

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, and INCLUSION at Tara Mandala: PURVIEW and SCOPE

GROUND:

Beings across the globe encounter a wide variety of oppression, prejudices, and privileges in their real lived experience. Given the history of slavery, genocide of indigenous people, and repression and exploitation of marginalized groups in the foundations of American economic and social realities, we recognize that we must sever our attachment to white supremacy and keep these issues in the forefront of our mission and teachings. These histories of imperialism, slavery, colonization, and oppression are present throughout the globe, and apply in unique and relevant ways to the settings of the global Tara Mandala sangha.

Within the organization of Tara Mandala, the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Council (EDI) is the hub of the mandala that constellates these efforts to sever our attachment and to keep these issues in the forefront of our activities and practices. Even as we acknowledge the concepts of race, sex, gender, sexuality, and bodily ability, etc. to be fundamentally transient and illusory, we commit ourselves to applying our lineage teachings to collective liberation within the sangha and for all beings.

PATH:

The purpose of Tara Mandala's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion work is

- To promote cultural literacy in our sangha
- To foster diversity, inclusion, and equity in the Dharma, specifically at Tara Mandala and her global sanghas around the world
- To be a place of refuge and healing for those who have been marginalized, discriminated against, and/or oppressed
- To bring the Dharma principles of compassion, love, wisdom, and interdependence into our relationships and practice path

The EDI council consists of eight Council Members and four Advisors.

Current EDI Council Members

- Lopön Chandra Easton (Dorje Lopön/ Lead Senior Teacher)
- MacAndrew Jack, PhD (Former President of the Board)
- Karla Jackson-Brewer, MS (Senior Teacher)
- Celeste Young (Board Member)
- Joanne Brion (Executive Director)
- S. Michele Nevarez (Board Member)
- Tenzin Sangpo (Tara Mandala Resident Translator/Librarian)

- Erik Jampa Andersson (Tibetan Medicine Practitioner/Teacher)

Current EDI advisors:

- Sylvie Djeddah (French Sangha leader)
- Iwona Khandro (Polish Sangha Founding member)
- Ellen Serrano (US Sangha member)
- Clifton Carmody (Operations Director)

The EDI Council identifies, recommends, and supports education and training, including inward-facing trainings for the staff, board, and teachers as well as outward-facing trainings for the sangha and global community. This can include supporting the Executive Director in selecting and engaging EDI consultants for the organization, programs such as Severing Attachment to White Supremacy, and consulting with teachers and sangha leaders on predictable challenges with language (such as contextualizing uses of “white” and “black” descriptors of dakinis, or moving beyond heteronormative models of yab yum and guru/consort relationships). Through this, we aspire to preserve the power of the authentic lineages while adapting and applying them to modern understandings of relative harm and how to minimize it. The EDI council generates and coordinates monthly blog posts, supports an ongoing EDI-oriented book study club, and supports accessibility to programs through analysis of barriers such as those posed by pricing or the lack of diversity among teachers.

The EDI council serves as a hub for listening to and addressing examples of harm and grievance around issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, based in race, gender, sexual orientation, and economic class, etc.. The forms of this listening may involve restorative practices, council practices, or recommendations to the organizational human resource staff.

The EDI council provides input on issues of marketing, fundraising, and organizational policies in order to reduce bias, promote inclusion, and reduce harm.

Areas of EDI Contribution:

1. Supporting Affinity groups BBIPOC, SAWS, LGBTQ+ as they arise, and supporting sanghas who wish to form their own affinity groups
2. EDI Council initiatives for teachers, Board Members and staff
3. Supporting and/or overseeing the creation of relevant sub-committees as appropriate
4. Establishing and nurturing safe/brave spaces for community feedback on EDI-related issues
5. Input/influence in teacher training in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion
6. Supporting visiting teachers with consultation around inclusive methods of teaching and contextualizing delicate topics
7. Receives EDI related grievances

FRUITION:

The EDI council holds that it is possible for all sentient beings to be liberated from sexism, racism, white supremacy, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of bias through concerted awareness-raising, severing of attachment to privilege, and practicing the Dharma of our lineages. Tara Mandala can set an example in the Buddhist world and contribute to the blossoming of Dharma as it is applied to dismantling systems of oppression. This fruition is intimately linked to the ongoing acknowledgment of harm and application of view, path, and fruition for the liberation of all beings, such that the ongoing path is also the fruition, and the fruit is the path.
