

East Bay Meditation Center

# NOVEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

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**New! Radical Inclusivity Resources  
on EBMC's Website**

Please take a look at (and share with others!) four new incredible sets of Radical Inclusivity resources now available for free on EBMC's website! These resources include online articles and videos. Click the links below:

1. **Radical Inclusivity Practices**
2. **Resources for White People**
3. **Resources for Men**
4. **Resources on Disability and Ableism for Everyone (Disabled and Non-disabled Alike)**



## "State of the Center"

*So, what's the State of the (meditation) Center?*

Find out by reading our November 2019 State of the Center report by clicking [here](#).

Get up to date with brief reports from our LSangha (board of directors) chair, our Development Director (fundraising news!), and our Program and Finance Director. Questions and comments are warmly invited. You can always reach us through the **Contact Us** feature of the EBMC website. And you'll get a timely response, we promise.



## Quiz:

*What are the 5 Core Elements of EBMC?*

Just for fun -- do you know what the five core elements of EBMC's organizational "ecosystem" are?

Find out the answers by clicking [here](#). And please feel free to ask any questions by emailing us at **admin** at **eastbaymeditation dot org**



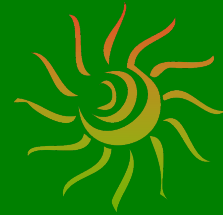




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## People of EBMC: Zahra Ahmed & Christian Howard

Zahra and Christian are both graduates of the sixth cohort of Practice in Transformative Action (PiTA), EBMC's yearlong program of secular mindfulness training for agents of change and social justice activists. They are currently apprentice teachers for the seventh cohort of this program, which began in September 2019.



**EBMC:** Hi Zahra and Christian, what brought you to EBMC, and could you tell us a little more about yourself?



### **Zahra Ahmed:**

*More about me:* I come from a big family; I have four sisters and three brothers, all of whom live in Southern California. I also have one daughter named Rai.

I'm from Southern California -- an area called the Inland Empire about an hour and a half east of Los Angeles. I moved to the Bay Area about a year and a half ago to teach at St. Mary's College. I love being out in nature -- I go to the water on a weekly basis

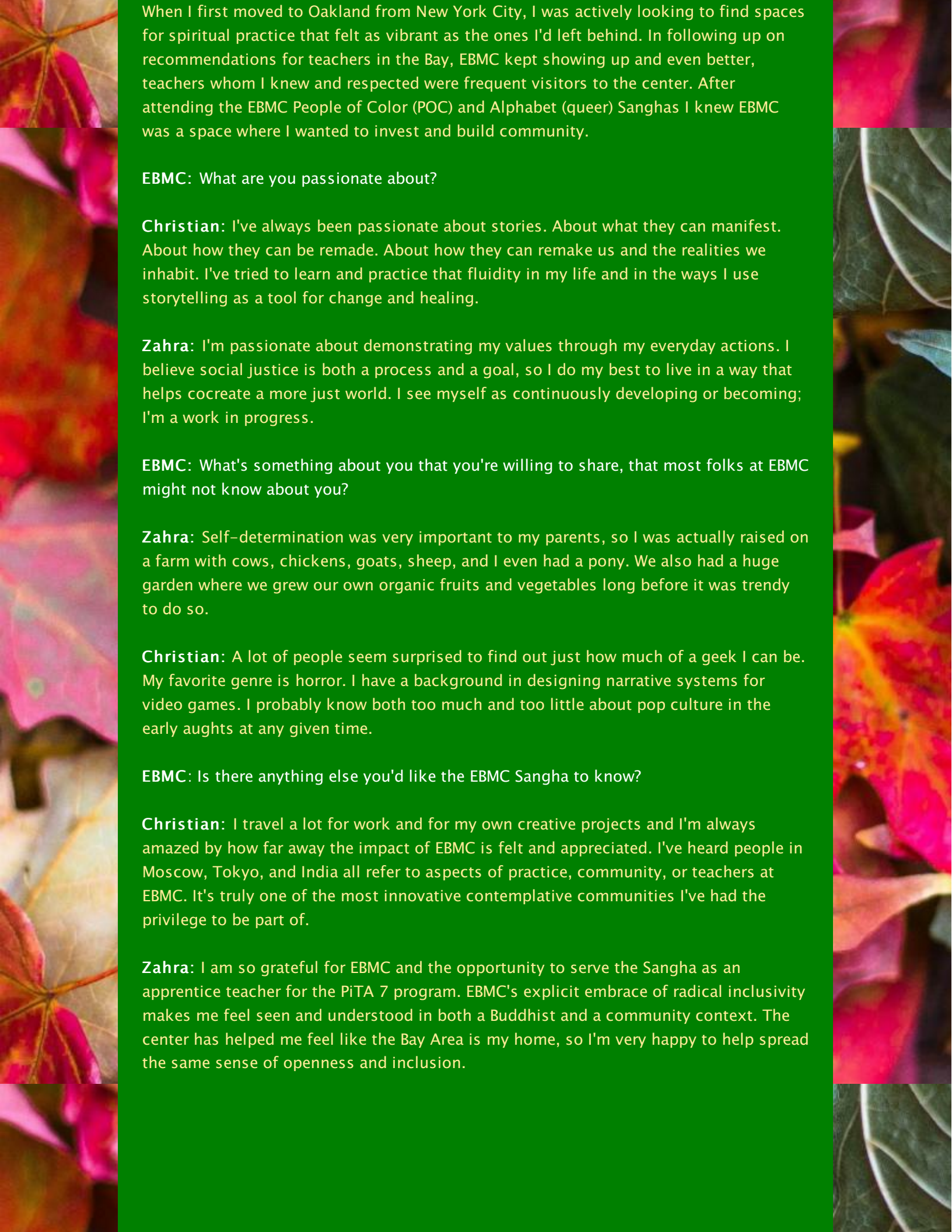
and I go hiking as often as possible. I'm also an amateur photographer. I'm especially interested in photographing street art and taking candid photos of people in urban areas.

*What brought me to EBMC:* I actually learned about EBMC before I moved up to the Bay Area. A friend of mine who lives here told me that I may want to check out EBMC because they offer a weekly sangha for people of color. That same friend mentioned the PiTA program, and said I might want to apply. I had mostly meditated alone for the majority of the time I've been practicing, and I'd been feeling the need to join a community. When I moved to the Bay, I went to the EBMC POC sangha, and I immediately felt secure and welcomed. I also applied for the PiTA6 program and I was accepted, so I was able to become even more familiar with EBMC through our monthly large group sessions. Being part of both sanghas has intensified my feeling that EBMC is my home and I feel honored and privileged to be part of such a powerful community.

### **Christian Howard:**

I'm originally from Buffalo, New York. A fiction writer and academic by training, I've been working for a number of years around building interactive narrative experiences for various kinds of transformative change.





When I first moved to Oakland from New York City, I was actively looking to find spaces for spiritual practice that felt as vibrant as the ones I'd left behind. In following up on recommendations for teachers in the Bay, EBMC kept showing up and even better, teachers whom I knew and respected were frequent visitors to the center. After attending the EBMC People of Color (POC) and Alphabet (queer) Sanghas I knew EBMC was a space where I wanted to invest and build community.

**EBMC:** What are you passionate about?

**Christian:** I've always been passionate about stories. About what they can manifest. About how they can be remade. About how they can remake us and the realities we inhabit. I've tried to learn and practice that fluidity in my life and in the ways I use storytelling as a tool for change and healing.

**Zahra:** I'm passionate about demonstrating my values through my everyday actions. I believe social justice is both a process and a goal, so I do my best to live in a way that helps cocreate a more just world. I see myself as continuously developing or becoming; I'm a work in progress.

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

**Zahra:** Self-determination was very important to my parents, so I was actually raised on a farm with cows, chickens, goats, sheep, and I even had a pony. We also had a huge garden where we grew our own organic fruits and vegetables long before it was trendy to do so.

**Christian:** A lot of people seem surprised to find out just how much of a geek I can be. My favorite genre is horror. I have a background in designing narrative systems for video games. I probably know both too much and too little about pop culture in the early aughts at any given time.

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

**Christian:** I travel a lot for work and for my own creative projects and I'm always amazed by how far away the impact of EBMC is felt and appreciated. I've heard people in Moscow, Tokyo, and India all refer to aspects of practice, community, or teachers at EBMC. It's truly one of the most innovative contemplative communities I've had the privilege to be part of.

**Zahra:** I am so grateful for EBMC and the opportunity to serve the Sangha as an apprentice teacher for the PiTA 7 program. EBMC's explicit embrace of radical inclusivity makes me feel seen and understood in both a Buddhist and a community context. The center has helped me feel like the Bay Area is my home, so I'm very happy to help spread the same sense of openness and inclusion.





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## Mariana Ruybalid, longtime EBMC Sangha member, joins our ancestors altar

On September 20, 2019 Mariana Ruybalid wrote: "I was shocked on Tuesday when I heard my cancer had progressed and was in my bone marrow. My doctor and I decided I am not strong enough to fight the chemo and radiation I would have to take. So, I will go on Hospice and stay at home as long as possible."



Mariana's wishes were met. She died late Sunday afternoon, October 13, 2019, at home in the tender care of her dedicated caregivers. She had recently added the word "courage" to her personal list of lovingkindness meditation (metta) phrases: "I live softly and simply with gentle ease, tender quiet loving-kindness, curiosity, joy, wonder, awe, amazement, compassion, courage, love, and connection."

Mariana has been with EBMC since we were at our old location on Broadway at 22nd in downtown Oakland. She was a member of the People of Color and the Every Body Every Mind Sanghas and attended numerous classes at EBMC. Mariana was an author, among her many accomplishments. You can read more about her life, in her own words, at her

[blogsite.](#)



EBMC Family Sangha teachers Michele Ku and Baruch Golden show off our fall fundraiser wall thermometer. We raised over \$33K! For a full report back on the EBMC Dharma-thon, go to the [State of the Center](#) report in this newsletter.



Upgrade your monthly giving > 

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.

