[MUSIC PLAYING] NINA BRYCE: Good morning, everyone. My name is Nina Bryce, and I'm a third year M.Div. here at Harvard Divinity School. We're really delighted here at the HBC planning committee to finally arrive at this day and have you all with us.

Just wanted to say a couple other things about our theme this year. In the fifth year of this gathering, the Fifth Annual Buddhism and Race Conference, our intention as a planning committee was to continue the conversation from the last four years, looking closely at Buddhism and race, and also to consider multiple identities, multiple dimensions of identity in the conversation today.

And as a planning committee, we found it very auspicious that today, March 8, is International Women's Day, so looking at gender in this morning. Very excited to celebrate International Women's Day with each of you. And the question of multiple religious belongings that we'll explore in the afternoon is really academically and personally of interest to a lot of us on the planning committee and here at HDS as a multi-religious divinity school, and as many of us part of this Buddhist ministry initiative experiment here at HDS. So looking at multiple religious belongings is important to us at this time.

So our field is centering intersectionality. And we wanted to begin the day with a video clip introducing the term, providing some framing. And we wanted to let Kimberle Crenshaw introduce the term in her own words.

Kimberle Crenshaw is a professor of law and leading scholar of Critical Race Theory who developed this term, and her work on it, starting in 1989, has been really important in shaping our understanding of what intersectionality means. So we wanted to take a few minutes to hear from her and her definition of the term.

[AUDIO PLAYBACK]

- --ago, I began to use the term intersectionality to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems, like racism and sexism, are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice.

Now, the experience that gave rise to intersectionality was my chance encounter with a woman named Emma DeGraffenreid. Emma DeGraffenreid was an African-American woman, a working wife, and a mother.

I actually read about Emma's story from the pages of a legal opinion written by a judge who had dismissed Emma's claim of race and gender discrimination against a local car manufacturing plant.

Emma, like so many African-American women, sought better employment for her family and for others. She wanted to create a better life for her children and for her family. But she applied for a job and she was not hired, and she believed that she was not hired because she was a Black woman.

Now, the judge in question dismissed the suit. And the argument for dismissing the suit was that the employer did hire African-Americans, and

the employer hired women. The real problem, though, that the judge was not willing to acknowledge, was what Emma was actually trying to say, that the African-Americans that were hired, usually for industrial jobs, maintenance jobs, were all men, and the women that were hired, usually for secretarial or front office work, were all white. Only if the court was able to see how these policies came together would he be able to see the double discrimination that Emma DeGraffenreid was facing.

But the court refused to allow Emma to put two causes of action together to tell her story, because he believed that by allowing her to do that, she would be able to have preferential treatment. She had an advantage by being able to have two swings at the bat, when African-American men and white women only had one swing at the bat.

But of course, neither African-American men or white women needed to combine a race and gender discrimination claim to tell the story of the discrimination they were experiencing. Why wasn't the real unfairness law's refusal to protect African-American women, simply because their experiences weren't exactly the same as white women and African-American men. Rather than broadening the frame to include African-American women, the court simply tossed their case completely out of court.

Now, as a student of anti-discrimination law, as a feminist, as an anti-racist, I was struck by this case. It felt to me like injustice squared. So first of all, Black women weren't allowed to work at the plant. Second of all, the court double down on this exclusion by making it legally inconsequential. And to boot, there was no name for this problem. And we all know that where there's no name for a problem, you can't see a problem. And when you can't see a problem, you pretty much can't solve it.

Many years later, I had come to recognize that the problem that Emma was facing was a framing problem. The frame that the court was using to see gender discrimination or just see race discrimination was partial, and it was distorting.

For me, the challenge that I faced was trying to figure out whether there was an alternative narrative, a prism that would allow us to see Emma's dilemma, a prism that would allow us to rescue her from the cracks in the law, that would allow judges to see her story.

So it occurred to me, maybe a simple analogy to an intersection might allow judges to better see Emma's dilemma. So we think about this intersection of roads to the intersection would be the way that the workforce was structured by race and by gender, and then the traffic in those roads would be the hiring policies and and the other practices that ran through those roads.

Now, because Emma was both Black and female, she was positioned precisely where those roads overlapped, experiencing the simultaneous impact of the company's gender and race traffic. The law, the law is like that ambulance that shows up and is ready to treat Emma only if it can be shown that she was harmed on the race road or on the gender road, but not where those roads intersected.

So what do you call being impacted by multiple forces and then abandoned to fend for yourself? Intersectionality seemed to do it for me.

I would go on to learn that African-American women, like other women of color, like other socially marginalized people all over the world, were facing all kinds of dilemmas and challenges as a consequence of intersectionality, intersections of race and gender, of heterosexism, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism. All of these social dynamics come together and create challenges that are sometimes quite unique.

[END PLAYBACK]

NINA BRYCE: Thank you so much for your kind attention. And of course, we would love to play Dr. Crenshaw's entire talk. She has a lot of very important things to say, but please go to YouTube and find this, The Urgency of Intersectionality, and feel free to watch the whole thing on your own. It's really valuable.

But we wanted to just begin with that, with letting the definition speak for itself, and offer that foundation for the rest of the day. And it is now my great pleasure to introduce Professor Cheryl Giles, who will describe our panelists, our distinguished guests, and our moderator today, share a little bit more about who they are.

And Professor Giles is a really beloved member of the HDS community, the Francis Greenwood Peabody Senior Lecturer on Pastoral Care and Counseling. Her primary research interests are identifying the role of risk and resilience in developing healthy adolescents, exploring the impact of contemplative care for the dying and increasing awareness of health care disparities of African-Americans and the Queer community.

Professor Giles is a core faculty member of the Buddhist Ministry Initiative, and received training and certification in end of life care from the Being with Dying Program and GRACE, training and compassion-based interactions in the clinical patient encounter at Upaya Institute and Zen Center.

She teaches courses on spiritual care and counseling, contemplative care of the dying, and trauma and resilience for caregivers. And she enjoys mentoring students who are preparing for chaplaincy, social justice advocacy, and those interested in research on trauma and the psychology of contemplative care.

Professor Giles is also the co-editor of The Arts of Contemplative Care, Pioneering Voices in Buddhist Chaplaincy and Pastoral Work. She has authored articles on contemplative care of the dying and preparing clinicians to become compassionate caregivers, and I was fortunate to be in a pastoral care and counseling course with Professor Giles last year and can attest that she is one of our beloved teachers and really makes HDS what it is in so many ways. So we're very delighted to have her here with us today to introduce our panelists and begin the morning session. Thank you so much.

CHERYL GILES: Thank you all. We're delighted to see so many of you here today. And of course, each year when we have this conference, one of the truly wonderful benefits is to see so many Buddhist practitioners of various colors, which we don't get to see that much. So as we bring people in, it warms my heart to know that people are practicing throughout the country, and to sort of lift up the visibility, that Buddhism isn't, or Buddhists aren't all white. OK, so I had to say that.

So we are honored, deeply honored to have our four distinguished guests here with us today. I look forward to their blessings and the conversation around intersectionality. So you can join me here please, up front.

And as I welcome them, I wanted to also give a shout out to the HBC, Harvard Buddhist Community, the folks that are putting this on, who have done a lot of work not only to put this conference on, but also to sit together and to think together in the classroom, and to really make this place an ongoing practice. And I think we learn a lot from them and what they were doing. So thank you to you all.

I'd like to begin with Katie Loncke, who is the Co-Director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Many of you know that organization, a very active organization. And Katie explores the paradox of how to love and accept the world as it is while fighting to change it, bridging grounds between intersectional leftist organizing and lay Dharma training.

Kate brings over 15 years of experience in community organizing, nonviolent direct action, and loving sedition, alongside 10 years of training and Buddha Dharma. First in the [INAUDIBLE] community, [INAUDIBLE]. Their holistic work of engaged Buddhism centers in a framework they call Block, Build, Be-- Block, Build, Be-- blocking harm and oppression, building inspiring alternatives, and being in alignment with our highest truths.

[? Her ?] personal highest truth includes cats, lemons, and the Temptations. I love that. Get real with us.

And the next doctor, Melanie Harris, is a founding director of the African-American and Africana studies, and a full professor of religion and ethics at TCU-- Texas Christian University. Melanie also serves as a visiting professor of ethical leadership in global environmental studies at the University of Denver.

A graduate of Harvard leadership program and a former American Council of Education fellow, her research focuses on finance and budgeting and higher education, access, equity, and ethical leadership. Her scholarship critically examines intersections between race, religion, gender, interfaith, dialogue, and environmental ethics.

She is the author of many scholarly articles and books, including Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics, Ecowomanism Earth Honoring Faiths. And Dr. Harris earned her doctoral degree and master's degree at the beloved Union Theological seminary in New York, and an MDiv from our own school of theology and a BA from Stone College.

Venerable Dr. Pannavati is a [AUDIO OUT] Hendersonville, North Carolina. She has [INAUDIBLE] of the [INAUDIBLE] foundation and a vice president for the US chapter of global [? bechuni ?] Association of Black Female Buddhist monk [AUDIO OUT] She's a disciple of [INAUDIBLE] [? zuma, ?] [INAUDIBLE] transmission from [INAUDIBLE].

[INAUDIBLE] known for her wit and humor is both contemplative and empowered for compassionate service. She promotes equality and respect in spiritual life for both female monastics in [INAUDIBLE] and advocates for social justice-- the homeless, women, youth, and those who are marginalized, abused, and [AUDIO OUT]

Sister Peace is a nun in the tradition of the tradition of Plum Village and zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, who has dedicated her life to [INAUDIBLE] of mindfulness [INAUDIBLE] of educators and [INAUDIBLE] artists, and politicians. She has actively been involved in sharing her experience in the practice of mindfulness to help people understand aspirations [INAUDIBLE] and Dr. Martin Luther King Junior to build [INAUDIBLE] community.

Sister Peace lived in and was ordained in Plum Village, France [INAUDIBLE]. She currently lives in [? Manheliot ?] Grove Monastery in Batesville, Mississippi. Before becoming a nun, she lived in Washington DC, where she worked for mayor at the mayor's office. She's a graduate of Georgetown University of Business. She has organized [INAUDIBLE] Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America [INAUDIBLE] people of color, business leaders, and Silicon Valley educators, and others.

Most recently, a major focus of service and practice has been with children in the [? Shobecan ?] Juvenile Detention Center in Memphis, Tennessee. So as you can see, our guests really have lots of experience and deep wisdom in the practices that they've been engaged in. So without further ado, I'd like to have you welcome them in a minute.

But one more thing, which is that the moderating-- the panel will be moderated by Anh Tran, who as a community member of Plum Village for 15 years and is currently a doctoral student in Buddhist studies here at Harvard. And we're delighted to have Anh here. She's also good at masking divinity here. So she's been here for a while and helped to sort of guide us along and a really active and loved member of our Buddhist community here.

So without further ado, let's welcome our panelists.

[APPLAUSE]

ANH TRAN: So I would like to take a moment just to thank everyone for being here and for supporting HBC every year-- or this year, if this is your first year during this conference.

So as Professor Giles says, I did grow up in the Plum Village tradition. And I was thinking about the panel today-- all I could think about is the five contemplations for meal time. But then I modified it a little bit.

And I was thinking, this panel's a gift of the whole universe-- the earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work. And I somehow wanted to bring in our ancestors [INAUDIBLE] just to sit with that for a moment. Because as [? Ty ?] said, when I was growing up, he'd always hand me a cup of tea and say, this is a legendary moment-- [? sip. ?] But that said, I would just like to-- I told the organizers that I would just jump right in so we get to the meat of the conference.

So one of our main overarching questions that we'd like to invite the panelists to share about is that as we're looking into the intersections of race and gender in light of Buddhism in the context of Buddhist practice-- study, teaching, and community-- what has been your experience of intersectionality?

PANNAVATI KARUNA: Hello. Well, I was wondering why I was invited to be a part of this panel, simply because I've been maybe the one who has had the most resistance to new terms, new ways of approaching things. I was even against the notion of diversity in POC groups. I've been on the wrong end of that.

Nevertheless, I think I'm on the right end of the dommer-- when we have an aspiration, then we set our course and we try to enter into that. Sometimes, [INAUDIBLE] make it and bring it down to this. And I wanted to just leave the bar right where it was.

When I was first invited-- you're going to have to keep track of me. I was a Pentecostal teacher. [INAUDIBLE].

So when I was first invited to come to teach at different [? SAMHSA ?] centers, they would invite me to come and speak at the POC groups. And I would contact them and say, well, you want a Black Buddhist teacher. I'm a Buddhist teacher. When you want me to speak to your whole [? SAMHSA, ?] call a sister up.

And so that was the entrance. And they always would. They always would. I mean, sometimes, if you don't know, you don't know. So you need somebody to inform.

And I like to stay squarely in that space so that there's no wiggle room. I don't want a new category that we have to spend a decade figuring out what it is. I just want to stay right squarely in what the great aspiration is. And we shoot for the moon-- we miss, we still land among the stars.

And so I was thinking also of [INAUDIBLE], who says this [INAUDIBLE] faithful is the fruit of work and care-- fruit of work and care. I reflect upon my conduct. Have I [INAUDIBLE] my [? share? ?] My conduct is what I reflect on. And have I truly earned my share?

And so I'm not really looking for what the other does as the catalyst for moving forward. I look at what I do. And I have found that that has been a most fortunate frame of reference for moving forward.

So in my life, there's a zen saying to know the dharma is to know one's self, and to know one's self is to forget the self-- forget the self and you know the [AUDIO OUT]

So [INAUDIBLE] different from [INAUDIBLE]. Not the [? real self. ?] You know, Pannavati has some things. But if you're going to get rid of Pannavati, then what? What's that?

And so all of our work should be, and our effort should be, moving towards discovering the that. And when we discover it, then that is what is displayed. And people can learn something through the direct experience of you.

And you don't have to require that they do it, but you do it. Just you do it. And in doing it, people see another way that something can be done.

So I've not been-- until recently, like maybe the last eight years or so, I was not very popular. Because I was always going against the tide.

I mean, I'm [INAUDIBLE] but I was [INAUDIBLE]. Because I like them. And I don't like, you know, Theravada dress, especially in my tradition with brown. And brown and brown just doesn't feel that-- feel that good to me. So I wear the orange, maybe. You know, I mean, it's these little things where one finds their place and they abide in that regardless of what anyone else has to say.

But it's opened up such a freedom for the people who encounter me. You know? And they see somebody there who's walking in their own-- [INAUDIBLE] I was free pretty much before I came to Buddhism. I didn't want to come here and get bound, you know? I was looking for greater freedom. So I might have started at a certain place. And that's why I said, we can't keep starting over.

You know, we have to go on. And so for me, I am much friendlier now towards conversation around diversity. But I felt that we should all stay together. I mean, I feel like a lot of people got just what they wanted. You know, we have a group over there, we OK. You know? But I'd like to stay together. Because it's that rubbing together. If we're really committed to what we say governs our lives, which is dharma, dharma first, dharma first, not an appendage, not an also ran, but dharma first. Then it tells me how to move and have my being in the room.

And I can always look into where I am. Because whenever I think I'm lost, I can see what the dharma says, and I know where I am. So even if your enemy were to cut you limb by limb, and you had any feelings of hate towards them, you would not be practicing [INAUDIBLE]. That's the standard.

So I'm active, but I'm a pacifist. And I don't require that you do something, but I do have a requirement that I do something. And if I do my job good, it may influence you. And it may not. But what is that to do with me? I just do my job.

But I tell you, if we each did, if we each had the courage to walk in our own truth-- fearlessly, fearlessly, without any sense of another determining who we are, what we are, how we are, where we will be. Then we will know an inner freedom that the world didn't give us because the [INAUDIBLE].

So I began less than my [INAUDIBLE] minutes. But that's where I start with everything. You know, when I opened the center, you know, people were like, that's not going work. Well, I mean, that was their view. That had nothing to do with me. I knew that it could work, because I know people are looking for something [INAUDIBLE]. I don't believe that we're all meant to be like a cookie cutter mold, like Vanilla Wafers in a pack. Each one has some unique qualities that they bring to the experience of life. And if we all join those together, then we can have a real experience, not a make believe one.

So [INAUDIBLE]. [INAUDIBLE] not sure that I answered your question at all. But it's what I [INAUDIBLE].

[APPLAUSE]

SISTER PEACE: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SISTER PEACE: Beautiful, beloved [INAUDIBLE]. Well, thank you [INAUDIBLE], older sister, for opening the door to adornment. Because I want to share a story. I want to share a story how a very sacred [INAUDIBLE] in my community had an entirely different meaning for me. When we're ordained, we become novices. Boy, are we excited or anything new. We want to conform. We want to fit in until the [INAUDIBLE] starts.

[LAUGHS]

And then things get wonderfully challenging, but in that beautiful honeymoon time, we dress alike as if monastics in our tradition. And the women would wear a headscarf. You might have seen pictures in some wearing the headscarf.

And so I was trained like everyone else how to wear it, but when I put on the headscarf, I looked in the mirror, and I thought, well, how come the headscarf doesn't look beautiful on me? I would look at my monastic sisters, and I would say, well, it looks good on them. Well, why not me? And I thought, well, maybe I'm just not used to it. And with time, I'll get used to it, and it'll be OK.

A year later, I'm looking in the mirror.

[STATIC NOISE]

[INAUDIBLE]. What is wrong? [? Why is it ?] not beautiful? And the sisters by now have shown me a half dozen ways to put it on, right? And I'm fumbling with each one. It was too hard. It was too this, but I didn't

want to just dismiss it. I really wanted to understand, why was this so difficult for me?

So in the mirror, I looked and I said, why? With the purest heart and intent [? inside. ?] Suddenly in the mirror, there was a reflection. And you know who it was? It was aunt Jemima with the scarf. And I went, oh. Instantly, I understood, but I have to take some minutes to tell you about it.

I looked, and I saw, you know, an ancestor with a scarf. And I grew up in the '60s and the '70s when it wasn't beautiful. In fact, we were inculcated to distance ourselves from this vision. It wasn't beautiful. Don't. Honey, don't wear that. It's not beautiful. We're past that and any number of other things, but when I looked in that--

[STATIC NOISE]

--I've understood that that indoctrination had formed my sense of beauty. And I look closer, and then I saw some other folk. Dancing in the background was Stepin Fetchit, Uncle Ben's on the rice box, right? Rasheed Cream of Wheat. Go down the grocery aisle, see them all.

And I thought, oh. And what did I really see? I saw where my ancestors, in order to save their lives and the lives of their family, to make it so that we are sitting here today, they stepped and fetched. They were mammies, not only to their own but to all others.

They were cooks. They were servants, and they did what was necessary to stay alive. And suddenly, I saw something completely different. I had great gratitude, and understanding, and compassion because if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be able to be here in this form looking at you. Wow. The arc, whoosh, connected.

And so when I look in the mirror on the rare occasion, and I still wear the scarf, I no longer see not beauty. I say, hey, aunt Jemima, how you doing? When I go down grocery aisle and I'm seeing my folks, maple syrup bottles, and boxes of pancake, and syrup, hey, y'all, what's up? How y'all doing? It's so good to see you because you were there. I'm here.

And this had an even deeper connection for me because my grandma Nanny worked her entire life at a place called Millwood, Virginia where she was born. And she worked in a house I visited one day, and I swear, it was the house they filmed the Gone with the Wind. And they had pictures in golden frames and ribbons, and they were pictures of horses adorning the living room.

And she worked in a kitchen, and she ran the house. And she raised the kids, and she was a wet nurse to those children. She worked her entire life, and she died at 89. And I know, I can't even imagine what she might have had to do to survive, but I do know this, when it came to her funeral, those two [? Gildman ?] boys came.

They were grown men. Two white men. And they fell on their knees at her casket and wept like babies because she was their mama. She was all their mama, and we are everybody's mama in aunt Jemima and all the rest.

So I was really grateful that I had the practice, and I just didn't totally dismissed out of hand this beautiful thing. And I could see the beauty, and I just couldn't see it on me. I was able to look deeply and ask the question, why? And to understand, because of my experience as a Black teenager growing up in a time where we had difficulty accepting identities-- that's what I was left with, but now, hey, aunt Jemima.

KATIE LONCKE: Good morning, friends.

AUDIENCE: Good morning. Morning. Morning.

KATIE LONCKE: Thank you so much, all of you. I feel unspeakably grateful to be here. And the film-- I mean, can we just give it up for Kimberlé Crenshaw one more time, first of all. What?

[LAUGHS]

[APPLAUSE]

Grateful for her, her work, and it left me with this question. I didn't actually understand that intersectionality came from a metaphor of roads, but that was so interesting to me. And it made me wonder, where are these roads going? And what are these roads made of, and who built these roads, right? And out of what materials, and what's it doing to the runoff of the water, and sinking into the ground? All that stuff, right?

And it makes me wonder class, right? It's like an invisible road in the case that she was describing because class, and survival, and what we do in order to secure the means of our and our people's, our family's survival, is at the root of what Emma was searching for in a job, right? Not going to work at an auto plant just for fun, like it's for her survival and the survival of her people.

So there's class. There's disability. You know, there's citizenship in there. There's nationality. There's like, whose land is this auto plant built upon? What are these roads made out of, right? It's so strange, and it appears in us in ways that are both material and sometimes, spiritual or metaphysical.

So I had this sort of similar story about how intersectionality has come into play in my practice, in my Dharma practice, which requires a little bit of background. So my dad is Black, and his mom is from Jamaica, was born in Jamaica. When my dad was a little boy, his mom advised him to bite down on his lower lip so it wouldn't grow too big.

Yeah, and I think this relates to the question of where are these roads leading to, right? In the minds of some mothers, you want your child to be on the road of class ascendancy, of professionalization, of people taking him seriously, of people respecting him. And in this particular white

supremacist society, that means typically, you have an easier time if you look more white, right?

So that's one part of one story. Another part of the story is my mom is a feminist, who comes from a working class immigrant family, who escaped the Holocaust in Europe. And because of her, my first protest was in middle school against a dress code policy.

[LAUGHS]

And it was like around the time when these things are kind of controversial of girls or people raised as girls, people who socialize as girls, were told that we needed a cover up essentially in order to help the boys concentrate in school. Is that familiar? Anybody experienced this from here? Yeah, aha. So similar question like what? I have to contort or do something about my body, which is a problem for you, all right?

So how does this relate to Dharma practice? And again, always in my mind is like, where are these roads going? Like why do I need to do to abide by these policies? Similarly for my mom, she ended up going to law school even though her dad didn't think that women should go to college. And she became the head lawyer of Planned Parenthood of California into reproductive justice work.

So fast forward many years, I'm in sesshin, one of my first sesshin in the Rinzai tradition that I had started studying last year as a switch over from a Theravada lineage. And it's physically just very tough for me in this body. We're sleeping four hours a night maximum, sitting on the floor all day. My body is in a lot of pain. I'm like not even really changing out of my clothes because we're just wearing the same stuff.

And I'm in so much pain in my side, in my neck, and all I can think of is like, well, maybe if I take off my bra, then it won't hurt as bad. And so I asked the teacher, the roshi, in my one on one interview with him, if it would be OK if I didn't wear a bra during sesshin. And he kind of laughed at me. He was like, I don't care what you do, you know.

So I went into the changing room, and took off my bra, and put on back on my clothes. And that was just relief like this palpable relief, but in that relief, I felt my dad as a little boy, just wanting his body to be OK how it was. And I felt my mom, and people whose bodies are sexualized with breasts, and people who experience misogyny, and are told how to conduct and comport our bodies because we are a danger to others. But the practice helped so much, and it's these questions that you're raising again, of where are these roads going?

It's not just about feeling vindicated in this body. That's part of it, but this body is transient. It's not really mine. It's made up of so many different parts, and people, and non-human beings, and elements, but it's really ancestral healing work-- is how I think of it. It's the opportunity to be there for ancestors and to build the compassion that we call solidarity, right?

To me, solidarity is a really beautiful form of spiritual compassion. And I'm hoping that the roads are leading toward more compassion, and wisdom, and freedom that that's how we can use them even if that's not why they were built, right? Right. Race was not built to help us find freedom for sure.

[LAUGHS]

Binary gender-- not built to help us find freedom, right? Thank you.

[LAUGHS]

Yeah, and so I don't know. I'm really-- how can we build on this metaphor? What do we want to do with these roads, right? They're full of potholes. They're falling apart.

[LAUGHS]

How can we make use of them? And so just to end my part of the remarks, I wanted to share a visual aid that I brought with me. So I am coming from [INAUDIBLE] or occupied Ohlone land also known as Oakland, California. And I brought a visual aid. Do you mind helping me? Thank you so much.

OK, so can you hold that? Thank you so much.

[MURMURING]

So this says, "Wakandans for the Shellmound." Wakandans for the West Berkeley Shellmound, and this is a part of an expression of solidarity, the compassion of solidarity across race. The Shellmounds in the Bay Area-- I don't know if folks are familiar. There are sacred sites and burial grounds of the Ohlone people and places where folks from different tribes converge.

And this was part of a campaign led by Corrina Gould and folks from Ohlone nations, who are protecting the very last shellmound that has not been vertically built upon in the Bay Area. All other shellmounds have been desecrating. There's a mall built on one of them in Emeryville. The bones of Ohlone ancestors are kept kept in anthropology departments and basements.

It's this story of genocide, an ongoing genocide against native people. So this is part of a campaign that I'm happy to say has been successful. Give it up for organizing--

[APPLAUSE]

--to stop a condo from being built up on top of the West Berkeley Shellmound. And it's again led by Corrina Gould and native folks, but a bunch of us as Black folks in solidarity got together and created this action, Wakandans for the West Berkeley Shellmound. And this banner was designed by my housemate and friend, Erin Gray, who is a queer Black scholar.

And actually, she studies lynching. She studies the history of lynching in the United States. So we all got together and stayed up till the wee hours of the morning painting this banner, and then we used it as an informational picket for people trying to enter the parking lot right by the shellmound.

[MURMURING]

Thank you so much, Dr. Harris.

[APPLAUSE]

So yeah, I wanted going to share a little bit of a flavor of why I feel so excited to be on the road of compassionate solidarity. It can bring up so much beauty, so much possibility for us to connect with each other and to do the necessary work of protecting ancestors in the ways that we are called to do. Thank you so much.

[APPLAUSE]

MELANIE HARRIS: Deep gratitude to all who are here and also those who are not here. Deep gratitude to all those who have worked so hard to organize, and to bring new friends, and old friends together. And thank you so much, Anh, for helping us to remember again deep moments, legacy moments, moments of kinship, and love. Mm-mm.

[MEDITATIVE HUMMING]

The story that brings me to the conversation around intersectionality can be heard in the [? multi-vocality ?] of what we've just experienced. It is indeed a traditional way of coming together, of breathing in mindfulness practice. And--

[STATIC NOISE]

[INAUDIBLE]. What we also hear is the Black grandmother's voice.

[STATIC NOISE]

[INAUDIBLE]. really reminds us that we are called to love the lynching tree, and the white mob, and to hold sacred the blood that flowed from the Black body hanging from that tree. Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality is an invitation for us indeed to live deeply into race talk, into gender talk, into economic class talk, into sexual injustice talk, into environmental justice talk, into the realities of the way homophobia fragments the self from the self and from each other, and the varieties of justice roads that we must walk together simultaneously.

Now try writing that in a five-paragraph essay or a 20-page paper. What kind of prism indeed is she calling us to be? To live into, write, and to create? It is only truly in the languages that we have heard from the stories spoken here this morning that we even begin to know how. Might we need new tongue, new language, new words, to confront white supremacy and anthropocentrism.

And how are we to do this if it is so hard still to sit with each other? These are the gifts and the challenges, I think, of living most deeply into intersectionality. And they are also the challenge of living in community, in the deep, deep beloved community way in which our ancestors and our teachers have taught us. Not just Thich Nhat Hanh and King, not just Esther, Shifra, and Pua, not just the women, but also the children who are celebrating today in protest with their mothers on International Women's Day.

Those here, and those unborn, those butterflies that are still to come, and the trees right outside of Harvard Divinity School-- what have they seen? Hearing Earth, hearing the roads, hearing these stories-- that too is the work of intersectionality. The story I will share is a short one but an important one.

About eight months ago I gave birth to a Black beautiful son. In the delivery room, I came prepared-- my sacred text, [INAUDIBLE] just in case, my altar with a beautiful Bible handed down from my grandparents, and a picture of Buddha. In my mother's understanding of my preparation, she knew I was preparing a beautiful altar.

She is preparing in the name of the Lord. May the works of my hands be blessed by God. The meditation-- pure. My heart-- ready, but wow! Contractions? Whoo! It is as if every thought that was in one's mind disappears! Only this remains.

[LOUD MEDITATIVE HUMMING]

Whoo.

[LOUD MEDITATIVE HUMMING]

And new birth comes. Ashe.

[MURMURING]

Ashe.

ANH TRAN: I'd like to thank our panelists for just-- that was incredible. I'm a crier, so I've been swallowing tears.

[LAUGHS]

Thank you, Venerable Pannavati for just sharing your practice with us and everything that you said about finding your place and abiding. And I thought that was really beautiful.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, we can't hear you.

[MURMURING]

ANH TRAN: About finding your place and abiding. And I think that's a-- it's so beautiful to, not only define place for yourself, but also find a

place for, as Sister An Ninh said, our ancestors, and then as Katie said, for our future. Both of you guys, you spoke for our future, finding that place and abiding. And I have so many feels right now, but I'm just trying to narrow it down.

AUDIENCE: Thank you for your feels.

[LAUGHS]

The feels.

ANH TRAN: And you m when I was listening to everyone speak, I was thinking about the roads that we inherited that we didn't ask for and these intersecting roads of oppression, and these bodies that we didn't really ask for, but we have. And for me, they're not an oppressive thing-- these bodies that we have. And I always remember, in the Buddhist sutures, they always say, your body is like the raft that brings you to the other shore. So for me, this body is love, and this body is your liberation.

And so I'm wondering, how do we use these bodies to transform these intersecting roads of oppression? Of white supremacy? Of just in the injustices that exist in our society today? And how do we use these bodies, and not just our individual bodies but our sangha bodies, our ancestral bodies, our spiritual bodies? How do we transform even our gendered bodies to transform these oppressive roads that we didn't ask for into a place, where we can heal and support each other so that we can, as Venerable Pannavati said, "walk in our own truth?"

How is your practices informed or can speak to the transformation of these bodies and these roads that we inherited? And this question comes up because I've had many conversations with my beloved professor, Hallisey. And a lot of the times, I'm very confused. I don't know what he's saying.

[LAUGHS]

He, very lovingly, breaks my brain in many ways. Professor Giles is up here as a testament. Yeah, and I'm always confused, and I don't know what to do in front of him, but the thing that I always take away from this conversation is he's always saying, it doesn't have to be this way. And so I want to leave that out there, and put it out there, and ask the panelists to please, perhaps share about this or you know. Thank you.

PANNAVATI KARUNA: So when I used to go to white sanghas, they would always say, how do we get more people of color in our sanghas? [INAUDIBLE], how many do you know? How many do you have lunch with? How many do you invite over to your house? You can't just hang a sign that says, "Black folks wanted."

So having been in this body for 70 years, and it was always known that it's easier for you if you look white. And that wasn't going to happen. Then I need to have no illusions about how I needed to walk in the world. So you have to find your own identity based on a composite of what you have inherited in this life, and that's why I love the Dharma, because the Dharma takes us just right there to that.

You know, so I'm not ruminating in the past. My father was born 1899, so I don't even have to tell you about that time and the things that he experienced. He just woke up one day and said, you know, baby, too much, too fast, I'm ready to go. And he shut his mouth, and he never spoke again. And in two weeks, he was dead. Just too much I've experienced in this life.

And so I was always called like an old soul because I could feel it. It was still fresh in me because my father was so old. And one day, I went to a sangha member's house, and she want to show me all the art on her walls and things like that. And she wants to know what I thought about it 'cause she was so proud of all these things that what her family had left her, so that she had a start in life.

Well, she said, what do you think it? I said, I think you should sell all of it and give the money to Heart Wood. That's what I think you should do.

[LAUGHS]

And so it's our story, but everybody has a story. And I try to find to understand another person's story. I don't have to tell you about my suffering as a Black person. When you tell me that your mother ran off with your 17-year-old boyfriend and the family was destroyed, I mean, your story is just as challenging as my story. So we all have a story.

And sometimes, to get beyond the story, we have to move on to a place that it is impersonal. Everybody's got a story, and this is not to diminish the story. It's just to know that everybody has one, and that we're in a world that is suffering. And as we move out of our personal suffering, we give a space where people can see that it is possible with all the inequity, with all the things that are wrong.

It is still possible to live a life of freedom and liberty in spite of external obstacles, because freedom comes from the inside out. And so when I give up my story, and I've got a bunch of them, and I've told for a decade, no need to tell them anymore. I've given up the story, and some say, well some haven't heard it. Haven't heard yet. They haven't really you know felt it yet. No, but they have their own story.

If I can look at you and just know that you also have a story, then I can find a point of contact, where we can begin to come together. I tell the same people that say, how do you get people of color in your sangha? I'm like, I don't know, when you find out, let me know because I don't have any in mine. And I'm just in the deep South. I live in a segregated town where Blacks can't freak, except me, walk up and down Main Street yet.

So what would be successful to me? Would it be him Black folk in my sangha? No, it would be for them to be able to freely walk up and down Main Street. And so we have to look at what is really needed, and we have to demonstrate, so people can see that it is possible to have freedom even in the midst of external oppression.

MELANIE HARRIS: I'll add to the wisdom. The brain is a very resilient part of our bodies. So know that professor Hallisey has entered your brain very lovingly and that it will transform into a beautiful flower.

I do believe that this is a part of the gift of what Crenshaw and so many others. Using critical race theory have given us the pathways and the form of intersectionality in part because freedom does come, as you said, from the inside. It is a matter of having the choice and then taking the choice to use intersectionality, as a lens which is a different way of coming into the question around to quote, unquote, "diversity."

It is not just to answer the call when someone says, how do we diversify our sangha? But to ask the larger question about the systemic oppressions, and the systemic racism, and institutionalized forms of oppression that are around the sangha? It's not that you don't have enough parking , spaces but it may be that the asphalt is actually eating into the earth, which suggest that there is something in the Buddhist practice that's actually not in keeping in step with the creation of the asphalt in the first place.

So if the asphalt is eating the earth and the earth, herself, is not welcome, then how are you going to get Black folks in the door? And thinking in that dimension, which is a different prism, it's an intersectional way of thinking that Black folks matter, that Blackness matters in a society where it has consistently been said that it doesn't matter literally, legally. It has been consistently said that these lives do not matter.

I work in the area of religion and ecology. And oftentimes, in eco-womanist conversations-- eco-womanism comes from the term, "womanist" coined by Alice Walker, a practitioner of Buddhist meditation and for much of her life, in part because of the invitation to reflect on the suffering in her own life. And ecology. Bringing eco-womanism together really does allow us to think through an intersectional prism, an intersectional lens asking the justice questions, what does race have to do with environmental racism that's happening right outside of my sangha, or church, or faith community, or school, or campus?

What does class have to do with the sexism that's happening right inside my own community. What is economic injustice? How does gender injustice show up? How does ecological injustice show up? How does homophobia actually interrupt this system in the process of learning for so many?

And to actually ask these questions at the same time, again, writing and thinking together all at the same time, not privileging one over the other, and that's difficult to do. The challenge that has been put before us is essentially, not to use a hierarchy of suffering. It seems, to me, in Buddhist practice, in Buddhism, and in some forms of Christianity, there is a chance. Even in Christianity, there is a chance that we can actually begin to take the pillars out of the road of the hierarchy of suffering, liberty, competing about who's suffered more.

And the ego seem to say, step right in there. Isn't that interesting? Even in the process of healing, in trying to get your stuff together, the ego

seems to want everything, all of the attention all of the time. How do we go into the heart and take out the bolts of those structures?

And the practice, I do believe, helps with that. It would be great if, in fact, new forms of American Buddhism and the way that it is structured that individuals practicing mindfulness could, in fact, change systemic realities and systemic oppression. That is not the case.

American Buddhism got that wrong. The individualism of the United States of America that's practiced normatively here, that actually works alongside many forms of American Buddhism. It doesn't work to free beings and quote, unquote "non-beings."

KATIE LONCKE: Oh, I feel like I don't even have to say anything. It's already being said. Yes, suffering is universal. We all have a story, and yet oppression is patterned and specific. And if we want to learn how to heal oppression and oppressive systems, we start paying attention with our minds and our hearts.

Anh, are we answering your question?

[LAUGHTER]

ANH TRAN: It doesn't matter.

KATIE LONCKE: I would love to hear more of your questions if you have a lot.

SISTER PEACE: Wow. I wish I could say three things at once--

[MURMURING]

--because three experiences are coming up in me at once. I'm going to try and connect them. So we're talking out about our bodies, and I'm concerned about our children's bodies. And I'm concerned about the bodies that I live with on a daily basis in my monastery.

When I went to Thailand a couple years ago for the first time, maybe six or seven years ago now, and I went into the restroom-- this is the nun's restroom-- I saw bottles of shampoo that were skin brightening. Skin whitening. And I was shocked. How can that be here?

And I said to a nun who was around, I said, what is that about? She said, well, you know, maybe you can help talk to the sisters about it. Whew. I said, I don't understand. I come from a Vietnamese practicing community, and I was in Asia. And in the bathroom was skin-whitening, brightening shampoo, everything, and it was incongruent.

And I wanted to have a chance to speak to my sisters about it, but I didn't have it then. And I bumped into something else that, a lot of times, in many communities-- about who can be enlightened. You have to be in a monk's body to be enlightened.

And one of my sister said that to me, and I said, I'm going to make a deal with you, come back in the next life as a monk, and I'm going to come back as a nun. And we're both going to get enlightened. And then when I'm back at the monastery, being dark is not as readily acceptable to some as others.

[MURMURING]

And I, among my group, was the darkest, but how could I use their view to teach them and to teach it more fully? Accept myself 'cause that thinking was not foreign to me at all. So I would sit outside in the sun, and I'll pull up my sleeve.

An Ninh! An Ninh! An Ninh is my Vietnamese monastic name, which means peace, so Sister Peace. An Ninh, come. What? What's wrong? The sun! I said, oh! I said, don't you know? The darker the berry, the sweeter the juice. The would walk away. I continued to embrace it and maybe even tempt them a little bit.

And after a few years, many years of going to the beach, again, An Ninh, get out of the sun, is what they tell me. You're already dark enough. Maybe too dark. But I didn't get angry because I knew it wasn't their fault. They were colonized by the Chinese, and the French, and had go to the Vietnam War. And my folks were colonized, and we're still trying to recover from that stuff too.

So eventually, when they would get a tan, I would say, oh, it's so beautiful. I said, you look kissed by the sun. And over time, you know, they would then come, and make a comparison, and start to be OK with it. Now I didn't say, you have to be OK with that, and lecture at all. I just had to demonstrate because I had to embody it.

Hah. And I won't spend a lot of time now. Maybe during Q&A, I can share more, but when I talk about the bodies of our children? I'm working on a project called, Be, What A Bullet Can't Be, and we're in Shelby County, in Memphis, Tennessee, Juvenile Detention Center. And make no mistake, juvenile detention is a sanitized way of saying, a jail for children.

And most of those children look like who in this room? In Shelby County, in Memphis, Tennessee, where a great King was assassinated, but we went in. And we [? brought ?] mindfulness in the arts to help these children in their dark nights, in their cells with no windows, and to offer them something. The practice-- slow walking, and breathing like a tree in a storm, and helping them through that walking, and through mindful art to explore their stories, to see their bodies, not what put them in jail, but where they come from.

And it was wonderful to be able to help them to connect to their own bodies because they're in the bodies of big, strapping man, but they are babies still. And so my call to action is a simple one. We know the term compassionate action, but what compassionate action can I, can you, get passionate about?

What can we do to help, not just relieve suffering, but to transform it? How can we embody it? How can we model it, so that others can see, what are the reasons I'm sitting here in this body? It's because I didn't see enough, but I suffered one or two. And I said, well, if they can do it, I can do it.

And to me, the practice isn't about being a monastic, but the practice about having a way, having a different way. And I suppose we'll talk a little bit more about that this afternoon because so many of us are suffering, and are caught in the ignorance of not knowing that there are other ways to practice our spirituality without discarding anything. So the bodies of my sisters and the bodies of my "churen," as my mother would call us, churen, those are the ones.

ANH TRAN: I was wondering if Dr. Melanie had something to say because I see you over there. I see you.

MELANIE HARRIS: I thank you all for the wisdom. I am taking notes as any good student at Harvard does.

[LAUGHS]

ANH TRAN: It's about 11 o'clock and they wanted to leave some time for the audience to extract as much wisdom as you can from our exceptional panel. And so I would like to invite-- where is [INAUDIBLE]? So we had some mic runners. And if you have any questions, please feel free to raise your hand and take up this opportunity.

ERIN: Hi, everyone. Thank you a lot. My name Erin, and I use they/them pronouns. So just thinking about like this question that comes up really frequently of like, how do we bring more Black people? How do we bring more people of color into our sanghas?

A concern that comes up for me more and more is, why is there such a fixation on like obtaining more Black and brown bodies and not only ending racism generally in the world? Like transforming ourselves to live differently in the world? And just as people were talking, I like put together that it's also about this mindset of continued colonization in Buddhism, and in wanting to not necessarily respecting the spiritual practices that people have been, and are still carrying on within their communities, and kind of seeing it as like, well, we have to bring this practice to people because they don't have anything.

But then simultaneously wanting more of those bodies to-- I feel confused about it whether it's to get like [? brownie ?] points or virtue points to be like, we did. The racism is gone in the sangha. So I guess I'm wondering about how we can live further into the Dharma and share what the Dharma has to offer without replicating our history and our present of colonization. No big deal if it's like--

[LAUGHS]

ANH TRAN: [INAUDIBLE].

PANNAVATI KARUNA: Yeah, so I thank you. I thank you for that question. People would ask me, well, when did you leave Christianity? And how [INAUDIBLE]? Actually, I never left. I just stayed on a path, and I kept going. No, and over here, they call in an "anity." And here, they call an "ism," and here they call an "ist."

And so whatever label you want to give it, it's OK, but it's just getting on the path and keeping going. And at one time, there may have been certain things that I needed to integrate to understand, so that I could more adequately move into the space. I always believed the Bible and said, I could come up to the fullness of the measure of the stature of Jesus.

Then I looked at my congregation. I said it like, we are woefully lacking. We're groveling at the altar calling for some Hail Mary's or something, and I wanted to know, what is that I needed to do that? I found that in the Dharma. I found the step by step instructions, but then I do have to do it.

So I think a lot of Americans, they want the lazy man's way to the wealth. They want the lazy man's way to riches. It's the MO, and so they don't want to put the effort in that's required. We think that practice is sitting on a cushion meditating. That's not practice. Buddha said, I call that a pleasant abiding here and now--

AUDIENCE: Oh, my gosh.

PANNAVATI KARUNA: --because what practice is, is when somebody's standing front of you and calling you a nigger. And how you respond to that- the practice is you need it at that moment. What will I do, and how will I respond that? And so we don't really want to practice. We want a pleasant abiding, but he said, the only way you're going to be able to sit on that pillow and have the kind of pleasant abiding, is that you have to have done your practice in the real world moment by moment.

So to study the Dharma is not the same thing as cultivation. We have to cultivate something. I mean you can't just read about crops grown and think you're going to have any food on the table. You have to plant something. And so when our Western Buddhist practice becomes a real practice and that P-R-A-C-T-I-C-E-- is that how you spell it-- on a piece of paper, then we're going to see some kind of shift and of some kind of change.

What will draw people in is when they see your freedom. If they don't see any freedom from you, they don't want to go there. They're already bound. Why would they need to go there? But when they see a certain power, certain [INAUDIBLE] that comes off from you, then they know there's something there, and they go to see what that is.

And that doesn't just go for people of color. It goes to Black folks, white folks, or yellow folks. That goes for everybody because everybody is looking for the same kind of empowerment, and they look to see [INAUDIBLE]. When they recognize it in someone, then they will come to see, how can I have that too?

And so if there's a fail-- and I like it when the Buddha got on his disciples. He said, you know why a lot of people are not changing? Because you dropped the ball. You have not been doing this. And he went down a whole litany of what they hadn't been doing. Speaking to the teachers, and he said, you dropped the ball. So how can they step into this?

And so I like to take the responsibility. When something's gone wrong in my center, it's my center. And I don't want anybody to be confused when I talk about this for everybody, but really, I founded it and have a vision. So when something goes wrong in there, I take the responsibility.

I don't say, look what you did, because I let you be in that place. So I take the response-- the buck stops with me, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful. And that's how I trained them for them personally to say, the buck stops with me. And if each person is doing that, then it becomes a kind of mutual accountability, and it creates a kind of harmony that everyone can realize the fruit and the end the benefit of. So each one has to take a responsibility.

If each one can teach one, then we'll all get it. So we do have to make some shift in our understanding of what is practice. It is cultivation. It's not studying. Study's good, but you know.

KATIE LONCKE: Oh, you go ahead first. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: Well, one of the things that we've encountered in our sangha is sort of push back when we talked about the need to examine issues of racism, and gender, and other things [INAUDIBLE], but then we get a pushback especially when it comes to race. I don't see as much pushback when it comes to gender and other things, but when it comes to race, what is this have to do with the Dharma? Why that they feel almost political? And why or [INAUDIBLE]?

Buddhism is not supposed to political, and the Dharma is not political. In that given [INAUDIBLE] of race is political, and really, that's not what it's supposed to be about. Have you encountered that in terms of trying to deal some of these things? And in what ways would you handle that sort of pushback?

KATIE LONCKE: Yeah, maybe I could try to speak to both questions. So yes, I hear that a lot. And at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, I think that we attract people from many sanghas, who have that experience that they don't feel that a politicized experience of their life is a welcome presence in their sangha to be able to apply the Buddha's wisdom to our real lives, which may include yeah, all kinds of things.

But here's the thing. So like right now, the first wave of attacks on Cambodian folks in the US for deportation is happening. And a lot of those Cambodian fam are Buddhists. So partly, the pretended apolitisation of Buddhism in the United States is really this product of white supremacists censoring of the experience of citizens, of the experience of white Buddhists, and even of the exclusion of Buddhists, who were raised Buddhists for those who come from lineages of Buddhism through Asian diaspora.

And there's like a very odd thing that happens that-- folks like Aaron Lee from Angry Asian Buddhist, who has since passed, folks like Chenxing Han, folks like [INAUDIBLE] Su, folks like Duncan Ryuken Williams, who just published a book called American Sutra, about Japanese-American Buddhists and turned in the concentration camps during World War II, right? Like that's politicized Buddhism. Hello? And I would hate-- well, things can be otherwise. It doesn't have to be like this. I love that.

We can be creative and loving with each other. And we can say, well-- one thing we're doing at Buddhist Peace Fellowship this year that people thought we could not do is having an all Black Indigenous [INAUDIBLE] eco-Dharma retreat. And people were like, there's not enough Buddhists in the US who are POC, who care about the environment. We're like, uhm, but, uh?

[LAUGHS]

You know, but it's this mentality. And there are studies, recent research that shows that people across the board in the United States think that environmentalism is a white thing, think that white people and people with wealth or middle-class people care more about the environment, right? And there is all these different layers of social conditioning that have produced these views, right?

So I think we have to get very clear about what we want, and then start from that place. Like not just reacting to the colonized views that we happen to be surrounded by in this place in time, but finding those others who share our visionary dreams and tender hopes that feel scary to admit to sometimes, which is like, can I have space with my Dharma fam to talk about anti-Blackness within Asian diasporic Buddhist communities? And to talk about Black collusion with the erasure of Asian-American Buddhists in the US? Can we find the time for that in a way that does not have to center whiteness or diversity in a traditionally, predominantly white sanghas?

So these are the dreams that we're trying to help may happen. And I would love for all of us to be able to share. What is your dream that you're building? What are you make and happening in your sangha that's beautiful and amazing? I really want to hear.

AUDIENCE: Greetings. Thank you for all of your presentations. I'm specifically interested in hearing more specifically, from Sister Peace, about transformational programs that you're doing. Could you talk about how you do then? And like what are some of the elements of them? I'm interested in how you are bringing together the artistic part with the spiritual part.

SISTER PEACE: Thank you for the opportunity to expound. So our team, we call ourselves the BET. And I smile because to me, it's a double entendre when I think about the habitual "be," that we've been doing what we're doing. And we don't just do it in a moment.

Myself and three others, two filmmakers and a photographer, Amanda, who was Michelle Obama's photographer in the White House-- we all had a dream.

And we're all practitioners. And we wanted to be able to really make a shift. At the end, I could see the paradigm shifting. In the beginning, yeah, I wanted to work with the children.

And the story actually started with one of my team members, Allen, who was on an airplane and read an article that chief justice of the Juvenile Court in Shelby County, Judge Dan Michael, said he had the awareness. He had the insight to know that these children [INAUDIBLE], and that they shouldn't be thrown away, and that they were definitely rescuable or something? [INAUDIBLE] would use that term. And he invited anyone with programming to come.

Allen called up and said, we have an idea. We want to bring mindfulness and the arts together. And we want to offer it to the children, and so we did that. And we went in, and we'd start by throwing up on the screen a picture of Dr. King and my teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, and explained who they were just by, well, that's my teacher. You know Dr. King? They were friends, and that's my teacher.

I don't need to say much more. And those of us have experience Dharma sharing, where [INAUDIBLE] we sit in a circle and we share-- well, teenagers in jail, who some lived in the north and some lived in the south barrack because one was in this, The Bloods, and The Crips, and different gangs. So when you came out and did what we called a weather report, what did you get? How are you doing?

Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine. Fine.

It's too risky. But eventually, they'd open up. And we'd start with slow walking, and how that came about.

One child just broke down and said, I don't know about the rest of you all, but I'm going to tell the truth. When I'm in my cell at night, I'm on my knees crying and praying to God because I want my momma. And at that instant I said, well, you know what I do in a situation like that? I do this thing called slow walking.

I didn't give a long dissertation of what walking meditation was. I said, you interested? Who'd like to-- who'd like to try? OK, nobody said, no, let's get up and let's do it.

[LAUGHTER]

And the sharing came with the walking. Let's walk slow. Let's breathe. One step at a time.

We're walking on our precious Mother Earth. And I do all sorts of creative things. I even, one time, invited them to send energy to a hurt of their own physical body. And only later did I realize how brave it was for them to admit it [AUDIO OUT].

And so when the opening-- our sort of weather report-- what's your word? What's your word? Give me a word.

Black diamond. Cloud. Rose. Like that.

And then, the only thing we could bring in to help them, artistically, get in touch with that was paper. Copy paper. And 64 color Crayola crayons. Because pens and pencils were contraband.

And we said, right, draw a picture. Write some words. Boy, they were able to touch their stories. Not what they had done. We did ask.

We didn't want to know. When offered, we denied. Because we didn't want to be colored in any way, even on a subconscious level. I was wanting to be there to support, not to insidiously condemn.

And they came up with the most beautiful stories. The most beautiful sharings of their life. One young man-- his name was Preacher because he gave his first sermon at 13, but yet there was in jail at 16. And he said he will he was inspired to write a book. And it's going to be called 21 Chapters.

I said, oh, really? Where are you? I'm on 16. I said, 16, how are you on 16?

He said, because that's where I am now, I'm 16. And I'm writing backwards. And then, by the time I'm 21, it'll be finished.

Don't underestimate intellect because of the body somebody's in. Or what they may have done. And I heard stories. And I was grateful.

And I know that these young children perpetuated crimes and created victims, but they themselves are victims of their circumstance. And can we hold them in the same way, if not more so, than those who were victimized?

And we do slow walking. And we sit, and we breathe like a tree in a storm. What happens when you get angry? You're up here, right?

Branches are-- where are you? Is that where you want to be? In a tree in a storm? Or here? What's happening here?

What part of the tree is this?

AUDIENCE: Trunk.

SISTER PEACE: Trunk. Is it solid? Is it stable? And we move down. And what's down here?

AUDIENCE: Roots.

SISTER PEACE: And are we connecting with our ancestors? Those living ancestors and those who may not be with us or in other dimensions. These kids got it. They would go back to their cells and they would practice.

And then they taught the others. And fast forward to one particular time. The three months we were there, the violence in the facility went down by 54%. We didn't touch everybody. We kept trying to figure out how that was.

Then we start hearing the stories of how they were teaching the others, and there's newer boys could come in. I saw so-and-so walking in his cell. What was he doing?

He didn't know. It looked right, so he went to his cell and started doing it.

[LAUGHTER]

Oh, one boy had an altercation on a basketball court because things are very tense. And he was able to sit-in his cell and breathe. And when there was a sit out-- and rightfully so, because the kids were denied showers and phone calls-- they wouldn't go into their jail cells.

So we went in the next day. And we have to give them a list of who we want to see. I said, well, look, I got to look at this list. Because, you know, we have some activity. And if they were part of it, they can't come today.

OK. Oh, yeah, this guy. Well, he's all right. He was the only one to go into his cell that night.

[AUDIO OUT] slightly far reaching that he knew he could connect from the time he was with us, and sharing his story and what he wanted to accomplish and do-- that if he went into the cell, he'd get out quicker.

So this gave me a whole new insight. Going in-- going in for the way out. He went in so it wouldn't count against him, and he'd have to spend more time there.

There's a whole host of other stories that I could share but, essentially, we would-- and I would often-- I would just be a satellite. And I'd just do slow walking in the room while the filmmakers would work with the kids and help them look at their stories. And sometimes I did too.

We brought in an African-American artist who was arrested at local Tennessee University to help them to get in touch with it. So that Black Diamond could express the fact that he had a dream to see the stars from the ocean that he never visited. You know?

Or Earth's Shadow, who looked at his own shadow one day and wondered, does the earth have a shadow? Now, what kind of young, brilliant mind could look at their shadow and say, I wonder if the planet had a shadow? And when he asked the question, the teacher says, sit down. Don't be stupid.

But we brought a video in and we showed him an eclipse. Wow. To see them know that he was right.

So each one had a story. And this is how we cultivated it. We were able to film, extraordinarily so. And we will be putting together a piece on the work that we've done. And it continues.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]. Very much appreciated. I want to share [INAUDIBLE]. I was wondering if we could, kind of, bring the scale down? Kind of on an individual, like, basis. If we can hear anything about that.

Specifically, I'm thinking about ableism. And you could see somebody who looks able bodied. And, I mean, for example, I live in Western Massachusetts. Oftentimes, I'm having a panic attack. And one person will interrupt my conversation on the phone to someone, and ask me a question and just stop me in my tracks because I'm a service to white people.

And I know to go back to the practice, have compassion. And when I know-- even when I'm, you know, invested in ableism myself-- when I know that I'm dealing with somebody who I should treat with compassion, I do do it.

But at the same time, you can't see behind, like, whatever [? sits ?] the top, or it looks like to you. I'm this able-bodied person. So if anyone could speak to that.

Like, what does it look like on the individual level on that scale to know that someone is not recognizing that you have your own story? And you don't want to speak to your own story because you don't want to compare notes, and you don't want to do all of that. But how do you actually practice in that moment, when you know your humanity is being ignored, and when you're not in that teacher role, you know?

You're a person right now who-- you're able-bodied, you're white, you're wealthy, you have all these things. You can't see it because of what I look like, you know? Does that make sense? Thank you.

PANNAVATI KARUNA: When we started the program for homeless youth, the place called The Ghetto Place, but the only one Black was me. And we had 85 kids who went through that program. But when they first came in, you know, they would call us-- they would call us by the n-word. They'd call us nigger.

Now I have to say something about that. I know that for people who are young, over times, different words affect people differently. But when I was coming along, and that was a time where I couldn't graduate, couldn't walk across-- I did graduate-- couldn't walk across a stage because I wanted to wear an Afro and we had to have our hair pressed to be able to do that.

And so I just opted not to walk across the stage. They send mine in the mail. And at that time-- you talk about police brutality now-- at that time, any white person could beat you. You know?

It wasn't just the police who could beat you. Anyone white could beat you. And we started taking the word "nigger", and we reframed it. And we adopted it as our own.

So when we saw, we took that and turned it into-- at that time in history, in our culture-- a term of endearment. So we'd say, what's up my nigger? You know? Mine. You're my nigger.

What's up, my-- you know, because they had made it an epitaph that totally diminished us. And we turned it around. And we made it a term of endearment. And that's how we survived in the late 50s and the early 60s. You know?

And times have gone on and it's understood in a different way. We have now internalized the white perception of it. And so something that we had gained has been lost, because minds are always seeking. If you find one way to overcome a problem, then you have to find a way to neutralize the strength that's coming from something. You know?

But within that way we begin to embrace one another. Because before that, we were like crabs in a barrel. You know, if only want to get out, who's that going to be between me and you? You know?

And so changing that, you know-- and so when they came in and they would call me nigger, I didn't react to that. I said, I know, baby. I know you heard that in your kitchen. I know you heard that at home.

And I'd just go on and do what I did. Because if my doing for them depended on them liking me, then that's not the reason to do it. You know? But I was doing something that I felt needed to be done. I could do it, and I did it.

By the time they would leave that program, I was no longer the nigger. I was Mama Vati. You know? And so, what I'm saying is, they had to have a direct experience of something to understand it in a different way.

So unfortunately, we have to create a context by which some people can have a different experience. When they come to Harvard, most of them-- I mean, in our time, when I got there, they said, nobody Black leads anything in our town.

You're west. You're from the north, and we don't like Northerners. You're a woman, and our women-- you're too outspoken. Our women are seen and not heard. And you're a Buddhist, and we don't even know what that is.

So we came to tell you that-- they sent delegation-- they don't have any problems with that where I live. They sent a delegation to put me on notice. Like, we're watching you, and what you can't do. But everything that they said I couldn't do in a town, I ended up doing anywhere anyway, you know, because I wasn't fearful.

When the KKK comes to [? song-- ?] and they still come from time to time, but most of them just abandoned that, you know? Because I told them once, keep your shoes on when you come.

But no, we take our shoes off. Keep your shoes on. And then we'll just have regular song and I dismiss. And they said, but [INAUDIBLE], why do you want us to keep our shoes? And I said, oh, I was just making a point, because if I ever see those shoes under a sheet, I'm going to say, "Jonny, is that you?"

[LAUGHTER]

Everyone knows that I'm not afraid-- I'm not afraid of that. And that kind of stuff scared people. People were trying to scare you. It was scary, because really, it's their fears.

So I understand that you're afraid. If my people had done to yours what yours did to mine, I'd be scared too. You know? But I'm not scared, because I'm not living with that constant fear.

And what I want to let you know, is that there's a way that you can turn it around so that fear won't be there. I said, so you can come here and you can learn about that. I said, but I'll tell you this, I'm happy to see you come. But I'm happy to see you go if you don't want to be here.

So there ain't going to be no sucking up, and no petting, none of that. Happy to see you come, and I'm happy to see you go. So when somebody leaves, and they say, well, we're so-and-so. I'm like, I don't know. Well, we should find out.

Why should we find out? I didn't invite him.

[LAUGHTER]

They came at their own free will, and there ain't no locks on that door. You know? They come in, and they hear something. And they start rambling, looking for chewing gum, grabbing keys.

I stop the dharma talk. Timeout. Excuse me. You see that door right there? There's no lock on it.

You know? If this is not benefiting you. And it stops those kinds of things. Because now they're too ashamed to get up and walk out. You know?

And then they stay, and they hear something. You know? So it's in our-- but doing it in a way that is really impartial. You know, like, not feeling-- it's not temperature rising. I'm just speaking truthfully.

You can learn, in some places, that you can speak truthfully. And I don't have to agree with you, and you don't have to agree with me. But we do have to speak truthfully to each other. And people find out that they can speak truthfully when they're in an environment where the people are disciplined enough to hear what they have to say.

I think this-- I don't know if I should say this. I'm saying it.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm just telling you. This is just [INAUDIBLE] body speaking. You understand that I'm not speaking for Harvard, I'm not speaking for anybody else in here.

But I think our election could have turned out in a different way if we had been listening. You know? I read an article that talked about how-- I

think it was 20 years ago, maybe 10 years ago, I forget now. I'm old. I'm 70.

How the mortality rate, you know, for whites dying-- well, Blacks dying younger than whites, you know, was at a certain percentage. I think it was like whites die at 70% the rate of Blacks. But when they did the last study in 2015, that whites without a high school diploma in a certain age group were dying 30% faster than Blacks.

So that's from living 30% longer to dying 30% younger. That's a 60% spread. That'll scare the jeebies out of anybody. I mean, so there is this fear that we're dying. We're dying from whatever-- drugs, suicide, depression, because we can't work.

Whatever your reasons are, I understand. You know? But to see how great of an increase it was, it starts to bring fear. And it changed my whole understanding of what was precipitating something-- what was brewing under the surface.

You know, because I have been looking at our age. We got our own. You got to take care of yours. We got our own. But then I look, and I saw, theirs is ours.

You know? And so I needed to pay attention to that. I live in Appalachian. That's all I gotta say. So 99% of those mindsets are right there.

I'm not going to be effective unless I'm willing to hear that and to feel their fear. It's not possible. So there is something that we have to do if we want to see the change.

When do we want it? We want it now. But we may not have it now. There might be something that we have to do, just like our ancestors did, to create the space for something to happen in the future.

And that's what I want to say. I know we want it now in our moment in time. But some things only bear fruit after a long time. And we have to be willing to prevail until something things transformed in our society.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

MELANIE HARRIS: I know that we're at time, so I want to make sure that I honor that. But I do want to address that question as well. Sometimes you do need to take sabbath and take a break. Sabbath. It's an invitation to-- in Christian tongue-- to take a rest and to take retreat from the perception that others have about your body.

And you would do that by naming yourself and the moment-- sacred moment-- that you're in. I understand that you have a question and I appreciate you as a human being. And I hope you can see that I'm in dialogue with Sojourner truth right now.

And you're interrupting that conversation. And in order for me to see clearly in this moment and to honor you fully, I need you not to press me with your question and your value, because I have value in this moment.

In Buddhist tongue, the concept of fierce or [INAUDIBLE] compassion. To hold that person accountable in a deep, deep love and compassion. So much so that they have a moment to breathe and to reflect on their own action of interrupting.

It pushes both, I think, back into the dharma. Back into truth. Back into Buddha nature. And one can be as mindful and as conscious to be able to breathe, take a moment.

Ask where is dignity in this moment? What do I need as an embodied being in this moment? Who are the ancestors who are holding me? What's the love and the lineage that's holding me?

It's significant and important too to point out, because we are all at different places on our journeys and paths, that there are multiple conversations happening right now in the room and in the space. And so if you're hearing multiple conversations and thinking, am I hearing things right? You are hearing multiple conversations happening in this space. So please know that.

There is an important reality that, many people who identify as people of color and the questions that we may be bringing to this conversation all day today, oftentimes those questions need to be answered and heard and voiced. And there will also be questions that are coming from people who are not people of color who also have genuine questions.

It's important to recognize all the different questions and all the different social locations that we're embodied in this particular space called the United States of America as we're being here today. I just want to say that. And I've said it as delicately as possible.

But to be clear, know your social location today. Love your social location today, as deeply as possible. And also know that your social location is constructed, and that we are actually after a deeper truth of being in full refuge with each other. With each other.

That requires a lot of deep listening.

KATIE LONCKE: Can I add one quick thing? So, Wallace, you said your name was? Hi, Wallace. I really appreciate you bringing that question of experience.

And I just want to particularly appreciate and lift up the dimension of ableism and disability which is so often missing from our social justice intersectionality frameworks. And I'm just wondering if, in a Dharmic sense, like taking refuge in sangha, taking refuge in people with similar experience-- Black and POC, disabled, like other folks-- and their experiences responding to ablest entitlement, racialized and all kinds of ways.

I'm thinking-- since we're talking about intersectionalities too-- I'm thinking about-- I think her name was Moya Bailey-- who coined the term misogynoir and as a disabled Black scholar who talks about the ethics of pace, and is a really brilliant contributor. And so I have all kinds of questions and excitement to broaden the intersectionalities dialogue to include other roads that are often not even named.

And also to acknowledge, like, as a temporarily able-bodied person. And you haven't mentioned crabs in a barrel mentality, [INAUDIBLE]. There are ways that our solidarity is even interrupted because so many of us are just trying to be OK, and/or intergenerational trauma and bodily memory that if our ancestors were not physically fit, then that was a very dangerous situation for them.

I'd really love to have it more of a dialogue than just talking. I don't know if you have any other further reflections that you'd like to share.

AUDIENCE: Not at this moment.

KATIE LONCKE: It's all good. Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] Thank you.

ANH TRAN: This is-- sorry. I have to wait on the [? program ?] a little bit because I've gotten signals from this corner that it's time for us to take a break. So I've gotten a signal that it's time to take a break. So I just wanted to wrap up the panel before I hand over the mic to the organizing team.

And I really thank our panelists, and thank everyone here for just making this a tremendous space. And in Vajrayana Buddhism, I read something about whenever someone reads the Dharma, or starts to think about the Dharma, or even have faith, that all the Buddhas in [INAUDIBLE]-- their ancestors and all the homies roll up to witness it and to support it.

And so I'd just like to thank everyone here for being here and witnessing each other, which is witnessing ourselves. And also witnessing the things that we can both see and cannot see, and being as mindful as possible of that. And so thank you very much to everyone for holding this space in this moment for all of us.

[APPLAUSE]