communities, the people that they're working with, and what they're learning about being in and responding to the world in this very nuanced way, hopefully deeply, deeply guided by the wisdom traditions that we are blessed, blessed in, blessed by. So in particular, I want to welcome Marisela Gomez, who is coming to us from, like me, the Potomac Greater Region of the Chesapeake Watershed, also the lands of the Piscataway people.

So I'll start with you, Marisela. How do you like to introduce yourself to the people who are here? And then we'll turn to Valerie.

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Marisela: Good. Not sure when you are watching this. So good happiness, wherever you are, everyone. And so happy you're involved in this kind of training. Mariela is good, and I do want to make a distinction. I'm in Baltimore and I'm giving my shout out for B-More, be more. B-More in the house. And yeah, I think that what I would say is a practitioner who wants to continue to figure out how locally we can change the world.

Kristin: Beautiful. Where we have standing. Gorgeous. Yeah. And then Valerie, Valerie Brown. Welcome. It's so good to have you here with us. In both of your cases, I admire and I'm inspired by your work. And so yeah, Valerie, same question to you. How do you like to introduce yourself to situations, to settings like this?

Valerie: Well, first I want to thank you and this beautiful community that has gathered around you, around us and just say a deep respect for the learning and the growth that is happening in this segment and throughout your learning journey. I also want to acknowledge that my feet are touching the ground in the traditional lands of the Lenape people, specifically an area called Aton. It's also known as New Hope, Pennsylvania. And that word, Aton, coming from the Lenape people means spring in the bushes. And so this is an area in southeastern Pennsylvania outside of the city of Philadelphia where there are many watersheds and tributaries and rivers. So it's a very kind of feminine and watery place.

I want to really acknowledge that what I am and we will be sharing has a root. And to acknowledge at least part of that root comes from our beloved teacher, Zen master Thích Nhất Hạnh. And for Thay, I'm very, very grateful, I would not be here without Thích Nhất Hạnh. And so I want to acknowledge not just this beloved teacher that I know is dear to many, many, many, many people, but also the

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Vietnamese people who have produced a Thích Nhất Hạnh and the lineage of the Buddha, the ancestral roots of the Asian people and Asian culture that have brought the manifestation of the Buddhist teachings that have been so beneficial to so many people.

And since we're talking about ancestral lineage closer in, I want to acknowledge my own ancestral lineage, the Cuban and Jamaican roots. And I know many people share similar roots. So I want to acknowledge the roots of the people who have supported me and have given me life. And my dear friend, Marisela, who is here, I would not be here without Marisela Gomez, and without Kaira Jewel Lingo, I would not be here. It's not possible. We all need spiritual friends and to have a spiritual friend and a companion is full of riches. And so I'm very grateful. And so that's what I want to acknowledge.

Kristin: Thank you. Thank you for that. And the naming, the necessary naming of lineage that we all stand in and benefit from. And yes to the astounding blessing, it still just blows my mind and my heart, teachings, really an astounding gift to this world and how lucky we are actually to benefit from your friendship with each other, your friendship with another longtime contributor and holder of this training with us, Kaira Jewel Lingo. So here we are already in friendship, so yeah, may those blessings, may they come and guide us here.

So one of a founding premise really of One Earth Sangha is that there is an incredible wealth to the Dharma, to the Dharma traditions, to the Asian lineages, to the teachers that we're already aiming here and more that can speak so profoundly and so helpfully to these incredible times that we're in, this kind of reckoning with really not just decades but centuries, even millennia of separation,

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of a kind of self-imposed or other imposed separation from each other and from Earth, from ecological kin, and a kind of seeing through the separative consciousness, the imposed consciousness, and the imposed separation and the self-imposed separation to what it means to be in deep sangha with one another, to what Thay has called interbeing.

And that wealth is largely untapped, actually, there's so much here for us. And I'm wondering if I can ask each of you, and you can even speak to each other about this, how you see engagement in the world. This thing where it's for some reason an adjective, *engaged* Buddhism, as opposed to Buddhism that is inherently engaged in the work of reducing suffering collectively. What sometimes gets called activism. How is Buddhist practice and that work in the world, if you will? How do you see those in helpful relationship and what would you invite as corrective or guidance or inspiration to have us realize that more deeply.

Marisela: Valerie always does this to me. That's why she's laughing. You can thank me later. It's funny. Yes, it is a complicated question. Only because our ego is the one driving the show because the teachings are real simple. The practice is very challenging. And as we're sharing, I think one of the people who has really brought the teachings, these beautiful teachings, at least into the West in a way that we have bite-size portions to digest, is our teacher Thay. And I remember living in the monastery and sometimes people coming to the monastery and hearing sometimes, yeah, it's just about breathing and walking, breathing and walking and I see Valerie smiling because it really is that simple.

And yet because we are so attached to this, as you're saying, Kristin, the separateness, the importance, the bigness of who I am, which then needs to be

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grand and then requires a grand this and a grand that, and then a complicated this and a complicated that, right? That we miss the simplicity of the path. And so whenever we get tired of breathing and walking already, it's the ego that is convincing us that there's more. And so I would always smile when I would hear that because what it's revealing is that as simple as it is, the complicated mind, the ego mind couldn't grasp it, couldn't understand the direct teaching of breathing and walking. And if we would only just, Valerie invited us into pausing with a breath, a bell and a breath earlier. And what comes from that, I think she said, you feel better. We all felt better.

It's that simple, you see, it was, it was just so simple. That's the evidence, that's the data, that's the science. The beautiful science of it was we just took 10 breaths together and then we felt better and we did it together. The sangha aspect of this path of resistance is to be in community, to resist the separateness, to resist the individuality that is so inculcated in us, especially in the West, that that's really the only way to go is individually, it's competitive. If you get yours, I can't get mine. And so my job is to take yours or make sure you can't get it so I can get it. And so this sort of separateness that feeds the competition nature feeds the idea that the only way I can have is if you don't have.

And so here we are today living that right now where people in this economic, socioeconomic geopolitical power places are showing us that in order for them to continue to have theirs and more, they have to make sure we don't have any, the people in the truly understanding collective sense of that way, we the beloved community. And even there, we can't let the beloved community not include those same people who are telling us that you are separate from us and who are

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impacting us and violating us and oppressing us individually and as collectives and we still then have to welcome them into this beloved circle.

The way there, it's not complicated. It comes back to that breathing, stopping, walking slowly and in that slow walk, reconnecting to this body while I have feet that can touch the ground. Isn't that a luxury or privilege? Sometimes when I'm leading walking meditation, I catch myself and I say, let's call this moving meditation because not everyone has feet. So walking, it's an accepted thing for me. And yet even that small awareness is already part of how I'm going to move through this world, finding in that moment that I already have so much and all that comes from stopping, pausing, breathing, looking, so that, doing just that in any space.

So it's not just always when I hear this question, I always say, yeah, for activists and also for anywhere, if we can bring this understanding that to slow down, to take a pause, to settle in, we are already bringing, we already bringing the Dharma right into that whatever action, whatever word, whatever protests.

Addressing a board that's trying to, just like Johns Hopkins who's trying to not pay their taxes in the city, but uses so much of the city's infrastructure. Even when you're addressing that in a city council hearing, can we bring our breath in there? Can we slow it down? And can we come from that place of openness instead of from that place of anger and revenge and hostility? Because that's where we include them also very locally, as I said earlier, locally, how we include them in that beloved circle still, even if they continue to do all this harm to the people in the city. I'll stop there.

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Valerie: I really love what you said, Marisela. It's so true and so beautiful. And just bringing up the beloved community. I can't help but think about Larry, about our dear friend, Larry, Larry Ward. Reverend Dr. Larry Ward who passed away in August, August 19th, a dear friend to so many people. And so I might be channeling a little bit of it here. So the separation that you spoke about Kristin, is kind of like, well, not kind of. It is an original wound. It is one of the original wounds that we as modern people have been given to believe that we are separate, that I get my little thing over here and I'm good and I can be separate.

But of course from the Buddhist perspective, we would call that wrong view and delusion. It's actually in Buddhism called a kind of poison to have these to hold on to the notion of separation. One of the things that our teacher, Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh, I know a teacher to many people, not just my own personal teacher, but to many people, has said is interbeing. He's given us this word that is more than a word, but a practice actually that we're not separate. I am not separate. And it's that original wounding, this sense that I'm separate, that can be at the root of so much destruction that we're experiencing.

So one of the things that we can do is to recognize what Marisela is saying, these practices of stopping, calming ourselves, mindful breathing, mindful walking, and it doesn't need to be anything grand, but simply recognizing, feeling my feet on the ground, taking a deep breath and slowly releasing the exhale to engage the parasympathetic nervous system. What does that do? In addition to calming the nervous system, it regulates, it's an act of self-regulation, self stewardship. And that is also the practice of not just self-regulation but co-regulation because we're not separate. My nervous system is in constant communication with yours, with Marisela. And so a regulated nervous system really is beneficial to the whole

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environment. And so this is one of the things that we can do. We can say time out, pause. Let me just take a breath before I respond. That's called agency.

And we can do that. And that is a great gift. Our teacher has written over 100 books. He's given countless Dharma talks all around the world, and they all say the same thing. You could read one book and you get the other 99. And what he has said is mindfulness, concentration and insight is the path to our liberation. And by that, he means he's talking about how we can go back to the first foundation of mindfulness, awareness of the body and the breath. I can feel my feet on the floor. I can sense the heat rising in my body. I want to say something nasty or whatever the case may be, I can regulate, I can hold that and I can take care of what's arising. That stopping is a practice. And with that stopping, we can then look deeply. We can say, oh, you, I am tired. I didn't get enough sleep, or I need to drink something, or this person really pisses me off. Let me not open my mouth. That's called insight. And so we all can do that.

Now, tomorrow here in the United States some big rallies are planned for the so-called no Kings Day. My hope and my prayer is that we all engage in this practice of stopping calming, looking deeply, and that we practice with the very ground of our being as our teacher said, and Paul Tillich. And we listen, as Tillich says, listening, being the first duty of love. We listen to what's happening within ourselves and with each other. So I'll pause there and just thank you for the beautiful question.

Kristin: Beautiful answers. Yeah, the answers that are actually both radical and also themselves not answers, that they are responses that are invitations to practice. That's how I'm hearing, to practice in a way of being in relationship, to ask

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the question, how am I rendered? How do I change my own sense of myself when I stop, slow down, feel my feet, feel my breath, and remember that I am not separate. To even notice what you invited us to notice before what happens when we come together and pause. I feel like that's the *don't believe me, check it out for yourself* aspect of this path that is so powerful because it's right there for every consciousness to know and recognize the truth of what you're both saying and saying so beautifully.

And so I wonder here if we can even slow this down and see the risk that is here if we don't take that last step of recognizing our inner being, our interdependence, our inseparability, enmeshment, the very stuff of us being Earth and interconnected and wildly both implicated and benefiting from and just in the mesh of it. Because I think that in my own experience in speaking to so much of what you both pointed to, the quiet, when Buddhism becomes quiet, becomes withdrawn and doesn't recognize that it's already participating and invites the practitioner to do that receding as opposed to staying with and knowing our inseparability, that I see as a kind of misunderstanding of what we're invited to. And one that actually is not uncommon. I would say that it doesn't engage in the mess of it, doesn't get out into the place where suffering, where the suffering of others, maybe not my own, but the suffering of beings just like me is happening. And to not step forward, to interrupt to even, I'm going to say an even more controversial word now, disrupt. Talk to me about how you hold this sort of work in the world and engagement, if you will, on both the risk of withdrawal and maybe the risks of tearing it all down or something that has those kinds of energies on that continuum maybe, and what might be The Middle Way. That's not a compromise, but is the stuff of the insights that you all are speaking.

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Valerie: Oh, no, thank you. This is such a beautiful and thorny question, right? Yeah. So what is the action that we can and should be taking? Maybe what action, what is called for now? Is it just sitting back and waiting? I'm reading Joanna Macy's *World As Lover World As Self*. Yeah, a powerful book. It feels like I'm hearing Thay, he wrote the foreword to the book. So it's like it's a really mind blowing book. And I'll share a little bit of what's coming up for me as a response to this question with that book.

In my mind, we all want to see peace in this world, we all want to see a world of peace, but we all don't know necessarily how to get there or how to generate peace within ourselves. It's kind of like the peacemaker, the angry, critical, brutal peace activist doesn't work. I mean, at least I'm not sure how that's going to work. The brutal peacemaker or the brutal social activists, that energy of that violence and brutality necessarily will rest within the work in one's the inheritance of one's body, speech, mind thoughts, deeds, conduct. And so by necessity, the work needs to begin with us. So what is it that an activist, a socially engaged person, obviously Plum Village is in the tradition of socially engaged Buddhism, what is it that we actually do?

So Marisela has a jacket like this, and hey, my name is Brown, and so I'm wearing a brown jacket. And so this brown jacket, this robe, is a reminder of many things. And one of the things, it's a reminder of humility and service in the world to love, to serve and to remember. It's also a reminder that in that service not to run to binary thinking good or bad, black or white, left or right, that's really simple. This brown jacket invites me to hold multiple perspectives, and in this spirit of Thay and Joanna Macy, to be able to hold these multiple perspectives and multiple complexities. The meaning of the brown jacket, the meaning of practicing

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mindfulness meditation in the Plum Village tradition is to alleviate the suffering within ourselves and in the world. This is what the jacket is a reminder of. And one of the ways that I can do that with folks and in myself is to cultivate a sense of peace and then share that with other people.

I think it was Thomas Merton, a friend of Thay, who said your actions are the outcome, the end result, you want to get to a place of peace or you want to get to a place of compassion, we don't begin with anger, hatred, and violence. And we recognize when we're committing violence within ourselves. The over activism, the overwork, the over striving is a form of violence. There is Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of great understanding, great listening, great compassion. And this Bodhisattva, this great being is sitting in a posture, kind of like this, in a posture of ease. It's called royal ease, the posture of royal ease.

The teachings are aimlessness, businessless. I'm busy, I have a lot of work to do, but I don't do it in a busy, hurtful, aggressive way. And the Bodhisattva of great compassion in this posture of royal ease, it's a reminder to find the ease and the peace within ourselves. Then we can hold the complexity. We can take multiple perspectives. We don't go to the easy black and white. She's right, he's wrong binary thinking. With a little bit more ease we can hold some of that complexity. Even the neutrality, if we're neutral, how is that promoting the status quo? So this is really about self stewardship so that we become an instrument of peace to be able to do the work in the world. So I'll stop there.

Kristin: Yeah, yeah. An instrument of peace. And I hear you speaking to not the way in which that cultivating peace within myself is not a precondition for my cultivating peace in the world, that they are done together too. It's not like, oh, I'm

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going to wait until I'm enlightened, and then I'm going to be in that with the body, with the breath as I move in the world, they are together. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Beautiful.

Marisela, I wonder if you could speak to what Valerie was just gesturing towards, or at least I heard a gesture towards both the ego, the kind of aggressiveness of the hitting people over the head with your peace sign kind of thing. Just like how that can be like, oh gee, that's not the way, and neither is the kind of rigid calm, the imposed calm that cannot tolerate the marketplace that kind of rises above and distances instead of holding and bringing the kind of energy or even the self-conception of apolitical is also I think in what I was just hearing Valerie speak to. So pick up any of those threads that I just named in what I was hearing from her, that speaks to you and that you might think might be helpful for us to explore.

Marisela: Thank you, Kristin. Thank you, Valerie. I think what I heard as a question was how to ... I mean, it was a little bit similar to the original question of Valerie, but now with more specificity around what those two extremes may look like, maybe. So let me start with beating the person on their head with the peace sign, because that's what I used to do, so I know what that is, what it feels like. I know what motivates it. I don't know all of the motivations, but I certainly know the motivations that I had when I used to do that as an organizer in a housing meeting where a developer is displacing 750 black families for a biotech park, and all the anger that I had, rage in engaging with the developer, the proxy for the Johns Hopkins institutions, and as the organizer for the people, people representing the 750 black families.

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I know what it meant to attack hatred with hatred. So I don't speak of it from a place of theory, I speak of it from a place of direct experience. And I remember specifically during those times wondering why not everyone else was doing that? Of course, I had to be right. I was on the side of the people, the side of justice, and the clarity of the injustice for me justified the clarity of my righteousness. And so, heck, don't these people get it? Don't y'all get it? Can't you see y'all need to do what I do? And so that would come in the form, I didn't actually hit anyone in their head with the peace sign, but my words were daggers.

I was really good at it. Nothing I'm proud of now. Just that's what I was. That's who I was. So then fast forward now. And so that's not the way, that's not it. That doesn't work because that doesn't do anything to my anger or my rage. It's so enraging that all it does is make the people who are fundamentally in hatred anyway, justify in some ways their hatred. See a stupid person, see, they're just angry. See, they're violent even, right? And so just from an external perspective, it doesn't work. You don't make friends and you may get outcomes because I did get outcomes. And as a community, we got outcomes. We stopped. We didn't stop the project, but we shifted some of the wins. We actually got some wins, but that was relative to doing nothing.

So that is for me, the example of those two that you're saying, right? The doing nothing, the neutrality that Valerie spoke of, the receding and doing nothing. And then the extreme opposite of like, I'm going to take this on. I'm going to get on the radio and I'm going to talk about y'all. People who think you're a White knight in shining armor, coming to rescue all the Black people, all that, been there, done it kind of thing. Again, it was like Valerie said, thank you Thay, thank you. And the transformation, and it's still transforming. It still happens, continues. It's ongoing.

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And see, I wear my brown hat. I don't wear the brown jacket. It's just too, what's the word, traditional, for me? Because you see, I still have all that in me, you see, and I wear the brown pants all the time, people, I wear brown, you have other colors. I'm like, it reminds me, it's just, well, it reminds me that something is holding me, that I have vows, I've taken vows that I am trying to live into. They're my guiding light when I want to go back to those places of rage, indignation and anger. And so what the practice did for me was, it was all about stopping and breathing. And in the process of stopping and breathing, being able to investigate and look at and listen to myself and then see that there was more than just that. And so now I engage differently. And it is just like you say, I'm not done right? It's a continuous process. The insight comes and then it goes right away.

And still, the little bit of transformation and insight allows me to see that the way I would engage. And so I'm still engaging with developers who are still oppressing Black people, working class people in the community. So I'm still doing the same work I was doing some 25, 30 years ago, and they're still doing the same thing, they meaning people with power who haven't quite woken up yet, but now I see them as part of my beloved community. Now they're not the other. So I go into those engagements now with that understanding that we are not separate. It's very different than the way I used to go into these spaces, which was like, you are so different from me. You're nothing compared to who I am. Ego. I have justice and rightness on my side, and you are all wrong. You don't put your shoes on like I do. You don't care about your family. All those things that come from separating ourselves from each other.

And so this practice, what it does when we take that breath and we take that pause, it gives us a bigger perspective. And it's that simple, right? It's not like you

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have to go in front of people and recite the five mindfulness trainings or recite contemplations before eating in the midst of a protest. It's as simple as stopping and breathing and remember coming back to yourself, coming back. And for those of us who still, when we wear this brown, I remember that I'm part of something much bigger than myself, right? I am part of this brown community, this humble community, that the brown represents the Earth. And so I'm connected to the Earth and the humility of being in that. And so that's the sangha part.

You see, that's the thing that keeps us on the path so that when we go back to those hindrances and the influxes, the things that keep bringing us, wanting us to go into their unwholesome actions, these things bring us back to center. They bring us back, and it keeps reminding us.

I do want to say this, I feel like practice is disruption actually, because you used the word receding and then the kind of extreme opposite, being disruption. I think that if you can take the time to sit and be with yourself and face and surrender to this, what it is right now that's so disruptive to the norm, the status quo. I mean, the status quo says, don't face what's up now, consume something to distract yourself from that hurt, to distract yourself from that. Take up the device and send a text, which is lovely way to connect. And also, why are we doing it?

So to me, the disruption is the stopping. We're disrupting the fast pace. So the disruption and the resistance is actually saying, I'm not going to go with the majority. I'm actually going to stop. I'm going to breathe. There's all this going on, but right now, I feel so ungrounded and so liable to do, I don't know. I'm going to actually go and spend a day of mindfulness just breathing, walking slowly, making tea, whatever, orange juice and drinking it mindfully. Yeah, I'm going to be lazy.

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I'm going to be pauseful. And to me, that's a disruption, actually. And if we could all be disruptive in that way, as well as getting on the street, as well as writing the letters to the governors, as well as sometimes laying down on the ground in front of the bulldozer. Yeah, yeah. Nothing's off the market.

Kristin: Yeah. I hear in what you're saying an echo of just that fundamental idea of going against the stream, that whether that stream is the unconscious driven, ego-driven agenda, and to interrupt, to disrupt that, to stand against that stream or to stand against the collective streams of the whatever it is that people and institutions with a certain kind of power, not the kind of power that you all are speaking to, but a certain kind of power or enacting to disrupt that. So both of 'em, I hear that kind of disruption, really skillful, necessary disruption just on different scales and different, maybe I want to do the latter with others. I definitely want to be together in real sangha, but to disrupt my own habits, my own unconscious habit as a beginning. So we wrap up. I would love to just do this for two more hours, honestly.

So much is here in the nuance and the, yeah, it's back to this idea of it being both simple and not always easy to put into practice. It takes so much attention staying with ourselves, staying with that brown, that brown fabric to say what is here? What does it mean to put this on? I hear you both speaking to the challenge, the beautiful call and the challenge in that I feel like you're both invoking here. So is there anything else as we wrap up that you would want to say to people who are in this course, who are grappling with what it means to be at this time that sometimes is called, it can be called crisis, can be called collapse. To me, those stories don't quite resonate for me. It feels like a threshold. It feels like a lot of threshold crossing happening in various ways.

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And yet to see ourselves as pattern two, that this isn't the first time that any peoples have confronted really hard collective moments with a lot of suffering and to join them in a certain way with humility and with inspiration. So is there anything else in this kind of maybe irreducible moment that you would want to offer to the people who are on this journey? With Kaira Jewel and Dr. Ward. Actually in session four, we have a recording that we're keeping, from him from last year. It was gorgeous. So he's here with us too. Thay is here. So many of the people that you're speaking to, anything else that you would want to offer?

Marisela: I think it's a really good question, actually. I think we need to grieve the moment, not to jump over the fact that we are ... there's things to grieve. It's real. Let's not jump past it. Let's not bypass the grief. So we need to grieve the moment. And then we need to find joy. The joy is so, so important. The joy is what gives us the ground from which we can keep coming back again and again. So we need to grieve and then we need to find joy. And when I say joy, I mean just the preciousness of any moment that's there right in front of us, the preciousness of their friends, the preciousness of sangha, preciousness of the sun and the trees turning colors. There's so much there. And yet when we are in some of these moments, we can't see. So we have to grieve it so that we, it's like acknowledging it. And part of that grieving is the turning and surrendering to it. So yeah, this is here and this is hard. This is really hard.

And then when we have acknowledged it, because the grief is an energy, and so the energy gets acknowledged, gets transformed, so we grieve it and then we find joy, and that's another energy. And that energy comes in us, and it lifts us up and it spirits ourselves and the energy flows. And then we tend to what we can tend to.

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And today it might be this, and tomorrow it might be something different. But being able, using all the tools and practices we discuss, being able to know what it is for us now, what does my tending look like today? One day my tending might be just sitting in that corner and breathing, and one day my tending might be being out there in what we might think to be the more external physical acts of activism or revolution.

And I can't reemphasize enough how sitting in the corner breathing is as revolutionary as getting out there in the front and speaking up to power. It's all about non-complying. It's all about taking care of ourselves so that we can then be in defiance where we need to be. Define the status quo by taking the time to care, to be what Valerie's saying, the self stewarding, and then taking care of ourselves and knowing that's what the tending and the practice, knowing where are we right now? Where do we need to be? Maybe we need to walk down the street and buy a meal for someone who's sitting on the corner and practice their compassion and kindness.

Valerie: That's so beautiful. Thank you. Marisela. I am so touched by the example of your life, really the lived experience of your life. We're talking about spiritual things, but we are also talking about political things. We're talking about spiritual action, but we're also talking about political action because the spiritual and the political inter-are, and as Marisela said, we each have a role. We each can take action. And for some people that means baking bread for other people, it's knitting. For some people, it's making signs for other people, it's planting seeds. Each person can take action.

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I'm thinking here about the words of the environmentalist, Bill McKibben. And someone went to him and said, Bill, I'm one person and we're in a polycrisis. What can I do as one person? And McKibben famously said, well, the first thing you can do is stop thinking like an individual I, that original separation.

And so this may seem very unsexy, to stop, calm and breathe. That would be one way to look at it. But what we're talking about here is a political action, a spiritual action of reclaiming one's humanity through the body, through the breath. We're living at a time when our own humanness is being objectified and dehumanized, othered, polarized and divisive. And so one way of addressing this dehumanization, which is happening everywhere, left against right, Palestinians against Israelis, environmentalists against ... you name it, is to remember that we're not thinking as an individual, that my life and my fate is deeply interconnected to yours. And so, yeah, going back to the teaching of Larry Ward and Dr. King and many, many, many, Thay, we create within ourselves a big tent of beloved community. We stop, calm and breathe, not just for us, but for the perpetrator. And that is creating the vision of the world that we desperately need today. So thank you. Thank you so much.

Kristin: Yeah, beautiful. Yeah, yeah. Thank you for kind of opening out the mystery aspect of what we're inside of too. There's something onward leading about what all of these orientations I think can bring that. Actually, we have no idea, but we know that those are wholesome, right? We know that that is the stuff of the world that we want to see. And then as Joanna says, in so much of her, right, and we don't know what it leads to, but nonetheless, nonetheless.

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And I also love your speaking to the various locations. Also in this module, we talk about movement ecology. We talk about the different places that we can occupy, whether it's the professional or the accountant slaving away in the basement who's just making the numbers work so that the movement in this space can continue or whatever it is, and it looks so different. I think also here is the way that our pain, in our pain and our frustration, we can, Marsiela, you spoke to it earlier and I want to lift it up, we can project on the others that they don't care enough. You must not care. Otherwise, you'd be doing what I'm doing, the way that we flatten each other when we're inside of maybe a much more complicated movement ecology.

So yeah, I want to kind of lift up for folks, these glimmers of the space that I hear you all speaking to this orientation, this orientation of practice, and also the simplicity of returning, stopping, breathing, consciously moving, being with ourselves, taking care of ourselves, and the disruptive aspect of that. So much has been brought here. I want to thank you. I have to admit that my greedy mind wants to do another full hour session with the two of you because this is so fruitful. But I have to speak to that. I have to teach myself the Dharma about sufficiency, efficiency. So really such a deep thank you to you, Valerie, to you Marisela, just a thousand blessings on your path, on those that you are working with, to your ancestors, to your parents, to your teachers. All that has brought you to us and to this world as you are right now. You really are quite awesome guides for us. So I really appreciate your taking some time to be part of this training. Be well, dear ones. Thank you so much.

Marisela: Yeah, thank you, Kristin. Thank you so much. Thank you, Valerie.

Valerie: Love to you.

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