



East Bay Meditation Center

MARCH 2020 NEWSLETTER

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COVID-19 (coronavirus) and EBMC:
All groups and classes
are now online

EBMC has moved all of our programs online using Zoom, effective March 11, 2020. If you have registered for a class, workshop or retreat, you'll receive information about how to access the online program and how to donate to the meditation center and, separately, to the teacher(s).

All of our weekly practice groups, including mindful movement groups and Deep Refuge Groups, are also going online. For this information, please click [HERE](#). We appreciate your patience as we make this transition.



"I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals."

– from "The Five Mindfulness Trainings" – Thich Nhat Hanh

Now more than ever we need our Friends!



As we temporarily move to online offerings at EBMC so that we can continue to come together--no matter where we may be physically located--we invite you to join us in showing your love for our Sangha by upgrading, renewing, or for the first time becoming a [Friend of EBMC monthly donor](#)!



EBMC's Spring 2020 "State of the Center" Report

This report updates you, our community, on news from our board of directors, and development, finance, and programming departments. Click [here](#) to access the pdf.



"Love in the Time of COVID-19": Some Tips to Help with "Social Distancing"

Health officials are advising us to stay away from in-person gatherings and to practice "social distancing" as a means to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus. There are many ways to connect safely with one another, and build community creatively; and we can also do some "traveling" while remaining safely at home. You're invited to share [your](#) tips on our social media pages!

- If accessible to you, take a walk, roll or stroll, in an area with plants, trees, and fresh air. Invite a distant friend to do so at the same time, and share photos with one another of flowers and things you see by texting on your smartphones.
- Ask a friend to do 5 minutes each morning and 5 minutes each evening of meditation and sharing of spiritual texts or quotations by phone or videoconference. (Some EBMC Sangha members are doing this now; it's a beautiful, stabilizing, and calming practice.)
- Enjoy a "dinner date" with friends by Zoom or Skype. Make a date to enjoy something tasty for dinner, and chat with friends who are also enjoying their meal. If you like, you can invite a bell of mindfulness to begin and end the meal, and share a blessing such as this one from Thich Nhat Hanh: *"This food is a gift of the earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work."*
- 12 Famous Museums Offer [Virtual Tours](#) You Can Take on Your Couch (Video). Experience the best museums from London to Seoul in the comfort of your own home.
- And of course, attend EBMC [practice groups](#) and classes online!



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"May I Be a Protector to Those without Protection"

A total of seventy-four members of the EBMC Sangha have now received Bodhisattva Vows and Precepts, in the first ceremony offered at the Center in December 2017, and more recently in December 2019. Two members of the 2017 cohort renewed their Vows in 2019 by participating in the ceremony. Recalling the words of the great Buddhist teacher Shantideva, these Dharma practitioners have promised, "May I be a protector to those without protection" -- in fulfillment of the joyful desire to encourage and accompany all living beings on the journey of awakening.



52 EBMC Sangha members receive Bodhisattva Vows and Precepts,
December 2017



22 EBMC Sangha members receive Bodhisattva Vows and Precepts,
December 2019

People of EBMC: Focus on Immigration Issues

Irene Ross and Antoinette González

EBMC: Hi Irene and Antoinette, what brought you to EBMC, and could you tell us a little more about yourselves?



Irene Ross:

I was born in Oakland and first began practicing meditation when I was a teenager. Many years later, I connected with EBMC through the Alphabet Sangha and later participated in the White Awakening in Sangha (WAS) yearlong program. I was drawn to EBMC because of the Center's commitment to fostering a socially engaged and radically inclusive Sangha.

Antoinette González: I checked out EBMC before I even moved to the Bay Area several years ago. When I lived in Fresno, I drove up a couple of times to participate in several daylong practices. Once in the Bay Area, I felt very fortunate to regularly attend the weekly POC (People of Color) Sangha and Yoga practice gatherings. I have come to deeply appreciate socially engaged Buddhism and the active work of inclusivity embodied at EBMC.

I grew up in a mixed legal status home in Fresno, was raised Catholic, and I identify as a queer Chicana/Latinx.



EBMC: Antoinette, we're particularly interested in the work you've done in helping undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Could you tell us a little more about this?

Antoinette: I began serving immigrants while in law school, working with a San Diego organization that served detained and non-detained immigrants seeking asylum. I have given multiple Know Your Rights presentations, especially when they were in demand after the 2016 elections. More recently, in workshop settings, I have offered free legal services to undocumented immigrants seeking help and information about their options to remain in the U.S.

EBMC: Irene, we're particularly interested in the work you're doing as an attorney working with immigrant people who are seeking asylum in the U.S. Could you tell us more about this?

Irene: I currently represent LGBTQQII asylum seekers who are facing persecution in their home countries on account of their sexual orientation and/or gender presentation. A grant of asylum gives an individual the right to live and work in the United States. Asylees can later apply to become lawful permanent residents and U.S. citizens.

EBMC: What are the top 1–3 things you think the Sangha needs to be aware of regarding

the current immigration laws and realities, and do you have any action recommendations or names of organizations that are doing particularly good work?

Irene: Asylum seekers need access to interpreters, attorneys and sponsors in order to have a fighting chance at winning their case. The U.S. Government does not provide court-appointed attorneys or interpreters to asylum seekers who cannot afford them. There are many wonderful groups who are working double-time to offer those services and there is still a huge need for skilled volunteers. Here are a few such groups that I would strongly encourage folx to check out and support in whatever ways they can:

- Al Otro Lado (San Diego/Tijuana) <https://alotrolado.org/>
- East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (Berkeley) <https://eastbaysanctuary.org/>
- Oasis Legal Services (San Francisco) <https://www.oasislegalservices.org/home>
- SPLC's Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative (Georgia, Louisiana)
<https://www.splcenter.org/our-issues/immigrant-justice/southeast-immigrant-freedom-initiative-en>

Antoinette: First, chaos, fear and trauma is this administration's strategy in targeting immigrant (documented and undocumented) communities. Seek out places of support, including legal resources. The Bay Area has many legal resources, more than other regions. Second, most immigrants (undocumented and documented), unfortunately, do not have access to legal representation. This negatively affects an undocumented immigrant's ability to have a meaningful opportunity to make a claim in immigration court or file a petition/application with USCIS (U.S. Citizenship Immigration Services). Legal representation should/must be provided, at a minimum, to children under the age of 18. Third, immigration policies/laws change continuously. Seek out legal assistance from accredited representatives or immigration attorneys and not from notarios/notaries.

We are the necessary resilient communities for each other. Creativity in advocacy, legal representation and lifting up immigrant communities is urgently needed! Here's a list of recommended resources:

- Al Otro Lado, legal services in LA, San Diego & Tijuana, <https://alotrolado.org/>
- BAJI, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, <https://baji.org/>
- CAIR, Council on American-Islamic Relations, <https://ca.cair.com/sfba/>
- Just Futures Law, a woman of color founded and led legal organization, <https://justfutureslaw.org/>
- National Immigration Law Center, [Home – National Immigration Law Center](#)

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

Irene: I'm totally obsessed with good coffee and all manner of dogs.

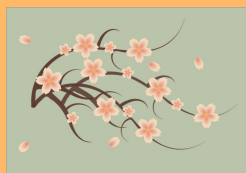
Antoinette: I also practice in the Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism (Thich Nhat Hanh tradition), and participate in various sanghas, including ARISE (Awakening through Race, Intersectionality and Social Equity).

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

Irene: If you or someone you know fears persecution in their home country, please seek legal assistance right away. Some immigration benefits have strict deadlines so it is important to speak with an attorney as soon as possible.

Antoinette: "Know Your Rights!" These rights apply to everyone and are only effective when practiced during interactions with law enforcement, including ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement). NILC (National Immigration Law Center) and ILRC (Immigrant Legal Resource Center) have excellent online resources.

[Editor's note: Antoinette González has recently joined the East Bay Meditation Center Leadership Sangha, our board of directors.]



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Mindful Teens Online: Spotlight on EBMC's Teen Circle!

"When K first joined Teen Circle this teen was struggling to handle the pressures and obligations of family and school. K knew they wanted to get out of autopilot and learn more about meditation. After joining EBMC's Teen Circle, K instantly understood that they had found a powerful and loving community of lifelong friends, space in which to grow, learn about Buddhist teachings, feel listened to and welcomed as their most authentic and playful self. Being a part of the Teen Circle gave K tools for paying attention to the internal world while developing a kind curiosity and compassion for both self and others."



EBMC's Teen Circle is a weekly meditation group for teens, ages 14–19. We meet on Wednesday evenings online using Zoom from 7:00 pm–8:45 pm. Our focus is to create deep relationships with ourselves and each other, while having fun, getting real and supporting each other. We learn mindfulness and explore dharma (Buddhist teachings) in creative experiential ways. No previous meditation experience is necessary. We are committed to maintaining a sangha (community) that is welcoming to people of all identities, cultures, and backgrounds. Led by Anthony "T" Maes, Raul Betancourt, Louije Kim, Sarwang Parikh, and Sara Oakes.

If you're reading this, please spread the word about our Teen Circle to interested teens and their parents/guardians. Please contact admin@eastbaymeditation.org for more information.



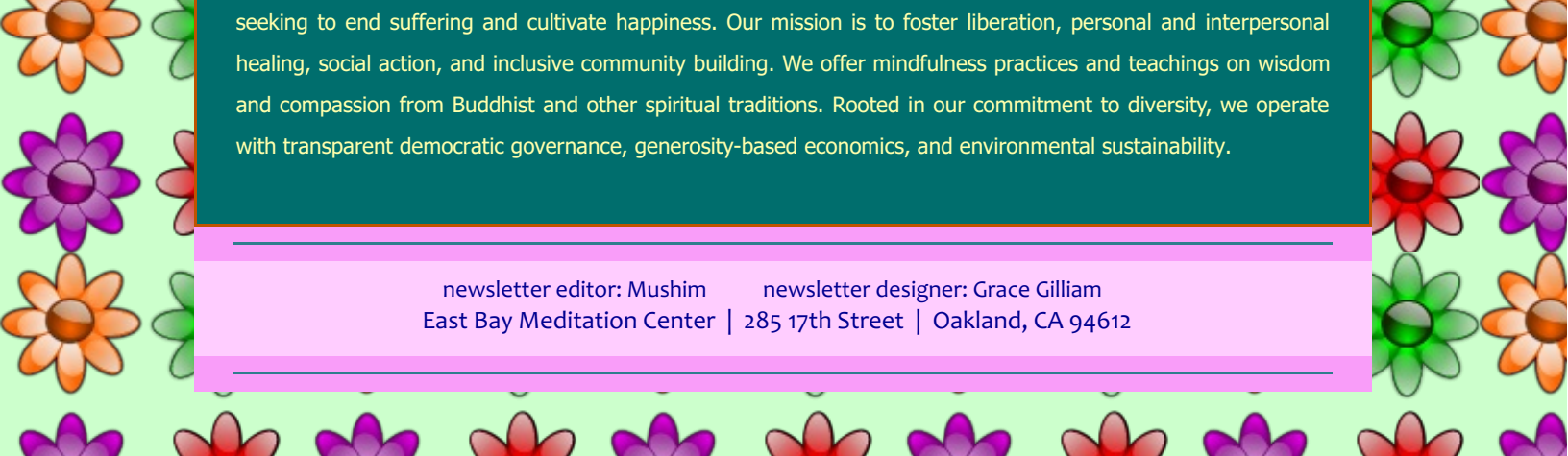
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See what's happening on our social sites:



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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