

The State of the IMCW People of Color & LGBTQ Sanghas – 2009

Respectfully submitted by La Sarmiento on January 7, 2010

- Both sanghas have been in existence since the spring of 2005.
- The LGBTQ listserv has over 300 members; the POC listserv over 200.
- Both sanghas meet monthly. Through the generosity of Unity Woods Yoga, we meet at their beautiful studio in Woodley Park which is wheelchair and metro accessible. LGBTQ meetings attract up to 25-32 members/meeting; POC meetings up to 20 – 30.
- Monthly meetings are 2.5 hours in duration and include a 30 minute sit, 10 minute walking meditation, Introductions/check-in, a short dharma talk into a mindful discussion. This year, we walked down one fold of the Eight-fold path each month.
- Japanese-American dharma teacher Mushim Ikeda-Nash from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship & the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland led a joint meeting of the POC & LGBTQ sanghas last January, and African-American lesbian Toni Lester for a “Wise Speech & Social Justice” workshop for the POC & LGBTQ sanghas last May.
- Lesbian dharma teacher Cheri Maples led a workshop last August for the POC and LGBTQ sanghas, and some members of the IMCW Teachers Council and Board of Directors in an interactive daylong entitled “Transforming Barriers With an Open Heart” to explore issues of privilege and power as we explore how to create healthy, ethical climates in which our energies flow toward rather than against one another. Of the 38 participants, 48% were People of Color, 53% were LGBTQ, and 29% were both.
- African-American teacher Ruth King led a workshop for women in November entitled “Intense Luminosity: Embracing the Nature of Rage.” Of the 47 participants, 23% were POC, 19% were LGBTQ, and 15% were both.
- The 2010 women’s retreat will be led by Tara Brach and co-taught by teachers of color Luisa Montero-Diaz and La Sarmiento. The retreat filled in 2 weeks and of the 72 participants, 13% are POC, 24% are LGBTQ, and 6% are both.
- Also in 2010, diverse dharma teachers Cheri Maples, Larry Yang, Anushka Fernandopulle, Arinna Weisman, Mushim Ikeda-Nash, and Eric Kolvig will be teaching daylongs and retreats for IMCW.
- The “Refuge 3” sangha, whose vision is to be a socially engaged, multicultural, urban sangha that together deepens in the dharma teachings and mindfulness practices to unlearn our conditioning with wisdom and compassion for both personal and social transformation, continues to meet on a bi-weekly basis. The current sangha has 9 active and committed members, half of whom are POC, LGBTQ, or both.
- Both sanghas have sponsored a holiday banquet as a way to create community amongst themselves and the greater IMCW community. This past year’s banquet attracted 40 guests.
- The IMCW Diversity Fund currently has \$4316.59 to bring diverse teachers to IMCW as well as keep registration fees low so as to make diversity-related events accessible to all through donations from affinity group members, IMCW sangha members, and the surplus from diverse events such as Cheri Maples’ and Ruth King’s daylongs.
- Two LGBTQ KM groups continue to meet in DC and VA and meet bi-weekly.
- A POC KM group and a POC Book Club formed and meets in DC.
- I co-lead a morning sitting group at Studio Serenity in Adams Morgan which attracts many POC & LGBTQ.
- Giving back to the greater DC community: Six members from the diversity sanghas and allies participated in the Fannie Mae “Help the Homeless” Walk-a-thon in November and raised a total of \$1965.00 to benefit Miriam’s Kitchen. POC Co-facilitator Renee Ater led an effort to collect 106 sleeping bags from friends, family, and members of the IMCW community for Miriam’s Kitchen guests.
- We maintain active webpages on IMCW’s website that are updated regularly:

LGBTQ: <http://www.imcw.org/lgbtq>

POC: <http://www.imcw.org/people-color>