

APPENDIX C

Approved: 3/14/15

MINUTES

February 14, 2015

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Snowflower
Diversity Committee (“the Committee”)

Present: He Jingying, Diane Austin, Ben Hair, Curt Pawlisch

Absent: Karen Reppen, Carol Rubin.

I. INTRODUCTIONS.

Discussion. Members offered several reasons for joining the Committee and working on the diversity issue: their personal experiences and resulting feelings of exclusion due to cultural barriers or bias, abhorrence of racial injustice, especially in light of recent, well-publicized incidents of abusive law enforcement actions against persons of color that resulted in grave and tragic outcomes. Some Committee members also regretted their isolation from people of color.

II. DISCUSSION OF PROCEDURE AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP.

Decisions. For purposes of continuity and consistency, Curt will chair the Committee unless he feels unable to do so for health or other reasons. Curt invited Committee members to revisit their decision at any time.

To facilitate the cooperative, small-group nature of the Committee discussions, the Committee will use consensus decision-making.

Consistent with a request from the Steering Council, the Committee will distribute its minutes to the Sangha Listserv and archive them on the Sangha website.

The Committee approved Jingying’s request to add two members to the Committee, persons who have previously attended Snowflower Sangha.

Action Items. Curt will draft and email minutes for committee members’ approval; upon any needed revisions and final approval, he will send the document to the Listserv and post it on the Sangha website.

Jingying will email Curt the names and email addresses of the persons she identified in Snowflower Sangha who wished to join the Committee

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III. THE COMMITTEE’S MISSION STATEMENT AS APPROVED BY CTC AND STC.

Discussion. During the course of their deliberations that led to creating a special *ad hoc* diversity committee, CTC and STC considered a motion outlining the committee’s duties.¹ The Committee reviewed the motion’s contents and concluded that it effectively served as a mission statement.

Accordingly, the Committee understands that its role is *to study and recommend actions* for the Sangha to take on the issue of diversity so as to support, protect and enhance the practice of the Sangha and its members.

IV. IDENTIFICATION OF GOALS.

Decisions. The Committee did not want to set priorities concerning one set of diversity issues over another (*e.g.*, sexual orientation or ethnicity). Members decided that the Sangha diversity issues should also include cultural and socio-economic diversity. While deciding to not prioritize one set of diversity issues over another, members also noted that the issue of racial justice and white privilege were strong motivators for the Committee’s formation and for committee member participation.

The Committee reviewed notes taken during a recent Sangha planning meeting at Don Katz’s home. Committee members discussed whether planning meeting attendees thought the Committee should expand its role to include “marketing” the Sangha so as to increase Sangha membership. The Committee does not wish to engage in marketing (*e.g.*, how to make publications more attractive to young people). Instead, the Committee will seek to help identify and recommend how to remove barriers that separate the Sangha from the broader Madison community.

The Committee reviewed the Insight Meditation Society (“IMS”) Diversity Initiative goal statement:

1. “To deepen the understanding and undoing of internalized and institutional racism in order that leaders and members throughout IMS's community can act with wisdom and compassion, informed by sensitivity to racial and cultural realities.”
2. “To reduce barriers for people of color to participate in IMS retreats.”

¹ The motion read as follows:

The CTC and STC recommend that SF create an ad hoc committee of interested Sangha members for the purposes of a) studying ways to support and enhance the diversity of Sangha members while protecting the existing Sangha and b) making recommendations to the STC in December of 2015 concerning feasible ways to do so.

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3. “To enhance the sense of welcoming, community and inspiration that people of color feel about practicing and serving at IMS.”
4. “To offer the teachings in a way that resonates with a racially diverse sangha by enhancing cultural sensitivity on the part of our faculty and by increasing the number of teachers of color.”
5. “To define organizational strategies for sustaining focus on our diversity vision and carrying it forward.”²

Curt shared that he had recently spoken to a diversity employee at a state university concerning the appropriateness of the IMS goals. This person emphasized that she was speaking in an individual capacity and not in any way as a state university employee or spokesperson. She suggested that the IMS goals should have included the concept of white privilege. She would also eliminate the phrase in #4, “by increasing the number of teachers of color,” because it sounded like tokenism, or as one Committee member put it, like a “quota system.” One Committee member suggested revising the phrase to instead say, “by ensuring that Sangha leadership reflects the diversity of its membership.” The Committee’s review of the IMS goals was only to give a sense of possible outcomes of the Committee’s work on a goal statement for Sangha consideration.

Curt advised that diversity official would be willing to speak to the Committee. He also reported that she thought the Committee should strive to recommend that the Sangha seek to be seen as welcoming to diverse populations. Furthermore, we should have the mindset that the Sangha’s lack of racial diversity was not the problem for Madison African-American community to solve. She also advised the Committee to avoid tokenism, which Curt understood in this context to mean patting ourselves on the back if we gain two African-American members. Curt thought that we also should avoid thinking of ourselves as “The Great White Hope,” in other words, having the mindset that African-Americans have problems and that we can deliver solutions.

Committee members recognized the need to: 1) educate themselves on implicit bias; 2) find community resources to help in this regard; and 3) identify community projects in which Snowflower members could be of service to communities that would include persons of color.

Committee members thought the Sangha should develop a more “inclusive-feeling” to its website, one that implicitly and explicitly communicates the Sangha’s commitment to diversity values. Curt reported that he was working with Don Katz to build an entirely new Sangha website, and that these discussions were well timed.

Diane shared examples of statements of inclusivity on websites of First Congregation Church (<http://www.firstcongmadison.org>) and East Bay Meditation Center

² From <http://www.dharma.org/about-us/diversity> (last visited on 2/16/15). (NOTE: COMMITTEE MEMBERS DID NOT SEE #5 DURING OUR 2/14 MEETING BECAUSE JAN SHEPPARD HAD APPARENTLY INADVERTENDLY OMITTED IT IN HER EMAIL TO CURT PAWLISCH.)

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(www.eastbaymeditation.org, “Our mission is to foster liberation, personal and interpersonal healing, social action, and inclusive community building.”)

Jingying noted that transportation is a barrier for students wishing to attend Tuesday and Friday night Sangha sessions. Bus service on these nights to Sangha is okay; bus service afterwards is not. Many students, perhaps especially foreign students, may feel uncomfortable asking for rides home.

Diane said that she would raise this issue with the CTC. Curt suggested that perhaps the CTC should request that, prior to the first sit, leaders ask volunteers to raise their hands if they would be willing to drive persons home after Sangha.

Other issues noted were that Sangha members may not know about opportunities to volunteer, such as the Coming Home Project. Perhaps the CTC should review this concern with a thought about periodic Sangha announcements or descriptions.

V. REVIEW OF SUGGESTED GOALS AND ACTIONS FOR FURTHER COMMITTEE REVIEW.

Discussion: The Committee began its review of the following submissions:

- A. From the CTC minutes: “The CTC brainstormed possible ideas for examining SnowFlower’s inclusivity, including:
 - 1. Researching what other sanghas have done to address the issue,
 - 2. Reevaluating our materials,
 - 3. Starting sangha sits for various different constituencies
 - 4. Requesting dharma talks on the subject
 - 5. Offering a class or video series.” (modified to outline format).
- B. From CTC 2014 annual report (note that this list reflects discussion at Snowflower Visioning meeting held at Don Katz’s home earlier this year):
 - 1. How to include more people of different:
 - a. generations?
 - b. classes,?
 - b. ethnicities?
 - 2. Can welcome materials be more inclusive or inviting to younger generation?
 - 3. How would a statement of non-discrimination/inclusivity be worded?
 - 4. When we face challenging issues, Thay asks us to start with ourselves. What do we need to read, reflect, discuss, to create atmospheres of more inclusivity? white privilege?
- C. From Diane Austin:
 - 1. Revision of web site to explicitly welcome members from diverse backgrounds
 - 2. Ideas about education regarding white privilege (self-study, small groups, dharma talks, other ideas)
- D. From Karen Reppen: Using her training as a facilitator for

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multicultural awareness.

E. From Carol Rubin: “Perhaps some of us could go to a couple predominantly black churches, attend a services, and ask to read [a] brief statement. I know the Pastor at Zion City International and could ask him how this would be received if a couple of us want to do this.”

F. Should diversity, especially racial diversity, be a national Thay Sangha initiative rather than an individual Sangha initiative?

G. Research:

1. Madison resources, networking options (e.g, Richard Davis class)
2. Other sanghas: goal statements, activities, lessons learned (other Thay Sanghas, IMS, etc.)
3. Is there such a thing as “a diversity auditor” who could review all Sangha materials and practices to identify ways that we are unconsciously impairing opportunities for a diverse membership?
4. What does it mean to be a “member” of Snowflower?

VI. NEXT STEPS/ASSIGNMENTS

See attached chart.

VII. ADJOURNMENT.

Decision: The Committee agreed to meet monthly, and that for now the Madison Central Library works well as a meeting place, not only—as its name implies—due to its central location, its proximity to many bus routes, and its meeting rooms that can be reserved by library patrons at no cost.

*****ADDENDUM:** By email received post-meeting, Carol Rubin suggested Committee review of the following ideas.

- 3-5 Sangha members begin to attend Sunday services at traditional black churches in Madison.
- We and the Sangha members who go in to prison (4-8 people) offer to teach a Mindfulness Stress Reduction Course especially for people of color and try to hold it at Fountain of Life or Zion City Internatinal Ministries; or
- We offer to tack on such a 30-45 minute training on to the next EXPO meeting in Madison or Milwaukee . Expo is a new group for the formerly incarcerated started by WISDOM, parent of MOSES. WISDOM is also doing another leadership training for the formerly incarcerated for which we could do such a training.
- We start small by each of us personally inviting 1-3 people of color to attend a Mindfulness stress-based reduction course. I think I could get 3 people there. If we got 5-10 individuals we would be doing well.

APPROVED MINUTES

March 14, 2015

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Snowflower
Diversity Committee (“the Committee”)

Present: Karen Reppen, Carol Rubin, Diane Austin, Ben Hair, and Curt Pawlisch
Absent: He Jingying, Yijin Jang.

After introductions, the Committee sat in meditation for three minutes.

1. Review and Approve Minutes.

Committee: The members approved the minutes from its 2-14-15 meeting. In particular, they agreed that our Committee’s mission, as reflected in the minutes, is to “*to study and recommend actions* for the Sangha to take on the issue of diversity so as to support, protect and enhance the practice of the Sangha and its members.”

2. Review of Status of Assignments From Last Meeting.

- a. Taking implicit bias test.
- b. Finding resources such as websites and books, etc. on diversity.
- c. Reviewing diversity mission statements.
- d. Finding Sangha websites that explicitly welcome diversity.

Committee: The members shared their results of the implicit bias test as well as their disappointment and frustration with the outcomes that reflected in varying degrees a “preference for whites.” See <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>.

The review of implicit bias test results led to a broader discussion and identification of the Committee’s goals. The matters discussed, the ideas raised, and the questions asked included the following:

- Where does our diversity work start? Is our work “internal” or “external?”
Should the Sangha reach out, or look within?
 - Ideas included limiting our recommendations to SnowFlower to the internal work of exploring privilege and conditioning so as to foster a more open, aware, and welcoming community.
 - Others thought external work was also important, suggesting that for Sangha members, we should regularly highlight and make readily available and transparent volunteer opportunities to serve persons of color or other non-majority individuals at nonprofit service or advocacy groups such as MOSES.

- Heightening awareness of Thay’s teachings on Engaged Buddhism as applied to the diversity issue and the resources already available to us.
- Should our work start with the work we have to do on ourselves? Or can we immediately start to "recruit" people of color?
- Welcoming statement at the start of Sangha is a nice idea, but not at the root of the cultivation we need to do.
- Why do we want diversity? Check our intentions.
- Possible course of action: offer existing Sangha opportunities for awareness to begin work of genuine welcoming & reaching out.
- Possible course of action: looking into the dynamics of our Sangha's current community (geographical & otherwise).
- Anecdote: message taken away from a UW diversity expert “above all, make yourself welcoming & avoid tokenism.”
- How do we become more welcoming?
 - Service in the community as opposed to affirmative action to recruit persons of color.
 - Promote the service opportunities that exist already such as MOSES.
 - Starting a dialogue, gaining perspective through interaction.
- Survey Sangha members to help determine where our Sangha is on the diversity issue. Members could choose to answer anonymously such questions as “In what community were you raised?” “How do you define yourself?” “How long have you been coming to Sangha?”
- Challenge Sangha members to step outside their comfort zone.
- Invite Sangha to join us in promoting bias awareness.
- Possible course of action: Committee members give dharma talks to promote discussion, mindful investigation and identification of bias and places in need of our awareness. This idea in particular gained traction. Committee members volunteered to talk about diversity at each of the Sangha gatherings (T, W, F and Sundays). Until our lesson and message are clearer, this is only a tentative decision.

While progress has been made on the assignments from last meeting, more work remains to discover additional diversity resources. Since our first meeting, committee members found several examples of mission statements and Sangha websites that emphasize diversity. Ben agreed to organize the Committee’s Google documents on which these materials are listed.

3. Discussion of conference idea concerning implicit bias: Can and should SnowFlower, on its own or in conjunction with other Buddhist groups, organize a conference or retreat on mindful responses to implicit bias?

Committee: During its brief discussion due to time constraints, the Committee generally agreed with the proposal but realized that other preliminary work on Sangha diversity should occur first. Cheri Maples was identified as a recognized expert on this issue.

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MINUTES

July 18, 2015

Meeting of the Ad Hoc Snowflower
Diversity Committee (“the Committee”)

Present: Karen Reppen, Sue Laughrin, Ben Hair, and Curt Pawlisch.

Absent: Keith Hazelton, Joe Fishback, He Jingying and Yijin Wang.

I. STATUS OF COMMITTEE WORK.

A. Committee Membership. Curt advised that the Committee had three new members: Sue Laughrin (in attendance), Keith Hazelton and Joe Fishback. Diane Austin can no longer attend Committee meetings or volunteer for Committee assignments due to her move to Texas this September, but she has expressed an interest in reviewing and commenting on the Committee’s report when it is in draft form.

B. Ben Hair summarized his report to, and feedback from, the Steering Council at its meeting earlier in the week.

C. Curt brought to the Committee’s attention the guidance document for Sanghas by transbuddhist.org as well as the Call to Action and the Call to White Buddhists issued by Buddhists for Racial Justice.

D. Curt shared a list of proposed questions that he intends to ask Ruth King in an upcoming Skype or phone conference with her (Ben and Keith have asked to also participate.) This list is attached. Curt will email Committee members information about Ms. King’s teachings.

E. Curt brought to Committee members’ attention the substantial resources he has pulled together in Dropbox, including excerpted passages with Thay’s teachings on Sangha building and diversity from *Friends on the Path* and *Together We Are One*.

II. DISCUSSION OF OVER-ALL DIRECTION OF COMMITTEE

Discussion points are highlighted below for purposes of providing background for Committee recommendations. They are inputs towards decisions, and not decisions themselves.

Sanghas in the US are predominantly white, educated, liberal, middle/upper-middle class. Why? One possible explanation for our own initial attraction to Buddhism may stem from cultural appropriation—even if our practice has since deepened. An article from the website *Everyday Feminism* addresses the concerns about cultural appropriation: "What's Wrong with Cultural Appropriation? These 9 Answers Reveal Its Harm."

http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/06/cultural-appropriation-wrong/?utm_source=SocialWarfare&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=SocialWarfare.

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How does our lack of diversity, how does our failure to understand white privilege, how does our failure to examine oppressive power structures in our society and our role in them lead us away from a fully enriched practice? We need to examine our own ideas about inclusion, oppression, and how our disconnection from our biases causes us to suffer.

Outreach from our Sangha should not be about conversion and should avoid tokenism. We need to address our own suffering. In reaching out to faith communities of people of color, we can learn from them and bring their wisdom into our practice. Indeed, the African-American community's spiritual needs are likely already in their own religious communities. Attempts to convert are likely not only to fail, but also to be misguided: We need not and should not proselytize, but instead gather what we can. It is we who will be enriched in our practice.

Our recommendations to Sangha should note that Thay has offered separate retreats for people of color.

Perhaps the Sangha website should include tagline: "SnowFlower, Madison's community for Engaged Buddhism"

Our recommendations to Sangha should note that opportunities to serve as a volunteer in Madison's African-American community are listed in the Justified Anger report available on the web.

Thich Nhat Hanh books concerning diversity: *Friends on the Path*, compiled by Jack Lawlor, a work that includes Thay's Dharma talks on the importance of Sangha and contributions from other leading practitioners on the topic of diversity, and Thay's *Together We Are One: Honoring Our Diversity*.

From this discussion, discussions from prior meetings, and our own research, and without intending to limit by enumeration, the Committee re-affirmed its recommendations would reflect several aspirations, including broadly the relief of suffering and the opportunity to build Sangha. More specifically, the Committee seeks to strengthen the Sangha and the practice of our members by:

- Ensuring that SnowFlower is as welcoming as possible to members of non-dominant communities;
- Healing the wounds, both visible and invisible, that Sangha members hold within themselves due to the forces of structural racism and other forms of structurally-implanted ideas as to the inferiority or unacceptability of the "other";
- Making available to Sangha members opportunities to broaden their perspectives on diversity and equity issues by exposing them to a broad array of teachings and life experiences, the knowledge of which may deepen their understanding of the Dharma;
- Identifying or creating opportunities for service within the Madison community;

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- Determine if Groundwork, Nehemiah and YWCA —organizations listed in the Justified Anger Next Steps publication—offer training sessions as to diversity, implicit bias and multicultural awareness that would be appropriate resources for SnowFlower members;
- Add to the Committee’s Google document that lists Buddhist diversity resources and other background materials from the Committee’s Dropbox folders.

Keith:

- On 7/24/15, Skype with Ruth King.

IV. NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.

Curt will email members on or about 7/25/15 to inquire about whether and when to hold another meeting.

The Committee adjourned.