



Center Director's Report from Brenda Salgado *Looking Back, Looking Forward*

November 19, 2015

Beloved Community,

As I prepare to finish my second year as EBMC's first center director, I want to share my "State of the Center" reflections with you, looking back at 2015 and forward to 2016. What a rich and eventful year this has been!



Photo by Xiomara Castro

Fundraising news

I'm so thankful to our community for turning out for the Oct. 23, 2015 Power to the Planet fundraising event. We generated **\$6,400** net through this inspiring and substantive conversation with our distinguished speakers, Paul Hawken, Konda Mason, Charles Eisenstein and Lawrence Ellis. Kudos to our development coordinator, Cassandra Shaylor, for her skilled hard work, and to the team of volunteers, including "behind the scenes" graphic designers and social media volunteers, who helped make this happen! For those of you who couldn't be with us, "*Power to the Planet: Mindfulness, Earth Justice and Stories for a New Humanity*" connected the dots -- that the lack of response to global climate change is connected to the murder of Black people in the U.S. and is connected to gentrification in Oakland. And, one of the most powerful forms of activism lies in our storytelling. We often seem to operate under an ideology of separation, a stance of ignoring how each of us is connected to the environment and to suffering in our society. We need to let go of this old story of separation, to disrupt it and to co-create a story that is both new and ancient. Because the dominant story is not working for our communities, what's needed in this moment is cultural humility in order for transformative and powerful stories to be heard and transmitted. EBMC was founded on the principles of [cultural humility](#); they are interwoven into our deepest values and commitments. And, in so many ways, EBMC and all of you represent the making of a new story that is rooted in indigenous and earth-based spirituality.

EBMC's 2015-2016 finances

Regarding the Center's overall finances, we're ending 2015 with about \$361,000 in total income and \$357,000 in expenses. While it's positive that our income has exceeded our expenses this past year, we have not met our goal of six months of operating expenses in savings, which would cushion us against times in 2016 when cash flow may be restricted. I'm working with our staff and board to plan a great year of vigorous fundraising in 2016, and, with gratitude, we look to you, our community, to strengthen your commitment to [gift economics](#) and dana. In addition, looking ahead to 2016, EBMC is committed to providing medical insurance for our hard-working staff, which would cost an additional \$19,000 in our 2016 budget. We also have the additional planned expense of a part-time consulting teacher, Larry Yang, who began in September of 2015 and will continue throughout all of 2016. With all of this in mind,

the staff has met recently and we've set some fundraising goals for 2016 to cover the new expenses; these recommendations have been communicated to the Leadership Sangha (LSangha), our board of directors, who will finalize the 2016 budget.

Regarding new sources of revenue for EBMC, I announced at the 2015 Community Meeting that in 2016 we hope to have a smartphone app for people to donate to EBMC. We also presented two great new ways to support EBMC -- the first way is go to smile.amazon.com for any shopping you do on amazon.com and choose East Bay Meditation Center as your designated charity from the menu there. We are aware that some community members have concerns about using amazon.com and we want to be clear that we aren't encouraging people to shop there; we are acknowledging that some folks do shop there, and since that is the case, we'd like EBMC to benefit from this potential source of income. The second way to support EBMC is eating at [Spice Monkey](#), a restaurant near the Center, which has generously offered to give us 15% of the cost of meals if diners tell their wait staff to write "EBMC" on the restaurant's portion of the bill. Please join us in thanking Spice Monkey's owners for their generosity.

September 2015 Community Meeting

We had an all-Sangha Community Meeting in September, at which I presented a PowerPoint of information about EBMC's finances and we asked for input from the Sangha about anything having to do with EBMC. We presented EBMC core teacher Mushim Ikeda with a lovely album of warm wishes celebrating her honorary doctor of sacred theology degree from the [Starr King School for the Ministry](#).

One suggestion from the Sangha was to begin collection of stories from Sangha members to hear about the impact of EBMC in their lives, and to provide additional mechanisms for feedback from the Sangha. While we have had an evaluation process in place for our registered events for many years now, there is no comprehensive process for more general feedback from our community members. We will be looking at this more in 2016. There was also a request to know how we are doing financially more regularly in the future, and not just at community meetings.

We received feedback from the community regarding the EBMC beta website currently under construction. The new site will be more mobile friendly, easier to navigate, and will provide a calendar function. There was a request to make sure registration links are available on the calendar page, and to include information on our web page regarding programming, inclusivity and access at EBMC, and people being welcome here regardless of income (generosity practice visible upfront). Other ideas that were voiced included photo galleries for sitting groups, and providing some teachings on our site in audio/video/written or pdf form. We also made a request for photography volunteers, as we need high resolution images for the new website. If you are interested in helping with this please contact admin@eastbaymeditation.org. To view a PDF of the State of the Center report that was shared during the community meeting, please go to our home webpage, www.eastbaymeditation.org or email admin@eastbaymeditation.org

Historic first meeting between EBMC and BCA (Buddhist Churches of America)

On September 25, 2015, a group of 18 people from the Ministers Assistants Program (MAP) of [Buddhist Churches of America](#) (BCA) visited EBMC. The BCA is a national network of 60 Jodo-Shinshu (Pure Land) Buddhist temples and organizations with a history that goes back 110 years to their founders, pioneering Japanese immigrants. There are wonderful BCA temples in Oakland and in Berkeley, and some EBMC members have already discovered a (not) “secret” treasure -- the [Buddhist gift and bookshop](#) in the beautiful Jodo Shinshu Center on Durant Avenue in Berkeley. The Ministers Assistants in training came from all over the U.S., and enjoyed tea with me and community coordinator and EBMC teacher Mushim Ikeda, requesting that some of the visit time be devoted to a session of sitting meditation, followed by Q&A about EBMC’s uniquely diverse Sangha and our inclusivity practices that support safety and spiritual deepening for folks from underrepresented communities. At the end of the meditation period, the BCA folks placed their palms together in gasshō and recited the Nembutsu, a beautiful and heartfelt expression of gratitude to Amida Buddha. This was probably the first time that this ancient chant was recited by such a large group at EBMC!

Movements and social issues

EBMC stands with the [#BlackLivesMatter](#) movement and we know that many of our community members are active in this movement. As a socially-engaged Buddhist organization and a very diverse Sangha (spiritual community), we know that these issues are important personally and politically to many members of our community. We’re also aware through individual sharings from our Sangha members that many are being impacted by gentrification in the Bay Area; they are struggling to find affordable housing, or are being evicted from their homes. Some are homeless. We have also heard that, for some who have struggled with housing issues, it’s been their relationships within the EBMC community that have helped to pull them through, which points to the need for Sangha during periods of societal crisis. I expect we’ll continue to be very engaged in these arenas in 2016.

Looking back, looking forward...

EBMC continues to be a ground and a place of nourishment, or, quoting Lawrence Ellis, a “watering hole” for spiritually-based social justice activists who are working hard to transform suffering in our society. In our unique presentation of the Dharma, equally critical is the space and leadership development that EBMC provides for underrepresented communities and leadership opportunities and spiritual space for people from dominant cultures who are developing skills as allies. We are clear that it takes all of our efforts to transform the many ways in which oppression creates situations of “othering,” so that we can make progress toward a liberated society of wisdom, and compassion in action. As 2015 draws to a close, my heart is filled with the deepest gratitude to you, for being an important part of the “new story for humanity,” one of connection and love, that is unfolding at EBMC every day that our doors are open to all.

Brenda Salgado
EBMC director