



# EBMC Newsletter

## Winter 2011

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## Warm Aloha – Our EBMC Community in Bloom

by Mushim, on behalf of the EBMC Leadership Sangha

My mom was born on the island of O’ahu and grew up there, working in the pineapple fields and watching the airplanes drill overhead during World War II. Even though she raised all her children in Ohio, she never lost the aloha spirit, tending a small hibiscus plant in our basement and rejoicing when it bloomed as snow fell thickly outside. Because she was raised in a Japanese Buddhist family in Hawai’i, my mother brought the warmth of ohana, or family-ness, to all of her social relationships.

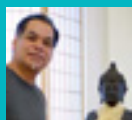


*The EBMC Leadership Sangha, L to R: Kitsy, Mushim, Larry, Konda, David, Max, Charlie, Spring and Anushka*

Our Sangha, or spiritual community, at East Bay Meditation Center is characterized by the same warmth of friendship, safety, and support. We care for one another, we practice the way of mindfulness together, and over time we get to know one another through ups and downs, gains and losses. We make mistakes, we apologize, we start over, knowing that our ability to generously offer and receive forgiveness and compassion will grow the more we offer and the more we receive. We also practice giving, by asking, “How can I help?” or simply pitching in and helping when we see a need. Dana, the ancient Buddhist word for generous giving, manifests as what folks

## Next Issue

“Love Letters:” Have you had an insight at EBMC that was helpful? How has your mindfulness practice impacted your life? **Email us your story** by Feb. 28, 2011.



in Hawai'i call kokua – cheerfully lending a hand so that the Sangha can flourish. The feeling of kokua is warm and strong and joyful, and each of us can experience it in our own way.

Our new EBMC newsletter is meant to open communications and help to build our spiritual community. We hope it brings warm sunlight to your winter day. May 10,000 flowers bloom.



*EBMC Sangha members at the recent Community Meeting in the potential new space upstairs.*

Questions about the EBMC Sangha Newsletter or ideas for the next issue? Write to Max: [maxairborne@gmail.com](mailto:maxairborne@gmail.com).

## Announcements & Info

### *Operations Committee:*

### **New bike racks at 19th St. BART station**

As bike riders coming to EBMC know, we don't have space for bike storage inside the center, and bike storage outside the center is inadequate. Well, you will be glad to know that the 19th St. BART station is now providing bike racks inside the station, where EBMC community members can safely store their bikes while at EBMC.



### **Do you wear shoes? Read this.**

To help make EBMC's small space as accessible as possible, we need to keep the entryway free of clutter. This includes shoes! Please **place your shoes on the shoe racks**, rather than on the floor, so everyone, including everyone using a wheelchair or scooter, has enough space to easily and safely enter the room. THANK YOU!

# WANTED

Interested in finding out more about the inner workings of EBMC than you ever imagined possible? **THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE NEEDS NEW MEMBERS!**

**CHECK OUT OUR LISTING in the Path of Service Sangha Section below.**

## Lightweight easel needed!

EBMC needs a lightweight easel for holding chart paper. Do you have one to donate? Please contact us at: [admin@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:admin@eastbaymeditation.org). We extend our deep gratitude for your generosity.

### Programming Committee:

## ANNOUNCING: Sangha for People Living with Disability, Illness or Aging – planning meeting Jan. 16

Planning Meeting to discuss forming a Sangha for *People Living With Limitations Due to Disability, Illness or Aging*. With Charlie Johnson & Debra Kerr, Sunday January 16, 2011 from 10 AM to 1 PM at EBMC. **Open To All**

Please join us to discuss having an ongoing practice group that would meet regularly in a safe, accessible space to practice dharma and support one another as we travel the path together. There will be time for mindfulness and lovingkindness practice, as well as group discussion, sharing ideas and planning.

Please consider how you want this group to take shape: What would you like this group to be called? How often and when would you like to meet? What are your ideas about how the group might be? What would you do to help the group become a reality?

### How to Propose a Program at EBMC

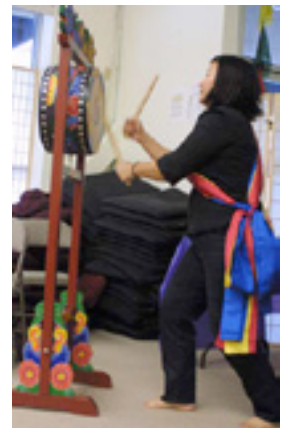
Do you have a brilliant idea for a retreat or class at EBMC? [Here's all you need to know to propose an event. \(PDF\)](#)

## ANNOUNCING: Deep Refuge in Spiritual Friendship – a network of EBMC Practice Communities

*“To have spiritual associates, spiritual companions, spiritual friendships, is the whole of the Holy life.” ~Buddha*

The **Deep Refuge program** has been created to support the many individuals and diverse communities of the East Bay Meditation Center to deepen their spiritual path in their lived experiences. Deep Refuge communities are intended to provide a safe, intimate, and community-led space in which folks can explore what relevance wisdom teachings from different lineages and traditions have in their lives.

Deep Refuge groups can have many different themes or organizing principles, such as a particular area of study, a common interest, a shared identity, or a shared neighborhood. They generally consist of 5-12 members, making it possible for Sangha bonds to grow strong as well as providing an intimate enough setting for true exploration of Dharma topics. This deepens the development of daily life as practice.



*Sharing creative talents at the Path of Service Sangha brunch*



For more information about starting a Deep Refuge group, [visit the EBMC web site](#) or contact Max from the Programming Committee: [maxairborne@gmail.com](mailto:maxairborne@gmail.com).

**Fundraising Committee:**

**What's up with the prospective move?**

Become a Friend of EBMC The Fundraising Committee is working hard to support the sustainability and growth of EBMC. Our work has stepped up with increased membership on our committee and our focus on EBMC's prospective **move to a larger space upstairs** at our current location ASAP, to better serve our growing community. The success of the **Friends of EBMC** (monthly donor) campaign is vital to this move. We have a 3-phase (step) campaign to move into the larger space upstairs in our building. The 1st step, which allows for periodic and part-time use of the upstairs space for large events requires approximately 135 new "Friends of EBMC." **WE ARE CURRENTLY ABOUT 50% OF THE WAY TO OUR GOAL!** [Learn more about the 3-phase campaign.](#)



**Upcoming retreat with Sylvia Boorstein and Larry Yang**

We have also been focusing much attention on our upcoming **January 23 fundraising event, a one-day retreat with senior teacher and author Sylvia Boorstein and EBMC's very own Larry Yang.** This daylong retreat will occur

at UC Berkeley's Pauley Ballroom from 10am – 4pm, and will include spiritual practice (including silent meditation) and discussion on the topic of "What really is important in this Life?" [Tickets are still available, so click here to buy now](#) and please spread the word!

**Dharma-thon!**

Lastly, mark your calendars! We are in the beginning stages of planning for **EBMC's first 24-hour fundraising Dharma-thon July 2-3, 2011.** The event will feature EBMC core teachers, community teachers and/or leaders, meditation (still and movement), chanting and entertainment, amongst other possibilities. This will be a fun event, which we hope will raise many funds to support the growth and sustainability of our community! We will be having a brainstorming meeting on January 11 from 7-9 pm, in the upstairs space above EBMC, to plan this event further. Please join us!

We can always use more help! If you are interested in joining us as a member of EBMC's Fundraising Committee, please email [admin@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:admin@eastbaymeditation.org). Thank you for your support!



*EBMC volunteers helping prepare to send out a bulk mailing to the Sangha.*

### ***Volunteers & the Path of Service Sangha:***

All EBMC Volunteers are invited to join the Path of Service Sangha, where we get together regularly for fun, food, creative sharing and building community. For more info about joining the Path of Service Sangha or volunteering, please contact Sylvia: [volunteers@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:volunteers@eastbaymeditation.org).



### **Volunteers positions currently open? Yes!**

#### **EVENT REGISTRAR**

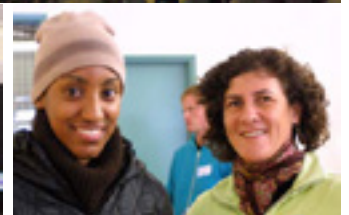
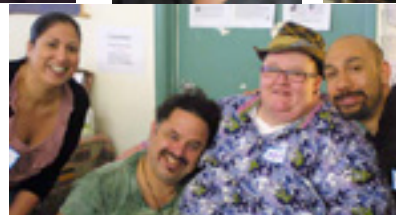
Helps out with registration for events from home or wherever there is an internet connection. ([More info - PDF](#))

#### **TEACHER'S EVENT ASSISTANT (TEA)**

Assists teachers with logistics during an event (retreat, workshop or class series). The TEA coordinates volunteers before the event, opens & closes the Center, and oversees other volunteers at the event to ensure proper set-up, check-in of registrants, and clean-up. Training provided. ([More info - PDF](#))

#### **OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBER**

The EBMC Operations Committee is in charge of administering all the day-to-day operations of EBMC (except programming). We also function as the executive committee: we formulate policies & make policy recommendations to the Leadership Sangha. Requires 4-6 hours per week and some weekday availability. ([More info - PDF](#))




*Members of the Path of Service Sangha at our last PoSS brunch*

# Appreciating Our Weekly Sitting Groups!

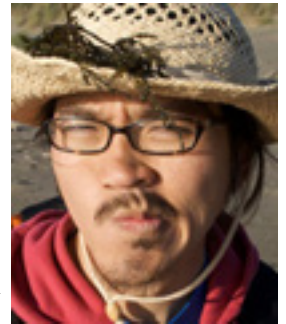
**What some sitting group members had to say when asked about their Sanghas:**



 “What I love about the sitting groups is that the true heart of sanghas’ collective intentions and struggles to grow ourselves spiritually and otherwise really happens and comes through at EBMC. It is like a feeling of working in community in a place that has great energy and with people from the community or sangha that bring great energy to EBMC. It’s a great place that supports my practice.

I love that it is fun to volunteer and it feels good to help support the sangha.”  
—*Crystal John, member of the POC, Alphabet and Open Sanghas*

“It’s an anchor in the middle of the week for me, an opportunity to be grounded. My weekdays are generally packed. But the opportunity to practice in sangha every Wednesday night allows to me to connect with myself again and to be held in a community setting.



Volunteering has been a process of exploring generosity for me, as well as the possibility to engage in mindfulness through communication with others who attend EBMC.”  
—*David Shih-Chun Wu, member of the Alphabet Sangha*



“I like my EBMC sitting group because I can sit with community and I relate to Charlie’s teachings. The generosity-based system was also instrumental in keeping me coming back.

I like volunteering because it allows me to experience how EBMC is run and managed, and to meet others who share this interest. Volunteering provides me with insight to become mindful of the direction that Leadership is taking EBMC.”  
—*Ave Cruz, member and Volunteer Coordinator of the Open Sangha*

*Sangha*

“Having a weekly sit is a precious oasis. Volunteering at EBMC has opened doors for me to build relationships within our Sangha. Offering my time to support the programs at EBMC in an expression of gratitude.



It is an honor to be part of this growing movement that casts its nets wider and wider to include anyone and everyone interested in liberation.”  
—*Mariam Toor, member and Volunteer Coordinator of the Alphabet Sangha*

## Volunteering at your sitting group

Volunteering at your sitting group is the best way to get to know your Sangha. Help create a safe, friendly and supportive space for your Sangha by opening and closing the center and welcoming folks as they arrive.

- **Wednesday night Alphabet Sangha for LGBTQI/SGL folks**  
(Alphabet-identified community members only, please): contact Mariam at [omdevima@gmail.com](mailto:omdevima@gmail.com)
- **Thursday night People of Color Sangha**  
(POC-identified community members only, please): contact Syra at [syra\\_s@sbcglobal.net](mailto:syra_s@sbcglobal.net)
- **Friday night Open Sangha**  
contact Ave at [ave50cruz@gmail.com](mailto:ave50cruz@gmail.com)

## A note to/from the Alphabet Sangha (LGBTQI/SGL community)

by Mariam Toor & Syra Smith

All at the Alphabet Sangha would like to express a deep appreciation to all of our volunteers who show up to prepare the space for the weekly sit. Volunteers lovingly open and close the center, welcome us with a smile, train new volunteers and give mini dharma



talks on generosity. Thank you: Abe, Adam, Beth, Carolyn, Cathrael, Celinas, David, Danielle, DL, Emma, Holly, Isobel, Jean, Jess, John, Josh, Julie, Kathi, Koralle, Liz, Luis, Martha, Max, Missy, Red, Renee, Rosemary, Steve, Wayne, & Winona for all of the support this last year. And a welcoming shout out to our newest crew members: Jess, Josh, Luis and Martha! Thank you for joining the team. If we have accidentally forgotten anyone, an extra dose of metta to you--thank you everyone for all of your support & effort!

## Getting to Know You!



*Featured in each issue: mini-interviews with our Sangha ~ the Volunteers, Staff & Leadership Sangha of EBMC.*

### Sylvia La

#### **What are your roles at EBMC?**

Administrative Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator. My role is a nice balance of event coordination and relationship building. On the administrative side, all kinds of things need to be done to prepare for each event we have at EBMC, and many volunteers are involved. I work mostly

with volunteers to manage the registration, publicity of events, and logistics & teacher support the day of an event.

EBMC also relies on volunteers to keep the Center running. I recruit, train, work with & support the Temple Keepers, who keep EBMC spic and span. I also work with the Supplies Manager, who keeps us stocked with our basic supplies.

Because we are a volunteer-run center, relationship building is a large part of what I do. It's my goal to properly train volunteers and also support and thank them. I build a connection between this work and their practice of dana, the generous giving of their time, talent & energy towards building this beautiful community of meditators.

### **What brought you to EBMC?**

A lot of my progressive activist & social justice friends were coming to EBMC, especially for the Thursday night POC sit. I came to try it out. At that time I had also started giving workshops on drawing as a contemplative process, where the practice of observing helps bring greater awareness. I was thrilled that EBMC was willing to take a chance on my experimental union of drawing and mindfulness practice. The workshops went well, and when I saw an opportunity to work with EBMC to develop the volunteer program, I went for it. It has been a wonderful opportunity for me to get to know more of the Sangha and understand the workings of such a unique meditation center.

### **What keeps you coming back?**

The unique community, which is diverse and ever making the right efforts towards healing and inner growth.

### **Can you share something about your spiritual practice?**

I meditate at home for an hour each day. I fall off that horse as often as anybody, but with the support of my teacher, Haricharan Das & others in my life who are keeping up the spiritual work themselves, I am constantly reminded to try and try again.

### **What in your life helps support your practice?**

My teacher, Haricharan Das, is immensely supportive. I'm so grateful for his teachings, and yet he has said that as my Dharma teacher, he is my cheerleader, the one who tells me to keep on going.

Consistency is also an immense support. The more consistent I am with my practice, the stronger is my practice.

### **Melvin Escobar**

#### **What is your involvement at EBMC?**

I have participated in each of the three weeknight sits, in several daylong retreats, and have completed several class series over these last couple years. I have volunteered





at many events at EBMC, mainly as a Teacher's Event Assistant ... and once as the "Hugger" for the Free Your Heart daylong which was a really deep experience. I am part of the Fundraising Committee, having helped put on the last two big fundraisers for EBMC. I am currently enrolled in the Commit to Dharma program. I also have gotten quite involved with sampling those exotic teas at EBMC.

### **What brought you to EBMC?**

A friend of mine mentioned the People of Color sit - I then checked out the EBMC web site, and enrolled in the Heart of Buddha's Teachings class series that was being offered at the time, almost three years ago. I really didn't have any formal training in meditation before this class. It's been awesome to be part of the beginnings of such a significant social movement.

### **What keeps you coming back?**

EBMC's my main spiritual home - I feel free to be my true self. Being with folks practicing mindfulness, the friends I have made. The tea. The teachers. The times folks bring yummy snacks. The teachings.

### **Can you share something about your spiritual practice?**

Since being accepted into the Commit to Dharma program, I've been able to have a daily sitting practice of an average of 45 minutes a day. It's been an amazing experience, being able to give myself that time, the time to allow the rust to wash away from my heart and mind, the rust of old stories, of old beliefs that don't serve me much anymore. I do my daily sitting at an altar in my studio apartment with pictures and objects from people and places that have touched my life. I journal a couple lines after my sit, and then usually start heating up water for tea.

### **What in your life helps support your practice?**

The community - the EBMC community of folks with whom I practice. Drinking tea. Working with children helps support my practice - kids are almost always in the present moment, and it's been great to be around them so that they can remind me to keep it real and come back down to earth, to the here and now.

### **My favorite EBMC moment?**

Being part of the Oscar Grant vigil - it was such a powerful contrast to be sitting with folks that were processing the intense emotions of the protests through healthy and beneficial ways while downtown folks were expressing their intensities through not so healing ways.



**Syra Smith**

### **What are your roles at EBMC?**

I started out volunteering for the Alphabet Sangha. During my first year, you could count the number of weeks I missed that sit on one hand! I soon became the Volunteer Coordinator for the Alphabets, and a Teacher's Event Assistant. My initial interest came from my history in event production & management. I was soon hired as Event Manager / Event Volunteer Coordinator and more recently, Development Associate. I'm now responsible for administratively supporting all EBMC's fundraising efforts, including the Friends of EBMC monthly giving program and our wonderful Dana-based economics system. Along with enriching

relationships and building on EBMC's strong base of supporters and donors, I'll still help coordinate fundraising & community events, and support EBMC's outreach system.

**What brought you to EBMC?**

I initially came to EBMC out of curiosity and probably, more than anything, out of a deep need to feel connected to a supportive community. I was in grief over my ailing and dying life-long animal companion. My partner, determined to get me out of the house for my birthday, laid out several options, the Alphabet sit on Wednesday nights being one of them. I loved it, I needed it, and I've been coming back ever since.

**What keeps you coming back?**

It feels like home. In general, I feel comfortable and accepted for just exactly who I am. Though I know my way around a room full of people, as a queer woman of color that feeling of acceptance is rare for me. This community and the ideals and motivations found at the Center represent me. I finally really and truly feel I've found a spiritual home. Imagine that you can put your complete trust and heart into something and know that it's the real deal coming from the right place, imagine that. That's why I keep coming back.

**Can you share something about your spiritual practice?**

My practice is centered around a self-effort to move towards divine or awakened consciousness and collective liberation. With the support of the community at EBMC and my Commit to Dharma group, I've been able to cultivate a fairly regular sitting practice over the past couple of years. This small yet intense effort has brought me eons of gratitude for the moments that I've truly been around to notice (LOL)...moments of mindfulness. To swim in the ocean can be a movement practice. To drum, deeply connected, can be an exercise on breath and so on. I can't tell you how beneficial this has been for my life. My spiritual life includes some earth-based traditions and indigenous practices as well.

**What in your life helps support your practice?**

My community!

***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.*