



# EBMC Newsletter

## Spring 2011

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## **Freedom Starts Within**

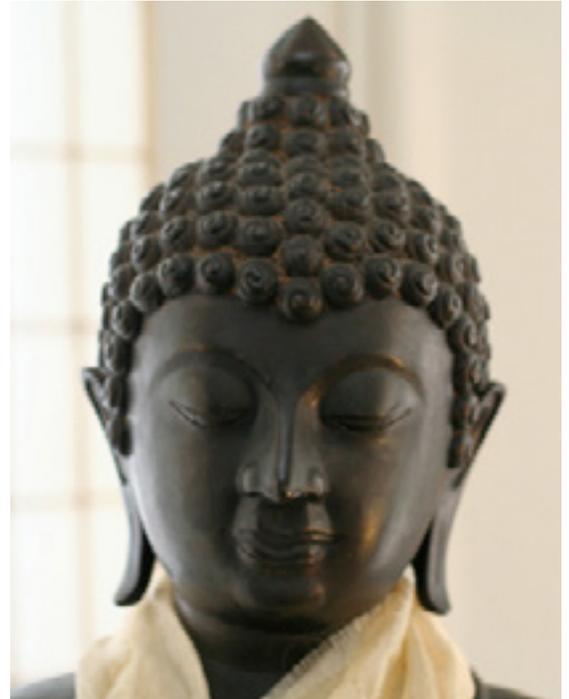
by Anushka Fernandopulle, on behalf  
of the EBMC Leadership Sangha

Populist revolutions have been sweeping through many countries recently. Large numbers of people have been able to connect in their desire for freedom, using new technology and social media in ways previously unimaginable, facilitating social and political change. It's an exciting time, inspiring to people all over the world.

There are many interesting lessons here around democracy, organizing and revolution. As meditation practitioners, what are some of the lessons for us as we see these exciting events unfold? Are there any parallels for us in our practice? Who are the dictators of our internal lives, and what movements can bring us liberation from them?

When we live with mindfulness, we live with awareness about what is actually happening in the present moment. Without mindfulness, thoughts, emotions, and sensations arise unexamined in our body and mind, and we are driven by them. When a thought arises, we identify with it, believe it and react to it; when an emotion comes through, we are gripped by it. These unexamined thoughts, emotions and sensations can be like dictators of our lives if we let them. "Eat that! Hate this! Fear that!" And often we follow blindly. In a way, we too live under tyranny until we can really see through these things.

Freedom in recent political movements is resulting from people connecting with each other in new ways and tapping into their shared desire for freedom. We too can connect with our experience and taste freedom in the moments when we are able to see a thought, emotion, or sensation with mindfulness. We can identify it: "OK, this is jealousy, it's like this", and be present with the direct experience in our body, rather than being obsessed and driven by it. In the space created we can see what is really happening and have the freedom to act rather than react. When you have these moments of freedom, it is good to really notice them and gain energy from them.



The success of recent movements also relies heavily on the fuel of courage, being brave enough to see what is really true and call it out. Our practice encourages us likewise to have the courage to see what is really going on in our lives, honestly and plainly. Mindfulness can meet everything that comes up in our lives, pleasant or unpleasant. When we have the courage to open up to the truth of our experience, then we have the option to act in the most appropriate way based on this.

Meanwhile back in downtown Oakland, EBMC is gaining momentum as a different kind of practice center. We too are fostering connections between people in new ways, whether it is around particular sitting groups, classes, or daylongs around topics that have previously not been taught. Come join us in our community, which is creating change both internally and externally. Gain inspiration from what you read in the news, both for social and political change and for spiritual liberation. Freedom starts within, and the best time to start is now.

## News and Announcements

### Film Screening May 18

EBMC is featured in a documentary film created by students in a social justice filmmaking course at SF State. *Refuge in Sangha* explores how meditation can be used to foster community building and healing to diverse communities, specifically the People of Color and Alphabet communities at EBMC. The screening of *Refuge in Sangha* and the other films from this class will be Wednesday, May 18 @ 7 pm in the Copola Theater at SF State. More info: ([Download PDF flier](#))



### *Operations Committee:*

### **Blessing Bowl**

All Sangha members are warmly invited to place blessings in our new ceramic Blessing Bowl, which sits on the altar at EBMC. Next to the bowl are small slips of paper on which blessings can be written. It's the perfect place for healing wishes, prayers, intentions and expressions of gratitude. Our temple keepers will lovingly clear the bowl out each week.

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***Program Committee:***

## **Singles Sangha?**

Is there any interest in an EBMC “Singles Sangha?” If so, what would it look like? If you have ideas or interest, please contact the Program Committee: [cjohnson21@earthlink.net](mailto:cjohnson21@earthlink.net).

## **New sitting group on Sundays: The EVERY BODY EVERY MIND SANGHA**

Please welcome EBMC’s newest weekly sitting group: the EVERY BODY EVERY MIND SANGHA for people living with disabilities, limitations, differences and chronic illness. The weekly meetings, which are Sundays from 6:00 to 7:30 pm, will always include: Meditation of about 30 minutes, a dharma talk/Buddhism instruction and discussion of about 30 min., some form of check-ins or personal sharing in small groups, chanting or singing, and some form of regular lovingkindness practice to close the evening.

The remaining few minutes will be available for simple mindful movement, mindful breathing exercises (if teacher has training in this area), or large group sharing. How that time is used will vary from week to week.

The “dharma talk” portion of the meeting will include systematic Buddhist teachings at some times, and at other times will include individual presentations by group members about how it is to live in their individual bodies, with their own disabilities, differences, or chronic illnesses.

An article about the Every Body Every Mind Sangha appeared recently in the SF Examiner. [[Read it](#)]

EBMC now has sitting groups four nights per week, in addition to the other classes, workshops and daylongs on the calendar!

## **Words to/from the POC Sangha**

**From Syra:** EBMC’s Thursday night POC Sangha would like to acknowledge, honor, and express deep gratitude to each and every dedicated volunteer and to each unwavering Teacher who tirelessly create and hold space for our sit week after week. Thank you!

*–Syra Smith, POC Sangha Volunteer Coordinator*

**From Spring:** Our people of color sangha has continued to thrive and deepen over the years and nothing makes me happier than arriving on Thursday nights and seeing our beautiful community. It is a true refuge and a place that I and many others call home. We are living in turbulent times both socially and economically and communities of color get hit the hardest. Places where we can come together to laugh, share, grieve and hug one another is precious. As the lead teacher of our people of color sangha it’s always an honor to serve and the learning is mutual. I want



*Members of EBMC's first Commit 2 Dharma program at a recent POC residential retreat at Spirit Rock*

to take a moment to appreciate all those who support the sangha and will continue to support us in the future. Thank you to all the guest teachers, volunteers and especially to Syra Smith our group coordinator. The best is yet to come!

*-Spring Washam, POC Sangha Lead Teacher*

Members of EBMC's first Commit 2 Dharma program at a recent POC residential retreat at Spirit Rock

### **Volunteering at your sitting group**

Volunteering at your sitting group is the best way to get to know your Sangha. Help create a safe, friendly and supportive space for your Sangha by opening and closing the center and welcoming folks as they arrive.

- **Wednesday night Alphabet Sangha for LGBTQI/SGL folks** (Wednesdays, 7:00 - 8:30p) Alphabet-identified community members only, please: contact Mariam at [omdevima@gmail.com](mailto:omdevima@gmail.com)
- **Thursday night People of Color Sangha** (Thursdays, 7:00 - 9:00p) POC-identified community members only, please: contact Syra at [syra\\_s@sbcglobal.net](mailto:syra_s@sbcglobal.net)
- **Friday night Open Sangha** (Fridays, 6:30 - 8:30p) For everyone: contact Ave at [ave50cruz@gmail.com](mailto:ave50cruz@gmail.com)



*Members of EBMC's second Commit 2 Dharma program*

- **Sunday night Every Body Every Mind Sangha** (Sundays, 6:00 - 7:30p) For people living with disabilities, limitations, differences and chronic illnesses: contact Brian at [BSalem@dor.ca.gov](mailto:BSalem@dor.ca.gov)

### Open Deep Refuge groups

*Deep Refuge groups are small practice groups initiated and led by members of the community. More info about the Deep Refuge program is available on the [EBMC web site](#). Some Deep Refuge groups are open to new members, and listed below. Please contact the group directly if you are interested in joining.*

#### East Bay Mindful Parenting group

This group is geared toward parents of young children with the goal of providing a community of people who are interested in practicing mindful parenting. The group will likely read a book or part of a book each month on this theme and gather to discuss it. Hopefully, there will be an opportunity for a few minutes of silent meditation at each meeting, but the primary focus of the group will be social and supportive.

Contact Name: Vanessa Smith

Contact Email: [vspwest@gmail.com](mailto:vspwest@gmail.com)

Proposed frequency of meetings: monthly

*For information about starting your own Deep Refuge group, [visit the EBMC web site](#) or contact Max from the Program Committee: [maxairborne@gmail.com](mailto:maxairborne@gmail.com).*

#### Community & Development Committee:

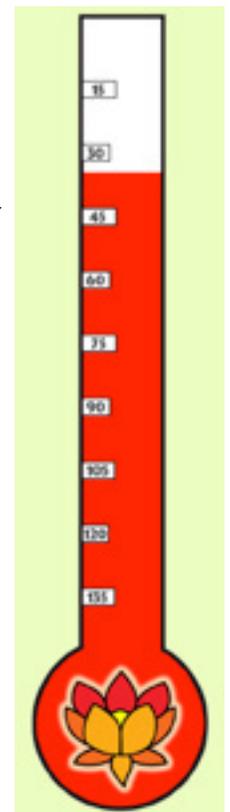
### Where are we with the prospective move?

We're almost there! Upstairs, that is, in the same building. With just 35 more "Friends of EBMC" monthly donors, we can begin to use the much larger upstairs space in the same building, allowing much more space for the growth of our vibrant community. Can you help EBMC make it up the stairs to the larger space? Please click the thermometer to make a one-time or monthly gift. **We are more than 2/3 of the way to Phase I**, the first step of the move upstairs into the larger space. (In Phase I, we will be able to start periodically using the upstairs space for events too large to fit in our current space.) Please help EBMC make it up the stairs!

- [Join the friends of EBMC](#)
- [Learn more about the 3-phase campaign](#)

### Dharma-thon!

Join us and our greater Sangha and community for the first



annual 24-hour Dharma-thon, the most exciting dharma happening of the year. The Dharma-thon will begin 9:00am Saturday July 2nd and end at 9:00am Sunday July 3rd. Space is limited, and reserved for participants who raise donations from their friends, family, and acquaintances to support their 6, 12, or 24 hours of practice, and to support EBMC. The program will include periods of sitting and walking meditation, Dharma talks and discussion, movement such as yoga and tai chi, music, chanting, spoken word, martial arts and much more all lead by EBMC Core Teachers and community dharma leaders to include Spring Washam, Larry Yang, Mushim Ikeda-Nash, and Konda Mason. To participate in this event, each registrant must raise either 5 donations of at least \$20 each, or a minimum of \$250. Top fundraisers (those who raise the largest number of donations, as well as those who raise the most money) will receive prizes! For additional details and to register please visit <http://www.firstgiving.com/ebmc>

**Can you offer sessions, lessons or consultations? Have gifts to bear?** You're in luck! We are gathering prizes for the upcoming Dharma-thon! Support our Sangha's effort to fundraise by donating to our gift pool. We are in search of body workers, artists, dancers, astrologers, coaches, musicians, chefs, trainers, hairdressers, you name it, we need you! Are you able to offer an hour of your trade as a prize? Or can you offer gift certificates to events or classes in the community? Or pieces of art you have created? The sky is the limit! Prizes are being collected from now until the Dharma-thon in July and will be awarded to our most earnest fundraisers until we run out. Please contact: Mariam at [omdevima@gmail.com](mailto:omdevima@gmail.com)

## Path of Service: Volunteers

*Volunteers are the heart and soul of EBMC! Working together is one of the best ways to get to know other Sangha members. All EBMC Volunteers are invited to join the Path of Service Sangha, where we get together regularly for fun, food, creative sharing and building community. For more info about joining the Path of Service Sangha or volunteering, please contact Sylvia: [volunteers@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:volunteers@eastbaymeditation.org).*

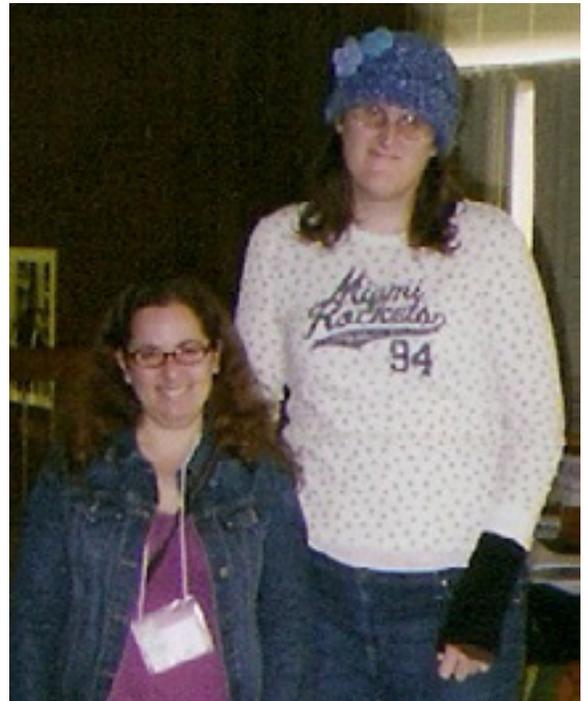
### Volunteers positions currently open? Yes!

- AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT VOLUNTEER

Maintains EBMC's microphone and speaker system; projector; and recording equipment. ([More info - PDF](#))

- EVENT REGISTRAR

Helps out with registration for events from home or wherever there is an internet



connection. (More info - PDF)

- **TEACHER'S EVENT ASSISTANT (TEA)**

Have you wondered how events run so smoothly at EBMC? Would you like to be a support to EBMC teachers and your fellow meditators? Do you enjoy working with people? EBMC is seeking volunteers who are organized, dependable, and culturally / socially aware to help out as Teacher's Event Assistants (TEAs) at our events. TEAs help out on about one event per month by contacting volunteers, opening & coordinating set-up, troubleshooting during a retreat or class, and closing up. Familiarity with EBMC's space & culture is helpful. (More info - PDF)



*"My experience as a TEA gave me a lot of appreciation towards the volunteers and the TEAs, especially on nights where I'm just setting up or not volunteering at all. It also made me appreciate the teachings at EBMC and the whole space we have to share in our spiritual paths. That it's not only the teacher bringing the wisdom they know, but every one of us collaborating to have our community. I was honored to have so much trust given to me to open and close the center--which has given me a greater sense of belongingness and responsibility to EBMC." --Yaminah*

## **Many Thanks to Our Temple Keepers**

EBMC would like to acknowledge & thank a group of volunteers who are working in the background, but nonetheless consistently give the gift of their time, energy and spirit towards EBMC. Three times a week, the Temple Keepers come in for an hour or more to clean and spruce up EBMC so that the center can remain a sanctuary for dharma practice. We would like to thank Ann Marie Davis, Goldburn Maynard, Celso Carreiro & Dolores Restrepo for their loving care of EBMC. Read a little more about two of our Temple Keepers:

### **Ann Marie Davis**

I am a lifelong resident of the bay area. I'm also a writer & poet. I first started going to East Bay Meditation Center a few years ago. I believe that giving is like circulation and that there is a spiritual law of reciprocity. I have received so much peace and understanding of how the world works that It feels wonderful to be able to give back my time. I'm thankful the EBMC is here for me.



**Dolores (“Doe”) Restrepo Macias**

I am a Chicago native and am currently here in the Bay Area studying photojournalism. I live here with my husband (and our Techichi puppie) in the Downtown Oakland area. I am very honored to explore my gift of service as a (back-up) Temple Keeper here at EBMC. Saludes y Bendiciones.



## “Meditating Lightly on the Earth” – the Greening of EBMC

By Mushim

When I was a Buddhist nun in South Korea in the late ‘80s, I lived in a large nuns’ training temple on a famous sacred mountain with a long history of practice. When



going to the outhouses, you had to take your own toilet paper, and the human waste was used to fertilize trees and flowers on the temple grounds. I never saw a garbage can in the cavernous, smoky kitchen. Burnable waste was added to the fire used to cook the large cauldrons of white rice and miso soup daily, after which pots of water were placed on the dying embers; if you were lucky, you might be able to score some of the warm water to wash a few clothes after breakfast or lunch. Yet, simultaneously, the Westernization of South Korea was in full swing, and tourists who thronged the mountain every weekend to see the historic, beautiful

temples and hermitages, would leave behind a trail of plastic containers and snack wrappers. The monks and nuns would occasionally organize to pick up litter and clean the creek bed.

The first Buddhist guideline, or precept, is not to harm, but to cherish all life. Living in the Bay Area in 2011, I’m presented with so many choices: Do I take reusable bags with when I go grocery shopping, or bring home groceries in “disposable” plastic bags? Do I diaper my baby in cloth or in “disposable” plastic diapers? Do I consider the effects of the household and personal cleaning products I use on the environment and the water systems?

At East Bay Meditation Center we’re doing our best to be as “green” as possible, in alignment with the First Precept of cherishing all life. Some, but not all, of our paper supplies are recycled paper, because of price points, and we collect compostables at some of our potluck meal events but not on a daily basis, due to a lack of our own

garbage, recycling, and composting pickup area (our neighbor, Bay Area Community Services, very kindly allows us to use their dumpster). We are working on improved containers and signage to more clearly show what goes into the garbage inside the Center, and what goes into the recycling containers near the tea table. The cleaning supplies at the Center are all free of perfumes and dyes, and are biodegradable. People can choose ceramic mugs, disposable paper cups, or can bring their own beverage containers for the filtered water and teas. We know that our environmental report card is mixed, and we want to continue to show improvement at a sustainable pace for our Operations Committee.

With our collective and joyful effort to reduce, reuse, and recycle, we can continue to move in the direction of “the greening of EBMC.” Thank you!

## Mindfulness, Wet Laundry & Hope

by Abe Doherty

Laundry

I was just noticing the pleasure that I feel when I do laundry and hang up the wet clothes on a drying rack. I notice the satisfaction from lining up the shirts and pillowcases in rows on the rack, looking at all of the colors, appreciating the gift of hankies that a friend embroidered for me, smiling at the pink shirt with zebras that is my partner’s favorite shirt.



This is mindfulness. This is gratitude. This is hope. This is taking action to slow down the climate change that is projected to cause tremendous suffering and fundamentally threaten life on this planet. Since I work professionally on the latest science on the impacts of climate change, I am witnessing things unfolding in a dramatic way. EBMC is very helpful to ground me with meditation practices and learning how to be aware of and transform suffering and the causes of suffering.

Did you know that using a drying rack or laundry line instead of using an electric dryer prevents the emission of 1,500 pounds/year of carbon dioxide, one of the greenhouse gases that is causing climate change?

How else can we practice mindfulness, slow down, improve our quality of life and take action to help address the climate change crisis? Check out [www.coolcalifornia.org](http://www.coolcalifornia.org) for more information and inspiration. For those interested in the latest science and policy developments on climate change, read [www.climateprogress.org](http://www.climateprogress.org).

And please help me have hope by sharing stories of how you are taking action to address climate change and create more sustainable households and communities. Consider posting it on the EBMC bulletin board at [ebmc.wordpress.com](http://ebmc.wordpress.com).

# Because of These Things

by Ann Marie Davis

Gratitude falls down  
into a valley  
on a hoof-kicked stone.  
It falls  
into the valley  
amidst a single chirp  
of a bird talking.

It rolls  
as graceful as an avalanche  
as the valley becomes gratitude  
and solitude at once.

The sun becomes happiness  
followed by rain  
and then sadness.

The insects,  
high, excited, buzzing  
in sun bleached grasses  
silence themselves  
in the absence of shadows  
at noon  
and become serenity.

Creatures churn the clumps of  
soil  
and meet with and gnaw upon  
exposed and tender  
new roots.

That is pure love.

The red ants feed upon bleached bones.

They know with their shimmering exoskeletons  
that they are walking  
on the bones of the same mare  
who tossed her head  
on the day she was born  
when she was still slick and wet  
with birth.  
Because they are full on her now  
they know  
that they are both joy and sorrow at once.



*Victory to the Gods by Sylvia La  
Oil on canvas*

Because the old mare kicked her hoof  
one last time  
before falling.

Because there are tears of joy  
manifesting as falling leaves  
from an ancient oak tree  
with new and tender roots.

Because there is  
the shadow that one leaf casts  
against the others as it is uplifted in flight  
by a brief and sudden breeze  
the red ants are both peaceful and torn.

Because there is all of that.

***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.*

Questions about the EBMC Sangha Newsletter or ideas for the next issue? Write to Max: [maxairborne@gmail.com](mailto:maxairborne@gmail.com)

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