

**“State of the Center” Interview with EBMC Center Director Brenda Salgado
April 2, 2015**

Brenda, the Angela Davis and Jon Kabat-Zinn dialogue fundraiser on January 15, 2015 sold out quickly, and was also Livestreamed. How much did we make from it?

We're incredibly pleased to report that EBMC made around \$50,000 net. Also, an edited video of Angela Davis and Jon Kabat-Zinn in dialogue about mindfulness and social justice is now available for purchase. If you're interested, please email us at admin@eastbaymeditation.org.

Could you please share with us the highlights of 2014, your first year as EBMC's first executive director?

There are lots of highlights for me, including the perhaps hundreds of conversations that I had with members of our incredible Sangha, or spiritual community -- volunteers, board members, teachers, donors, people who came to EBMC events and folks who knocked on our front doors and asked to be given a tour. I was especially nourished by so many heartfelt stories of what EBMC has meant to people, and the positive difference it has made in their lives! As a new Center Director, I devoted 2014 to building relationships and strengthening community ties within EBMC as well as with other organizations. A few highlights I'd like to mention here are:

- Beginning 2014 by honoring Ven. Bhante Suhita Dharma, who died on Dec. 28, 2013.
- Supporting the #blacklivesmatter movement and providing community and healing space as members of the EBMC community were navigating their own participation in that movement.
- Our Library Sangha volunteers established a beautiful Lending Library.
- EBMC events and groups attracted over 14,000 individual visits in 2014! This number is an exponential increase from just under 8,000 individual visits that we recorded in 2013.
- EBMC moved to our larger space in October 2012, and 2014 saw a rich expansion of our programming. The Center is being used in all of its rooms more of the time. There's a wonderful feeling of vibrant community center life, including teens and families with young children.
- In 2014 we entered into a collaborative project with Spirit Rock Meditation Center, New York Insight, and Insight Meditation Society (IMS). The project has three goals: (1) Create an insight meditation teacher training curriculum for diverse and multicultural teachers and practitioners; (2) Increased multicultural competency training for current insight meditation teachers; (3) Strengthen relationships between the four organizations through collaborative work. The lead teachers working on curriculum redesign are Larry Yang and Gina Sharpe.
- As I mentioned above, 2014 was for me especially beautiful in my getting to know Sangha members, seeing their diverse and beautiful leadership, and seeing new

relationships form between different parts of the Sangha -- for example, between the volunteers who coordinate the weekly sitting and movement groups.

Brenda, what can we look forward to in 2015 at EBMC?

We've all been excited and encouraged by beginning 2015 with such solid fundraising success, and now we have to keep up the momentum! This year I'm also looking forward to:

- Continuing to work with our existing Leadership Sangha (board) members, and welcoming our new members to the fold: Noliwe Alexander, Carol Cano, and Shenaaz Janmohamed.
- Deepening transparency, accountability and communication with our greater Sangha in regard to EBMC finances and governance. We're planning two community meetings this year, in June and September, where our staff and board will give more information to the EBMC community as well as receive the community's input.
- Making the Honoring and Healing of the Ancestors an annual event. We offered this beautiful ritual for the first time in December 2014 as a celebration of "Beyond Ferguson," funded by the Akonadi Foundation. As an indigenous practitioner and healer, I have been taught by my elders about the need for collective and community healing practices, so I look forward to offering this community ceremony again in 2015.
- Expressing gratitude to our community through events such as a celebration for our monthly donors (Friends of EBMC), and a fun brunch and open mic for our volunteers (Path of Service Sangha).

Regarding EBMC's finances, how are we doing? What does the Center need to be sustainable in 2015 and beyond?

Running EBMC on a gift economics (dana) basis continues to be both challenging and rewarding. EBMC's annual budget at this point projects \$365,000 in income for 2015 and \$351,745 in expenses. We closed 2014 with a deficit budget, which was expected due to increased personnel costs and a planned speaker fundraiser that had to be cancelled. Dana (financial contributions) at EBMC events requiring registration is, on the average per person, substantially increased, we're happy to report. In 2015 our goal is to build up a reserve and to end with no deficit. We'll have two speaker fundraiser events this year instead of one, including the Jan. 15 Angela Davis and Jon Kabat-Zinn dialogue. Our goal is to have a 5% increase in dana from registered classes, sitting groups and Friends of EBMC (monthly donor giving) in 2015 so we can finish the year strongly.

Some of the increases in our costs result from beginning to offer sick time and vacation time to our five part-time employees for the first time in EBMC's history, and in alignment with our values. Our Leadership Sangha (board) also plans to transition the Center Director position to full time by the end of 2015.

Going into more detail about our finances for folks who are interested, we are really grateful to our community because the average per person dana amount for events

requiring registration (evening classes, half and full day retreats) has substantially gone up in 2014. In 2014, average dana per person was \$18.40, up from the 2013 average of \$8.95 for each class in a class series. For a weekend half or one day retreat, it was \$13.19 average per person in 2014, up from \$7.57 in 2013. So essentially the average dana per person for registered events has doubled!

We have also seen a slight drop in dana at sitting groups from an average \$2.23 per person per sitting group meeting in 2013. In 2014 it dropped to \$1.86. We're planning on giving our EBMC community teachers and sitting group coordinators more support and more information in giving robust dana talks, and we're confident in the Sangha's generosity, since the weekly and regularly meeting sitting and movement groups are so popular.

Is there anything more you'd like to share about EBMC's 2014 financials?

In 2014 our total expenses were \$328,446 and 68% of that was staff / personnel expenses. 17% was occupancy and insurance.

In 2014 we raised \$303,813 from the following sources:

- 28% Friends of EBMC (monthly donors)
- 20% Class series, daylongs and yearlong programs
- 20% Fundraising events
- 18% Grants
- 7% Sitting groups
- 7% Renting out space and miscellaneous

Thank you, Brenda. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

Yes, I continue to be inspired each and every day by East Bay Meditation Center! And for all of you who haven't yet seen our new six-minute video about EBMC, a gift to us from filmmaker Jenny Chu, please take a moment, relax, listen to the sound of the meditation bell, and watch it [here](#).