

# **East Bay Meditation Center Newsletter**

## **NOVEMBER 2017**



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# State of the Center Report

## November 1, 2017



*Shared Leadership at EBMC is both a collaborative governance system based on mutual accountability and a culture of respect and inclusion rooted in Dharmic society values. Our shared leadership approach stewards the mission and vision of the organization through role clarity, transparency, compassionate confrontation and timely attention to areas of tension.*

Hellos, goodbyes, and thank yous.  
**Who is stepping down and who is joining EBMC's Board of Directors?**

### **The Development Report from Cassandra Shaylor**

affirms that the celebration of EBMC's 10th Anniversary continues! And lets us know

**What's the update on the Love and Resistance event?**

**What's up with a \$20,000 Matching Fund? (yes, really!)**

### **The Finance Report from Xiaojing Wang**

answers questions such as

**How are EBMC's operating reserves doing? What purchases are improving the Center's well-being, physically and technologically?**

### **Larry Yang and Spring Washam have new books published!**

Find out the dates for celebrating each of these achievements with **festive book blessing/book signing parties.**

*There's so much to read, discover, plan, celebrate, and engage...  
Find out more [HERE!](#)*

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Behind the Scenes: EBMC Bookkeeper, Tina Bilger



*EBMC:* How long have you worked for EBMC as an independent contractor, Tina, and what are some of the tasks that you typically perform as our bookkeeper?

*Tina:* I began supporting EBMC with bookkeeping in June 2015. Regular tasks include preparing deposits, paying bills, processing payroll and preparing monthly financials.

*EBMC:* Do you have a mindfulness meditation practice? Are there aspects of the work you do as a bookkeeper / accountant that relate to meditation?

*Tina:* While my practice isn't always consistent, I try to start my days by centering. Now more than ever it seems like the time for me to prioritize this. Specifically in working with numbers, I find it extremely helpful in maintaining focus and easing stress.

*EBMC:* The work you do for EBMC is vital to our financial well-being, Tina, and at the same time you're very much working behind the scenes. What would you like the EBMC Sangha (spiritual community) to know about you?

*Tina:* Most of my clients are non-profits, with a focus on social justice work. Being behind the scenes is just fine with me. I love working with numbers and knowing that the work I do helps support the longevity of these organizations. When I'm not crunching numbers, I love traveling and trying new foods. Current status: cuddling our kitten, Merv, whilst reading *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*.



**Tina and Merv**

*EBMC:* Thank you for all you do to keep EBMC's books in order, Tina -- and for so much more! Sangha members: if you'd like to drop a note of appreciation to Tina, you can leave it in the EBMC office addressed to "Tina Bilger."

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"Descarapelar" = the Spanish word for the beautiful way walls crumble with time, the art of shedding of skin.

Pictured: A house on the street of my mother's childhood home.  
Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico. Diana Montaña Sept. 8, 2017

*(after the quake, homeland on my mind)*

*Tapachula is the dingdangding of the marimba, candles and herbs and potions in the back of the market, curbside Evangelists singing screechy prayers for the sinners, children swimming in the mud of flooded roads longlongago before they put in drainage, the peeling away of years and paint. The still-alive rubble of history and of forgetting and of the ones who stayed. Tapachula is that crease of earth in between Mexico and Guatemala, la Perla del Soconusco, land of volcanoes and coffee and Mayan gods and cacao, land that birthed my mother and my grandmother before her and her mother before her, and like that until forever, until before Mexico was Mexico and Guatemala was Guatemala, until back when everything was just earth, just that same earth that cracked open yesterday.*



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**Quick Links**

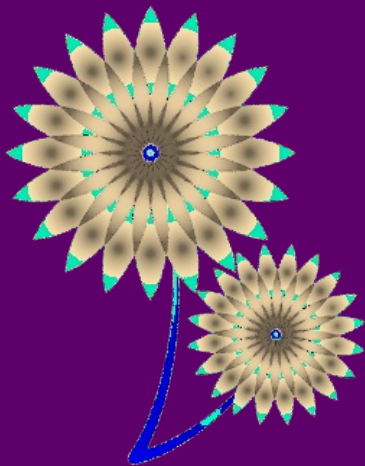
**CALENDAR**

***MORE ABOUT EBMC***

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## People of EBMC:

### ***Tammy Johnson,*** **cofounder of Art/Work Practice**

**EBMC:** Tammy, you've been meditating at EBMC for years! What brought you to EBMC, and can you please tell us a little more about yourself?

**Tammy:** It's all Larry Yang's fault! That's not very Buddhist of me, I know. But it's true. I came to EBMC in the fall of 2007, after hearing Larry Yang talk about the Center at the people of color retreat at Spirit Rock that Spring. After about a decade of a solitary practice, the retreat left me yearning for community, a spiritual home.

A friend who practiced Zen Buddhism introduced me to meditation in the '90s. I was a community organizer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the time. Those were long days that started with 6am meetings with public school teachers, shifted to preparations for membership trainings, election and issue campaigns, then door knocking in the evenings before ending with a cold brew or two with other organizers after hours. A long-distance relationship, family drama and the hustle of life left me desperate for any measure of relief. My meditation practice gave me some solace even though it had no spiritual grounding. I left the Zen stuff at the door, but there was enough peace in the practice to get me through another day.

I moved to Oakland in 2000 to work for the Applied Research Center (now Race Forward). For eleven years I did everything from policy work, research, trainings, campaign consulting, coalition management, to writing for Colorlines.com. In 2011, I became a racial equity consultant in order to make space for my other passion, bellydance. I've been dancing for about fifteen years, much of that time in a duet with Etang Inyang called Raks



Tammy Johnson.  
Photo by Lisa Ellis. 2016  
Performance: Kayf haal-ik?  
(How is Your Heart?)

Africa. For nine years we also ran Girls Raks Bellydance and Body Image program for teenage girls.

It's been a full life and there is more to come. The Buddhist understanding of impermanence has helped me loosen my grip on the good and the bad while on this journey.

**EBMC:** You've been active as a dancer, teacher and mentor of dance, and now you and your partners have launched an exciting new business, Art/Work Practice, bringing social and racial equity to arts organizations. How can we support the work you're doing?

**Tammy:** My partners, Channing Kennedy, Nayantara Sen and I have worked in various social and racial justice movements from immigration, public education, environmental to reproductive rights. We are also artists that cover a wide spectrum of forms from writing, dance, music, film to comedy. Our desire to marry our passion for racial justice and the arts brought us to our new business, Art/Work Practice, LLC. This has manifested into an arts integrated approach that focuses on creating cultural shifts through intentional connections, the interruption of dominant ideologies of oppression and the reconfiguration of power dynamics.

Our work touches a broad audience that includes social justice groups, for-profits, the entertainment industry, art groups and individual artists. That's because each of these areas plays a significant role in setting the context for change. We want to up the ante around the intentionality of how that happens in terms of creating new norms and the structures that dictate and facilitate those norms. So, on any given day we could be assisting an issue-based group in integrating cultural strategies in their work, talking to women executives in the solar industry about reaching beyond implicit bias for solutions, or facilitating a workshop about speculative fiction and structural racism at the public library.

I love my work, especially now! This is a historic moment, and our descendants will ask someday, "What did you do?" So, if this work does the minimum of seeding the ground for major sea-change in how we address oppression in our country (but let's be clear, I feel that the potential is much greater than that) then I will be happy. And I have no intention or ability to do this alone. Nayantara, Channing and I invite everyone to join us in the process of creating space for imagination and spirit.



**EBMC:** What's the connection between your everyday life and work and your practice of mindfulness meditation and Dharma?

**Tammy:** Metta (Loving Kindness) practice and the Eightfold Path are in heavy rotation on my playlist. As part of my daily work I deal with issues that people run, duck and hide from. After two decades of facing the structural monster, a personal high bar for excellence has made me my harshest critic. The Metta practice reminds me that I'm human. And it reminds me that this Black woman isn't responsible for other people's "stuff." The Eightfold Path provides a basic playbook, a way of moving through the world that balances personal responsibility with spirit. For instance, there are times when my warrior spirit is directed to "do nothing" as a form of wise action. "Don't answer that email right now, Tammy!" Damn that's hard! But doing nothing in

specific circumstances has saved my Buddhist bacon many a day!

Combined with some Northern African rituals and movement, meditation is the centerpiece of my morning. I no longer rush into my day armed with nothing but coffee, my to-do list and the "God help them before I get to them" prayer. It has slowed me down and allowed space to ask the question, "What's real right now, Tammy?" And that's not about resolving anything on the cushion. It's just acknowledging what is, sitting with it and realizing that I cannot only survive to the next moment, but at times even thrive into it. And no, I don't always "let it go." But it's nice to know that it's a real option that maybe one day I'll choose. And then, I drink the coffee.

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

**Tammy:** We are experiencing the legacies of the creation of this nation in a very visceral way right now. My spiritual and creative path has led me to investigate how we are dealing with the trauma that those legacies have produced. In the fall of 2018 I am producing an ensemble performance and workshop series that will explore how women of color are rediscovering these practices. There will be opportunities to participate, volunteer and attend various events along the way. People can stay informed about The Healing Suite through the A/WP website ([artworkpractice.com/](http://artworkpractice.com/)) and by joining our mailing list.

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## 1440 Multiversity Service Week

by *Melissa Crosby, LSangha (incoming board co-chair)*

Now is a moment to both resist and to build in service of the planet, precious



natural resources, and for the well-being of all life. In building, it's important to make time to cultivate new tools, sharpen existing ones, connect across action-based spaces, and to rejuvenate our spirits. For five days, beginning on September 4, 2017, six members of East Bay Meditation Center had an opportunity to do just that at the first annual 1440 Multiversity

Service Week.

Service week is a series of professional development workshops for nonprofit organizational teams aimed at supporting the idea of regenerative connections and collective efforts. Workshop topics included fundraising from the heart, board



recruitment, stress management, authentic leadership, trust building in teams, and conflict mastery, to name a few.

Lyla Denburg, EBMC's Development and Facilities Coordinator, remarked about her experience, "*The trainings offered at 1440's Service Week reinvigorated my commitment to cultivating wildly successful grassroots fundraising, elevated my desire to infuse our work and fundraising culture with positivity, collectivity and celebration, and equipped me with tools and exercises to bring what I've learned back to EBMC on a day to day basis.*"

We'd like to thank 1440 Foundation for coordinating this event, for supporting EBMC's team in attending, and for all of the work that they do to assist so many in the process of cultivating both personal and professional toolboxes. May we find strength in each other and in the world we are currently shaping through collective reflection and transformative action.



EBMC representatives at 1440's Service Week on September 8, 2017.

Photo left to right: Candi Martinez Carthen, Dennis Somera, Fresh! White, Jennifer Biehn, Lyla Denburg, Melissa Crosby





## Take your spiritual practice to the next level! Volunteering at EBMC

There are numerous ways to volunteer in service to the EBMC Sangha. In some volunteer positions people work remotely via computer, from their homes, or cafes, any time of the day or night. Other volunteer positions have more of a group social component, and yet other volunteer positions involve coming to the meditation center and working by oneself. What they all have in common is that volunteers are the lifeblood of EBMC -- the center cannot run smoothly without our many volunteers. As a volunteer, you can take your spiritual practice to the next level through what is called samu, or "work practice," in Buddhist temples in Japan. All Buddhists in Asia, both lay and monastic, have some form of work practice, from preparing food to sweeping and raking to administrative tasks. It's a great way to gain or develop one's skills, and to practice concentration and wholehearted giving in the greater spirit of harmonizing with the community. Volunteering can also be an excellent way to make new spiritual friends.

If you attend any of EBMC's weekly meditation practice groups, please consider talking to any of the volunteers who are event managing on a given evening, and offering to help with setup, cleanup, greeting, and other needed tasks. All of the weekly groups are volunteer-run, and need a committee of dedicated, steady and knowledgeable volunteers to schedule teachers, open and close the center, give talks on gift economics, and handle any issues with the physical plant and the center equipment during the group's meeting time. If you become a regular volunteer, please consider asking the coordinating committee of that practice group if they need more members.

There are many other volunteer positions at EBMC, from graphic design to inventory and supply to office tasks to website and database tasks to painting and cleaning and much more. Training and support are provided for all volunteer positions. If you'd like to know which positions might be open, please email [admin@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:admin@eastbaymeditation.org) and tell us more about your skills and interests. Thank you!



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#### 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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