



East Bay Meditation Center

Newsletter

JULY 2016

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Yearlong Program: Mindfulness Training for Social Justice Activists

Practice in Transformative Action (PiTA 4)

applications due August 6, 2016

September 2016 - July 2017

Now in its fourth year, PiTA is an award-winning yearlong program at EBMC for social change and social justice activists, community workers and volunteers, and transformative thought leaders. It is open to all, with a special invitation for People of Color to apply.

PiTA 4 will train participants to share mindfulness and other transformative practices of inner awareness in their workplaces, activist circles, and in public spaces in culturally sensitive, trauma-informed ways. For more information, click [here](#); to request an application, email PiTA@eastbaymeditation.org

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A Decade of EBMC!

Fundraising Report: Midyear 2016

by Cassandra Shaylor, Development Director

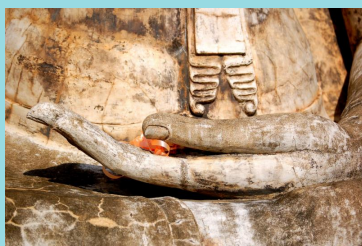
Summer greetings to the Sangha! East Bay Meditation Center is now in our tenth year. We continue to succeed in our radical experiment of sustaining EBMC using a **Gift Economics model**, AND that success relies on everyone giving to the extent that they are able.

For those who are financially able to give more, the model won't work unless folks with higher incomes give at the highest level possible. This is the power and the challenge of running a generosity-based center: it is completely dependent on each of us playing our part.



Some successes so far this year:

- A small group of generous Sangha members have pooled their resources to challenge the community to match their gift of ...
[click here to discover their generosity and more!](#)



2016 Finance Update

by Xiaojing Wang,
Assistant Director

We are happy to report that we ended the first quarter of 2016 in the black with \$101,388 raised in income and \$99,120 spent in expenses. EBMC met our goals in fundraising and individual gifts through a successful Dharma-thon and generous individual gifts from sangha members attending classes and practice groups. We continue to be in awe that our community is sustaining EBMC's radical Gift Economics model, almost 10 years after we first opened our doors.

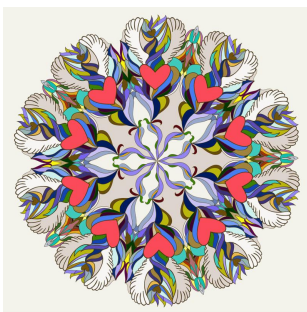
A full financial report on the first half of this year will soon be available in pdf form, and will be posted to the EBMC website and available upon request.

Beginning in the second half of 2016, EBMC will start offering employees health benefits, including dental and vision coverage. This is a milestone achievement for our center, and represents the fulfillment of a major organizational goal. We offer deep bows to our Sangha for making this step possible.

As EBMC works towards a shared leadership model that prioritizes sustainability for the organization and staff, we aim to close 2016 with three months of operating reserves and a development plan that will get us to six months of reserves in 2017.

Shared Mindful Leadership at EBMC

At our Community Meeting on May 22, 2016, the EBMC Leadership Sangha (board of directors) and staff presented a PowerPoint and invited input on the potential for EBMC to evolve toward a shared leadership structure and alternative staff management system.



With the stepping down of the center director in April of this year, EBMC's leadership sees an exciting opportunity to explore effective alternatives to the traditional hierarchical model that places a director at the top of a triangle, with other staff beneath. As was presented at the Community Meeting, EBMC has from the start been envisioned as a collective and community manifestation of liberatory, healing spaces, as well as an incubator for collaborative leadership development skills. Shared leadership could be the next logical step in our development.

Stay tuned for more information as we continue to explore existing models used by other organizations and to consult with experts who can advise us on next steps.

Note: We are seeking Sangha members who wish to serve on EBMC's Leadership Sangha (board of directors). If you're interested, please email shenaaz@eastbaymeditation.org.
Deadline is **July 29, 2016**.

We are also seeking organizational development consultants who have expertise in nonprofit shared leadership models. Please contact LSangha member
melissa@eastbaymeditation.org.

→ People of EBMC:

Alicia Kester, Event Coordinator

EBMC: *Hi Alicia, what brought you to EBMC, and could you tell us a little more about your job position at EBMC?*

Alicia: I am the event coordinator at EBMC. I manage classes at the center, as well as collaborating on bigger events.

EBMC: *What are you passionate about?*

Alicia: I am passionate about film and have been ever since my first screenplay at six years old. I am a filmmaker now and am one of the founders of [Light Show Pictures](#). We are in pre-production on my next film, so stay tuned! I am also passionate about writing. I am a published poet and playwright. I also have my own event planning and fundraising firm, [Alicia Kester Special Events](#) and have worked on amazing events from galas to weddings.



Alicia (left) at her sister's wedding

EBMC: *What's something about you that you're willing to share, that most folks at EBMC might not know about you?*

Alicia: I have the sweetest, most wonderful doggy named Joe. He's my constant companion.

EBMC: *Is there anything else you'd like the EBMC Sangha to know?*

Alicia: I feel so much gratitude for EBMC. I have been a member of the community for almost 10 years and have never felt so at home spiritually before. Please let me know what we can do to make EBMC your home!

→ Where Home Is

by Ann Marie Davis, artist, poet and EBMC volunteer

I started coming to East Bay Meditation Center soon after it opened in 2007. I was very unhappy with my job, as I had been unhappy with every job in my working career. I always seemed to manage to be too unhappy to feel physically or emotionally well enough to express my creativity. About a year into my meditation practice, I had an experience that I only thought happened to people who got on a plane headed to some exotic place for a year to study with a teacher while trying very hard to be enlightened. I started understanding, and feeling and knowing that I had been mistaken about who I was, mistaken about being separate from the rest of creation. Three months later I quit my job with no plans for how I would live, and no savings account.

I was not a model of equanimity after I lost my home and my stuff at the time of the global economic recession. Or maybe I was. I stayed with my meditation practice because I got instances of me observing the turmoil in my mind, instead of being swept away by it. No matter how brief those glimpses were, they were powerful, and I knew that I would no longer

dwelling, for too long, in the lost places of egoic suffering.



"I'm still here," I often say, as an ending to my telling of how I left the job with no plans. For all of the pain and drama that I have experienced in the past ten years, I wouldn't be considering moving to the incredible intentional community in Oakland, [Canticle Farm](#), had I not done what I did after I wrote my letter of resignation. I wouldn't have discovered how much I like growing food, I would not have published a book of poetry. I would not be a member of the [EBMC Midday Sangha](#) where we share sumptuous, nourishing food, often from home gardens, and where we experience sumptuous, nourishing community and dialogues with a meal.

On any day at EBMC I am grateful to walk into a room full of people and live on morsels of our shared humanity that I cannot get anywhere else.

[To see Ann Marie Davis's artwork and writing, please visit her [website](#).]

What's the difference between a person who meditates and a person who doesn't meditate?

"When a car passes by, what differentiates the meditator from the non-meditator? The meditator knows both that the car passed by and knows the experience of seeing, feeling, hearing, and interpreting the experience, thoughts, or thinking mind, and so forth (some or all, as the case may be). The non-meditator just knows a car passing by."

A daily practice reminder from Sayadaw U Tejaniya, June 2, 2016 from the Rochester Meditation Center

Quick Links

[Calendar](#)

[More About EBMC](#)



Kudos to Yania Escobar & Kazu Haga!

Winners of Dalai Lama Fellowship (Yania) and Fellowship of Reconciliation's Martin Luther King, Jr. Award (Kazu)

Kazu Haga and his Kingian Nonviolence training organization, [East Point Peace Academy](#), have recently been awarded the prestigious Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) MLK Jr. Award. Kazu is a longtime EBMC Sangha member, teacher, volunteer, and a graduate of EBMC's yearlong Practice in Transformative Action (PITA) program.

The [Martin Luther King Jr. Award](#) was established by FOR in 1979 to recognize persons or groups working in the United States in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr. The Rev. Dr. King was a member of FOR and worked closely with the organization; he was serving as a member of FOR's Advisory Council at the time of his death. The award honors those who make a significant contribution to the furtherance of Dr. King's nonviolent approach to transforming racial, economic, and social injustice.

Yania Escobar, also a graduate of the yearlong PITA program at EBMC, which provides secular mindfulness training for social change agents, says she was inspired by PITA to design a Spanish-speaking mindfulness and yoga program for immigrants living in Oakland, for which she has received a [Dalai Lama Fellowship](#). The Dalai Lama Fellows program is developing a global network of young social innovators working at the intersection of peace, justice, and ecology. Yania is a certified yoga teacher and graduate of the [Niroga Institute's](#) yoga teacher training program. She moved from her native country Uruguay to California when she was 13 years old.

Looking forward to her year as a Dalai Lama Fellow, Yania says, "My goal is that the program will demystify mindfulness practice and make it available to members of the community so that it will one day become common knowledge. The idea is that, after this year, when one of the participants witnesses a loved one become angry, they can say 'I learned this new practice, when I get angry I breathe for a minute and wish the other person well...' in a way that feels true to them. I am excited to keep learning how to be a mindful leader and to exchange wisdom with members of my community in our native tongue."



Mindful Peacebuilding Roots Retreat in New Orleans

Adapted with permission from [Mindful Peacebuilding's](#) newsletter

Six Mindful Peacebuilding friends from the San Francisco Bay Area co-created a pilot Roots Retreat for five days in May 2016, in New Orleans. Our intention: to honor the ancestors at the [Whitney Plantation](#), a site of major historical harm and suffering, and through deep looking and deep listening help to open pathways for individual and collective healing, transformation, and compassionate action.

Participants, many of whom are East Bay Meditation Center Sangha members, are of African American, Caribbean American, Vietnamese, white European Jewish, and white Northern European ancestry. As we grounded our practice in sitting and walking meditation, we offered ourselves and our ancestors healing energy at the Whitney Plantation, the first plantation in the United States to focus on the legacy of slavery; at the Tomb of the Unknown Slave at St. Augustine's Church; in the [Lower Ninth Ward](#), where houses are still being restored eleven years after Hurricane Katrina; and in Louis Armstrong Park. And we were fortunate to be invited to sit with two meditation groups and to be joined by Dolores Watson, a friend who founded the [Flowering Lotus Meditation Center](#) in Magnolia, Mississippi.

Three EBMC Sangha member retreatants shared their intentions for participating in this retreat:

Devin Berry, EBMC teacher: My purpose feels truly embodied and bigger than me. I'm not sure how to write or articulate it...I have a sense born of deep listening and looking at what my grandfather taught and instilled in us regarding family and

storytelling, and also born of dharma practices in relation to my genealogy work. I feel meant to do it, I feel compelled to do it and it feels deeply ancestral.

AJ Johnston, participant in EBMC's White Awake program: The question that is alive for me is, how do I as a person descended from slave holders take responsibility to make right the wrongs of yesterday and today? How do I heal my ancestors who enslaved others? What have those of us whose ancestors committed atrocities done to ourselves? To our descendants? To all of humanity? What is needed now? How do I move forward? How do I make repairs?

Noliwe Alexander, EBMC teacher and board co-chair: As I exited the van and began my slow walk onto the grounds of the Whitney Plantation, I could feel a rush of energy enter me. It was a combination of anticipation, excitement, fear and the subtle memories of ancestors, walking on the same ground so many decades before. Each experience along our journey, St. Augustine's Church, The Treme, The Lower Ninth, left me tender with emotions, raw beyond measure and more resilient than I could imagine.

Joining the Roots Retreat was a beginning of a personal journey in bearing witness to the suffering of my ancestors through the lens of my own internalized suffering and harm, seen and unseen. The retreat has been a catalyst to search my own ancestral roots and to continue seeing with eyes wide open how the healing of generational wounds and harms will become manifested as these retreats continue.



At the Whitney Plantation. Lower L to R: Lyn Fine, Noliwe Alexander, Dolores Watson, Devin Berry, Chinh Nguyen, Edissa Nicolas, Dr. Ibrahim Seck (head scholar, researcher). In front is John Cummings (director) and AJ Johnston. Photo courtesy of Mindful Peacebuilding.

EBMC is proud to claim two Grand Marshals in this year's San Francisco Pride Parade as our own Sangha members and teachers.

Fresh! White was selected by the board of SF Pride, and Larry Yang was elected by the general public.

Many EBMC Sangha members joined the Buddhist contingent that traveled



Fresh! White
together, organized by Spirit Rock Meditation Center, in the Parade.
Kudos to all!



Larry Yang (right) and his
husband Stephen Pickard (left)

newsletter editor: Mushim newsletter designer: Grace Gilliam
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See what's happening on our social sites:



EBMC's Mission Statement

Founded to provide a welcoming environment for people of color, members of the LGBTQI community, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented communities, the East Bay Meditation Center welcomes everyone seeking to end suffering and cultivate happiness. Our mission is to foster liberation, personal and interpersonal healing, social action, and inclusive community building. We offer mindfulness practices and teachings on wisdom and compassion from Buddhist and other spiritual traditions. Rooted in our commitment to diversity, we operate with transparent democratic governance, generosity-based economics, and environmental sustainability.

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