

Accessibility Policy for EBMC

Approved in 2012 by Leadership Sangha

Framework for the Policy

This policy is influenced by the following ideas from the disability justice movement, as expressed in the writings of Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Mia Mingus:

1. Access is a concrete form of love for our beloved community—our sangha. “I want to be with you, I want us to be together, we will not be divided.”(2) “Accessibility is concrete resistance to the isolation of disabled people.”(3)
2. “Disability” is created by a world which privileges and normalizes a limited range of mental and physical ways of thinking, feeling, and moving. Disabilities are not personal flaws or problems; they are not liabilities, shortcomings, nor tragedies. Inclusivity requires a transformation of worldview away from seeing “disability” as “wrong” or as something that needs fixing. Disabilities are assets that offer us vital teachings for our practice as interconnected human beings.
3. Sangha is one of the three refuges, inviting a recognition and practice of interdependence and moving us away from the myth of independence. “Interdependence... embraces need and tells the truth: no one does everything on their own and the myth of independence is just that, a myth.”(3)

Physical/Material Access

EBMC will continually seek to fulfill its mission of diversity and inclusive community building by consciously making the center accessible across the full spectrum of mobility differences, communication differences, sensory differences, chemical injury, multiple chemical sensitivities, and environmental illnesses. In so doing, we commit to collective access as a guiding principle, and treasure our practice as a sangha of “All of us, or none.”

We will use the Americans with Disabilities Act as a starting, not an end place towards a thriving center and sangha that is welcoming, safe, and accessible for every body and every mind.

We will use the principles of universal design to ensure equity across our sangha in the use of space, the ongoing creation of an integrated space, and to nurture a

spirit of practice to improve access as much as possible, lessening the need to identify and remove barriers on an individual basis.

Culture / Education of the Sangha

EBMC will actively encourage all sangha members to help foster an environment that truly welcomes all people by providing ongoing support and training for teachers, volunteers, the Leadership Sangha, and the sangha as a whole about how to model, create, and grow a culture of accessibility, inclusivity, and integration.

This includes, and is not limited to:

- Education about the importance of keeping the center and ourselves fragrance free; as well as how to continue inviting more of our sangha to integrate this practice fully (especially, as a starting point, for teachers and volunteers);
- Education about the importance of language use related to a wide range of disabilities and differences, as well as how to model and integrate inclusive language that does not privilege and normalize non-disabled ways of thinking, communicating, feeling, and moving through the world (i.e. “moving through the world” rather than “walking through the world”), and;
- Education to invite transformation in our sangha culture by examining the beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions we internalize and inherit from an ableist culture, and how to actively shift that thinking through our collective mindfulness practice.

Organizational Integration of Accessibility and Inclusivity

EBMC will integrate a mechanism into its organizational structure that ensures continuing work towards true accessibility. To this end, EBMC will establish a dedicated position and/or committee, with representation on the Leadership Sangha, whose job will be, in a conscious and ongoing way, to address “Who are we leaving out?” and “How can we continue to transform our culture and remove current barriers?” This person and/or body will invite, inspire, and manage the sangha’s commitment and efforts in creating a culture of accessibility, inclusivity, and integration, such that to practice at EBMC means to see how the dharma liberates us all, together.

References

1. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Making Space Accessible is an Act of Love for Our Communities*, <http://creatingcollectiveaccess.wordpress.com/making-space-accessible-is-an-act-of-love-for-our-communities/> (June, 2010).
2. Mia Mingus, *Wherever You Are is Where I Want to Be: Crip Solidarity*, <http://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2010/05/03/where-ever-you-are-is-where-i-want-to-be-crip-solidarity/> (May 3, 2010).
3. Mia Mingus, *Changing the Framework: Disability Justice, How Our Communities Can Move Beyond Access to Wholeness*, <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice/> (February 12, 2011).