



Dharma Rain
Zen Center

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Assessment and Plan
September 2018

Donated by:



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Overview

Background. Many Zen sanghas in the West, including Dharma Rain, have grappled with issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for decades. Much has been written and said about the relative whiteness of American Zen, and the accompanying stereotype of the typical practitioner along class lines - highly educated, professional, and upper income.

While this discussion has been happening, our country has continued to become increasingly diverse and multicultural. Though this shift - sometimes called “the browning of America” - is happening at different rates in various parts of the country, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the nation will become majority minority in 2050. That shift has been happening locally, too. In Multnomah County, Oregon today, almost 1 in 3 residents are people of color.

Taken together, these two trends - the relative whiteness of American Zen and the continued demographic diversification of the country - pose both opportunities and challenges in our effort to ensure that the dharma is available and accessible to all.

Dharma Rain Zen Center has also been discussing its responsibility to examine these issues. Like many institutions starting to address DEI, it began by focusing on scheduling DEI-related seminars or workshops for its members. After discussion, DRZC opted to take a step back and engage in a more in-depth process of examination and planning. As a result, it launched a multi-phase [diversity, equity and inclusion assessment and planning process](#).

Purpose. The purpose of Dharma Rain’s DEI assessment and planning process was to:

- assess our current state of diversity, equity and inclusion
- gather input regarding our experiences with and vision for diversity, equity and inclusion
- identify organizational opportunities and barriers to enhanced diversity, equity and inclusion
- identify evidence-based or promising practices being used by other Western Zen sanghas
- report our findings and options for increasing our diversity, equity and inclusion

Project Co-Owners. While this project was initiated by the Dharma Council, it was agreed that it would be co-owned by the Board of Directors and Dharma Council in order to be useful and applicable to DRZC as a whole.

Leading with Race. While this project inquired about multiple marginalized communities, it focused primarily on race and ethnicity. This focus stemmed from an acknowledgment that DRZC had made more progress regarding issues of gender, sexual orientation, seniors and access for people with disabilities. While more can be done with these communities, DRZC recognized it had the most need and opportunity regarding people of color.

392 Voices, 67 People of Color. This project reflects the voices of 392 people, including 268 at Dharma Rain and 124 Zen Buddhist teachers across the country. Of those, 67 were the voices of people of color.

Process

The following process was utilized in the assessment and planning process. Project phases were iterative and co-occurring rather than linear and sequential.

Phase 1: Build Ownership, Understanding & Engagement. We want all of the main bodies at Dharma Rain to understand what we are doing, why we are doing it, how we are doing it, and what our end product will be. We also want to secure the active engagement of these groups in our process.

Phase 2: Establish Baseline Metrics. As best we can, we will assess the current demographic composition of our sangha, including participants in our two signature programs, dharma garden and prison outreach. Knowing who we are now will help inform our efforts going forward.

Phase 3: Review & Assess Systems with an Equity Lens. We will take a look at the ways we do what we do - administratively, dharmically, programmatically - and assess those systems through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens. Where are our systems, policies and procedures helping or hindering our efforts?

Phase 4: Gather Input via Surveys. We want to ask our sangha and program participants for their experiences, concerns, hopes and vision regarding diversity, equity and inclusion at Dharma Rain. We will synthesize their feedback and identify recurring themes.

Phase 5: Gather Input via Focus Groups. In-person conversations will help us solicit a more nuanced type of feedback regarding diversity, equity and inclusion. We will convene small groups representing our sangha at-large, and synthesize their feedback for recurring themes.

Phase 6: Conduct Research. We will ask other sanghas what they are doing to advance diversity, equity and inclusion, with a focus on evidence-based or promising practices. Depending on what we do or do not find, we may expand our inquiry to other spiritual communities.

Phase 7: Report & Recommendations. We will summarize the information we gather in Phases 1-6, and offer options and recommendations for enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion for consideration by the Board and Dharma Council and discussion by the sangha.

Phases 1-7: Regularly Communicate. Throughout our assessment and planning process, we will update people about what we are doing, why we are doing it, where we are in the process and how they can engage. We will leverage all communication channels available.

Some Key Terms

Diversity. The demographic composition of the people in a group or organization, and the degree to which they reflect the demographic makeup of their community at large.

Equity. A commitment to make an organization accessible to all, and to identify and mitigate barriers or obstacles to full participation or access.

Inclusion. The culture of an organization, and the degree to which all perspectives are included, all people are valued, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

DEI. The acronym used to summarize the phrase diversity, equity and inclusion. While each of these terms is distinct, the acronym refers to this body of work in aggregate.

People of Color. People who self-identity as other than White alone, including Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Black/African American, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Multiracial.

Race. A social construction to describe a group of people who share physical and cultural traits, as well as a common ancestry.

Ethnicity. The culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs; to be a member of an ethnic group is to conform to some or all of those practices.

Race/Ethnicity Overlap & Distinction. Race and ethnicity can overlap, but are distinct. For example, a Japanese-American would likely consider herself a member of the Asian race, but might not identify with the Japanese ethnicity, considering herself to be American instead.

LGBTQ. People who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer.

Transgender. People who have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from their assigned sex at birth.

Millennials. People born between 1981 - 1996 and are now between the ages of 22- 36 years old.

Disability. People who are living with a medical, physical, psychological, neurological, intellectual or developmental condition that substantially limits, interferes with or impairs one or more major life activity.

Privilege. A right, advantage or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people; a particular benefit or advantage enjoyed by a person, company or class beyond the common advantages of others.

Implicit/Unconscious Bias. The bias in judgment and/or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes (i.e., implicit attitudes and stereotypes) that often operate below conscious awareness and without intentional control.

Microaggressions. Brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership; the casual degradation of any marginalized group.

Leading with Race. The concept that, while recognizing that others are still marginalized, focusing on racial equity provides a framework, tools and resources that can be applied to other areas of marginalization.

Diversity within Diversity. The recognition that within every community there is diversity of experience, views and opinions, and that diverse people and communities are not homogeneous. Similarly, there is diversity between diverse communities.

Embedding DEI. The effort to weave DEI into the fabric of an organization rather than approaching the work as a separate initiative or special project. This includes integrating DEI into existing policies, procedures and practices.

Dominant Culture Organizations. Groups created, governed and managed by white people, and which reflect the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interacting shared by white people.

Culturally-Specific Organizations. Groups created, governed and managed by people of color, primarily for the benefit of specific cultural communities, and which reflect the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interacting shared by people of color.

Phase 1: Build Ownership, Understanding & Engagement

For DEI work to be successful, it needs to be owned and understood by the organization, and especially its leadership. In order to build ownership, understanding and engagement with the DEI assessment and plan, eight meetings were held prior to the project launch. Conversations addressed the rationale, process, timeline, roles, responsibilities and possible outcomes of the project.

Over the course of two months, the following pre-launch meetings occurred:

- Gyokuko Carlson, Co-Abbot
- Kakumyo Lowe-Charde, Co-Abbot
- Sallie Jiko Tisdale, Senior Lay Teacher, Godo
- Mike Gyoshi Kaplan, Lay Teacher, Dharma Council Chair
- Board of Directors
- Dharma Council
- Dharma Garden Council
- Mandala Council
- Sangha Forum

Phase 1-7: Communicate Regularly

In addition to the initial pre-launch meetings outlined in the previous section, Dharma Rain sought to periodically update people on the status of the DEI project. Those updates took various forms through multiple channels, and included the following:

- Website – the project overview was, and remains, posted on DRZC’s website
- E-bulletins – articles were included in eight e-bulletins, with links to the project overview
- Blog – eight e-bulletin articles were also posted to DRZC’s blog
- Emails – three emails were sent to all members and dharma garden families
- Yahoo list serves – three updates were provided via disciple and all-sangha list serves
- Sangha Circle – brief verbal updates were given at five sangha circles
- Dharma Garden – brief verbal updates were given at two dharma garden gatherings
- Sangha Forum – a mid-point update was given at the spring sangha forum
- National Buddhist Groups – three emails and/or list serve announcements were shared with members of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZBA), Lay Zen Teachers Association (LZTA), and American Zen Teachers Association (AZTA)

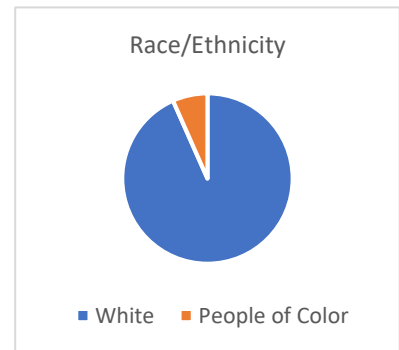
Phase 2: Establish Baseline Metrics

Because DRZC does not solicit demographic data on its members or program participants, an anecdotal review was conducted with staff in October 2017. Notations on race and ethnicity, gender/gender identity, disability and sexual orientation were made only when such information had been self-reported or acknowledged by the person themselves.

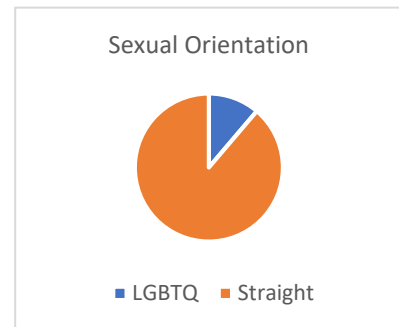
Because DRZC is a relatively small organization with many members and participants who have been engaged for multiple years, this anecdotal data is considered generally reliable. It provides an informal snapshot of the sangha at a particular moment in time. If the data skews in any direction, it likely underreports the incidence of diversity in race and ethnicity, disability and/or sexual orientation. Still, this information is anecdotal and DRZC should recognize the limitations of its generalizability.

Members (n = 196)

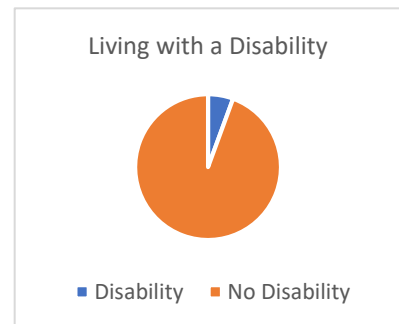
DRZC estimates that approximately 7% of its members are people of color. People of color comprise 30% of the population of Multnomah County.



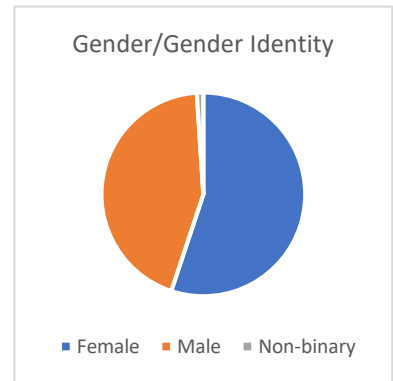
DRZC estimates that approximately 11% of its members are LGBTQ. LGBTQ are estimated to comprise 5-10% of the population.



DRZC estimates that approximately 6% of its members are living with a disability. People with disabilities under the age of 65 comprise 9% of the U.S. population.

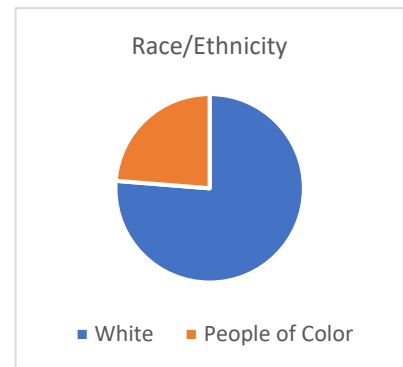


DRZC estimates that approximately 55% of its members identify as female and .5% as non-binary.

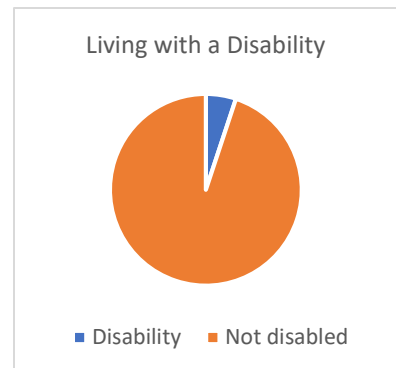


Dharma Garden (n = 118 children)

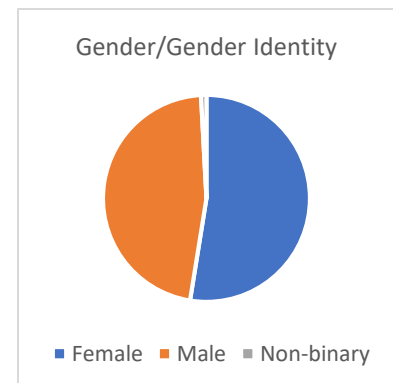
DRZC estimates that approximately 24% of dharma garden youth are people of color.



DRZC estimates that approximately 5% of dharma garden youth are living with a disability.



DRZC estimates that approximately 56% of dharma garden youth identify as female and 1% as non-binary.



Prison Sangha (n = 300+)

The prison sangha is comprised of people who are incarcerated in seven different correctional facilities across Oregon, and whose groups are facilitated by eight different DRZC volunteers. As a result, Dharma Rain lacks anecdotal visibility into its demographic composition as a whole. Instead, the demographics of the 49 survey respondents are included in a later section of this report.

Phase 3: Review & Assess Systems Through an Equity Lens

Applying an “equity lens” means examining and understanding the historical practices that perpetuate disparities, and an intention to remove institutional barriers where they exist. These barriers can be unintentional, but are barriers nonetheless. It also means identifying opportunities to weave DEI into the fabric of an organization – not just what it says, but what it does and how it does it. Embedding DEI into multiple policies, procedures and practices provides consistency, creates ownership and shares accountability for results across the institution.

More than 250 pages of Dharma Rain’s documents and materials were assessed by asking two questions:

- In what ways might this document or material support or facilitate our DEI efforts?
- In what ways might this document or material fail to support, or hinder, our DEI efforts?

Documents and materials were selected for review based on two variables: recommendations from staff and key program volunteers; and relative importance to DRZC’s governance and operations.

The following materials were reviewed:

- By-Laws
- Strategic Plan
- Lineage Tradition and Temple Culture
- Mandala Model of Organization
- Succession Plan
- Teaching Roles
- Ethics & Precepts in Sangha Relationships
- Human Resources Manual
- Administrative Policies & Procedures Manual
- Residency Application & Guidelines
- Sharing the Dharma with Children
- Dharma Garden Program
- Prison Program
- Communications
- Website
- Membership brochure

Observations and/or Recommendations

The following are ways that Dharma Rain can weave DEI into its organizational fabric. This list is not exhaustive, but intended to illustrate how DEI can be bolstered, reinforced and operationalized at multiple levels of an organization concurrently.

A shared theme among all of these examples is: be explicit. The commitment to DEI should be stated clearly, rather than assumed or referenced indirectly.

Statement of Inclusivity. This statement reads like a mix between a traditional nondiscrimination clause commonly found in businesses and organizations, and what would be considered an equity statement. Its strength is its explicit acknowledgement that suffering can be made worse by bias and prejudice, and its specific reference to race and ethnicity. That said, it lacks a key component of an equity statement: an acknowledgement that American Zen - and DRZC itself - have sometimes operated out of bias and prejudice, and that DRZC is committed to identifying and removing race-based barriers. A revision of the statement of inclusivity is recommended.

By-Laws. Embed the revised statement of inclusivity early in the document.

Strategic Plan. DRZC's plan includes language and multiple references to concepts that are aligned with DEI, but lacks an explicit DEI strategy. The updated plan should include a section on DEI, with clear goals, strategies, metrics, accountable parties and timelines.

Lineage Tradition and Temple Culture. This a thoughtful document intended to establish the temple's lineage and maintain its unique culture over time. It includes language and multiple references to concepts that are aligned with DEI. That said, "maintaining our culture" could be perceived as a dominant culture institution's determination to maintain the status quo and guard against change. At a minimum, embedding the revised statement of inclusivity is recommended. Ideally, it would go further by stating that the temple is committed to changing its culture in ways that would help it become more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

Mandala Model of Organization. The mandala model itself is an example of Dharma Rain's commitment to shared power, responsibility and accountability - an equity statement in action. Each "family" in the mandala should identify its role in advancing DEI within their existing scope of work, develop associated actions and regularly report on progress.

Succession Plan. While the succession plan has recently been successfully implemented, include the revised statement of inclusivity, and clarify our expectations of current and future leaders to be committed to DEI.

Teaching Roles. Embed the revised statement of inclusivity. Address the need for teachers to model principles of DEI by continually examining their own biases and increasing their cultural responsiveness and agility.

Ethics & Precepts in Sangha Relationships. This a thoughtful and carefully-crafted document outlining expectations for interpersonal interactions as a community. It is warm, loving and replete with language that is complementary to DEI efforts. Embed the revised statement of inclusivity.

Human Resources Manual. Embed the revised statement of inclusivity. Add a section that outlines a process to proactively market and recruit a diverse pool of applicants for all job openings.

Administrative Policies & Procedures Manual. It is clear that Dharma Rain has worked hard to shore up its administrative processes. When selecting vendors and purchasing goods and services, explore opportunities to solicit bids from and increase business with minority-owned firms.

Residency Application & Guidelines. Embed the revised statement of inclusivity. Multiple edits recommended that expand gender inclusion, ability/access, class, mental health/cognitive issues and communications styles. Separate document available.

Sharing the Dharma with Children. If and when reprinted, include information addressing outreach to, and cultural responsiveness working with, families and children of color.

Dharma Garden Program.

- 1) Few program policies, procedures and practices are written, making it easier for people to behave inconsistently or out of their biases, even unintentionally. A written manual should be developed to codify the philosophy, values and primary processes of dharma school, dharma camp and frog song.
- 2) Regularly educate program volunteers on DEI, and create opportunities for them to share and debrief DEI-related issues and practices.
- 3) Given the diversity of program participants, develop strategies to maintain relationships with youth once graduated.
- 4) To aid in a more inclusive view of sangha, recategorize dharma garden from a “program of the sangha” to “the sangha”.
- 5) Amplify the voice of youth and families by increasing their presence in DRZC communications.

Prison Program.

- 1) Few program policies, procedures and practices are written, making it easier for people to behave inconsistently or out of their biases, even unintentionally. A written manual should be developed to codify the philosophy, values and primary processes of the program.
- 2) Regularly educate program volunteers on DEI, and create opportunities for them to share and debrief DEI-related issues and practices.
- 3) Given the relative diversity of program participants, develop better strategies to maintain relationships with people who are incarcerated once released.
- 4) To aid in a more inclusive view of sangha, recategorize the prison program from a “program of the sangha” to “the sangha”.
- 5) Amplify the voices of people who are incarcerated and their loved ones by increasing their presence in DRZC communications.
- 6) Edit some Pen Pal and Home for Good materials to be more gender-inclusive.

Communications.

- 1) Embed DEI-related news, issues and opportunities into standing communication channels, including e-bulletins, emails, yahoo groups, flyers and in-person announcements. Provide regular updates on progress, future strategies and opportunities to engage.

- 2) Focus more on people and their stories than on buildings, physical projects and events.
- 3) Amplify the voices of diverse members, dharma garden families and people who are incarcerated across communications channels, including their stories and faces.

Website. Dharma Rain has begun a review and update of its website. The communications recommendations above apply to the website. In addition, add a DEI tab to the landing page, and consolidate DEI-related information and materials into this new section to facilitate easy access.

Membership brochure. Embed the revised statement of inclusivity. Amplify the voice of diverse members by including their stories and faces, and helping diverse communities see themselves reflected at DRZC.

Phase 4. Gather Input via Surveys

Through a series of web-based surveys, DRZC set out to collect information regarding five questions:

1. How diverse, equitable and inclusive is DRZC now?
2. How important is it that DRZC become more diverse, equitable and inclusive?
3. In what ways has Dharma Rain done a *good* job being diverse, equitable and inclusive?
4. In what ways has Dharma Rain *not* done a good job being diverse, equitable and inclusive?
5. Other comments, questions or suggestions about diversity, equity and inclusion at DRZC?

The survey structured responses to questions 1 and 2 on a Likert scale: 1 = not, 2 = a little, 3 = somewhat, 4 = very, and with space for open-ended comments. Responses to questions 3, 4 and 5 were open-ended.

For members and dharma garden families, surveys were delivered electronically via email messages, e-bulletin, yahoo list serves and in-person announcements (i.e., sangha circle and dharma garden). For prison inmates, surveys were delivered in person by volunteers, completed by hand, returned to DRZC and hand-tabulated.

A total of 181 DRZC survey responses were received, as follows:

	Total	Responses	Response Rate
Members	196	90	46%
Dharma Garden*	118	42	36%
Prison Sangha**	49	49	100%

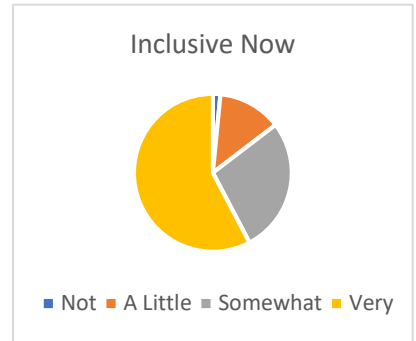
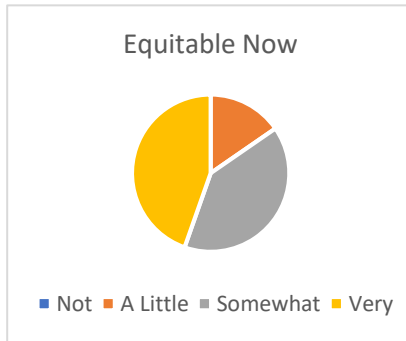
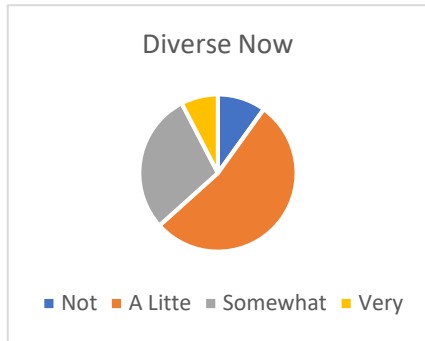
* While 42 Dharma Garden families responded to the survey, those families represented 57 children (48% of youth in the program) and 72 adults. When asked, “Which Dharma Rain children's programs is your family a part of? (Select all that apply.)”, respondents reported the following:

Dharma Garden Program	# Responses
• Dharma School	32
• Dharma Camp	19
• Frog Song Preschool	9

** The Oregon Department of Corrections requires that surveys be hand-delivered and completed by hand. As a result, only those attending services/meditation the week the survey was delivered (n = 49) could participate. DRZC estimates that over 300 people participate in the prison sangha annually.

Survey Responses

Q1. How diverse, equitable and/or inclusive is DRZC now?

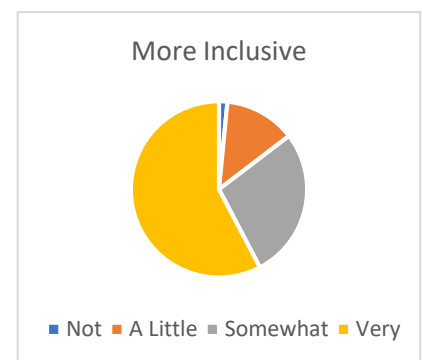
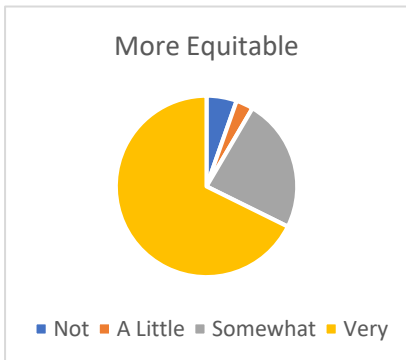
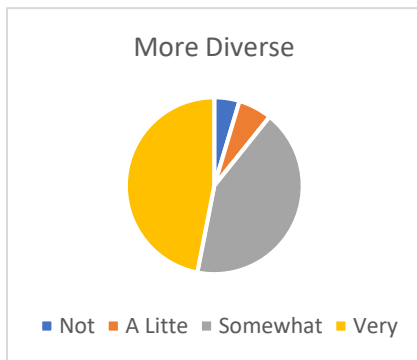


30% report DRZC is very diverse (10%) or somewhat diverse (20%) now.

55% report DRZC is very equitable (15%) or somewhat equitable (40%) now.

75% report DRZC is very inclusive (55%) or somewhat inclusive (20%) now.

Q2. How important is it that DRZC become more diverse, equitable and/or inclusive?



85% report becoming more diverse is very important (55%) or somewhat important (30%).

90% report becoming more equitable is very important (65%) or somewhat important (25%).

85% report becoming more inclusive is very important (55%) or somewhat important (30%).

Q3. In what ways has Dharma Rain done a good job being diverse, equitable, and/or inclusive?

Members	# Responses
• Welcoming, open, kind, respectful, friendly culture	27
• Prison program	15
• Inclusion/visibility of LGBTQ	15
• Accommodations/access for seniors and disabled	13
• Inclusion/visibility of women leaders	11
• Financial accessibility, scholarships, fee reduction	10
• Partnerships with community organizations and neighborhood	9
• Workshops and classes offered in Spanish	8
• Inclusion of youth and families through Dharma Garden	6
• Mission statement, inclusivity statement, policies and procedures	5
• Content of dharma talks, classes, merit list	4

Dharma Garden	# Responses
• Welcoming, open, kind, respectful culture	22
• Diverse, representative, inclusive demographics of children	8
• Financial accessibility, fees, payment schedules	6
• Inclusion of/accommodations for special needs	3

Prison Sangha	# Responses
• Warm, welcoming, inclusive, accepting, open, respectful environment	27
• Equal opportunities to share, talk, engage, ask	3

Q4. In what ways has Dharma Rain not done a good job being diverse, equitable, and/or inclusive?

Members	# Responses
• Lack of racial diversity	25
• Lack of outreach to/engagement with communities of color	18
• Socioeconomic/class, education level, fees	12
• Japanese forms, hierarchy, silence	7
• Lack of talks, classes, discussions on DEI issues	7
• Not inclusive of some political and social views	5
• Lacking in young adults/millennials	3
• Recognition of non-binary gender and use of pronouns	2
• Communication and member engagement	2

Dharma Garden	# Responses
• Lack of racial diversity among children/youth	9
• Gender separation/male-female gender split	4
• Lack of racial diversity of teachers, volunteers, materials	3
• Cost, fees high	2

Prison Sangha	# Responses
• Lack of racial and ethnic diversity	5
• Lack of outreach to some racial and ethnic communities	3

Q5. If you have other comments, questions, or suggestions about diversity, equity, and/or inclusion at Dharma Rain, please share those here.

Members	# Responses
• More explicit talk about and work on DEI	15
• More outreach to/engagement with communities of color	8
• Don't want explicit DEI drive or goals; needs to be more organic	4
• Focus on equity and inclusion rather than diversity	3
• Examine our implicit cultural values and biases	3
• More inclusion of families, youth, young adults	2
• More teachers of color and related teaching events	2

Dharma Garden	# Responses
• No repeated themes/comments stated by more than one person	-

Prison Sangha	# Responses
• More outreach, advertising, promotion	5
• More frequent meetings, services, retreats	3

Q6. What other types of diversity do you bring to Dharma Rain? (For example: fluent in another language, veteran of the armed forces, lived/worked in another country, spouse or child is a Person of Color, etc.)

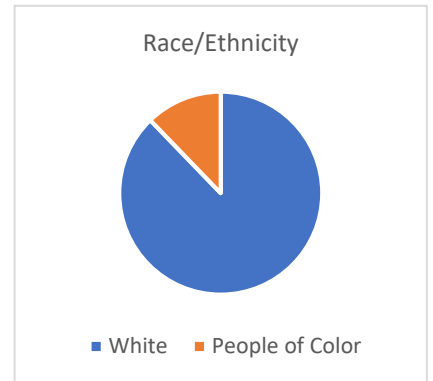
Members	# Responses
• Raised, lived, worked abroad	16
• Speak more than one language	14
• Family member a person of color	11

Dharma Garden	# Responses
• Multi-cultural/multi-racial/multi-ethnic family	5
• Multiple religions in our home	2

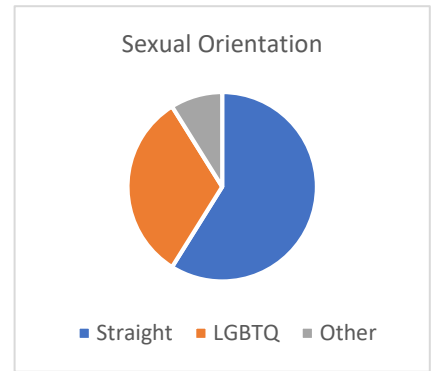
Prison Sangha	# Responses
• Speak more than one language	10
• Raised, lived, worked abroad	6
• Family member a person of color	4
• Veteran	2

Survey Demographics: Members (n = 90)

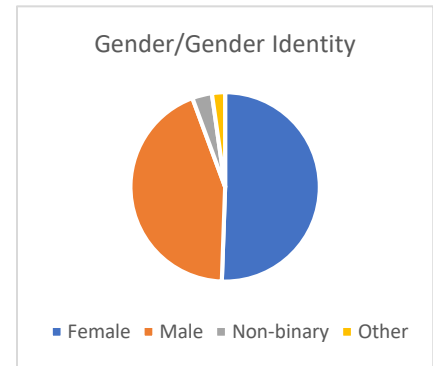
12% identify as people of color, including 6% as multiracial.



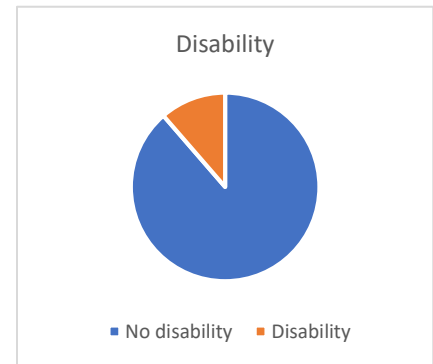
32% identify as LGBTQ and 9% as other.



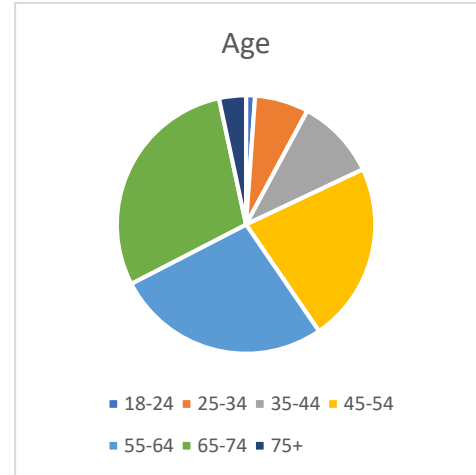
51% identify as female, 3% as non-binary and 2% as other.



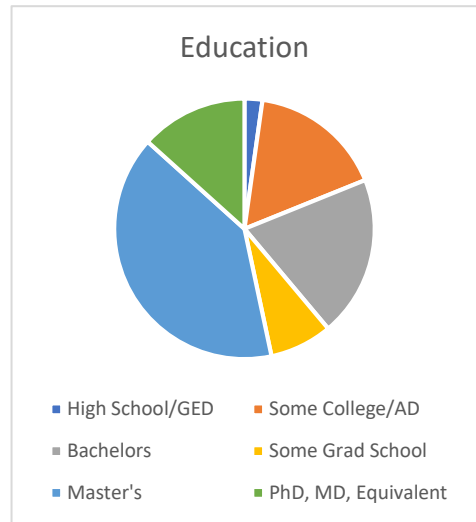
11% report living with a disability.



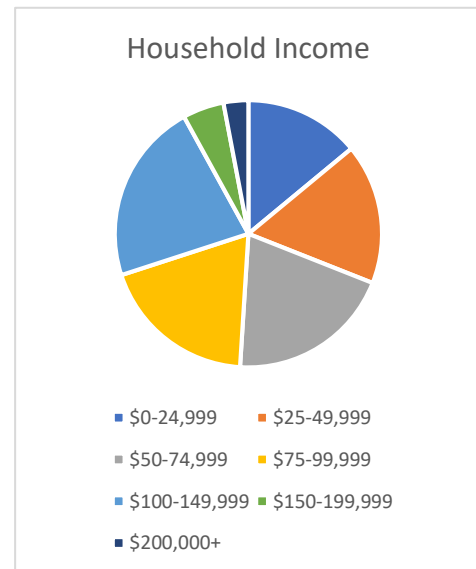
50% are between 55-74 years old.
7% are 18-34 years old (millennials).



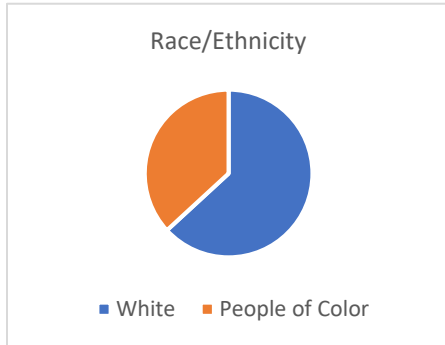
53% have a master's or doctoral-level degree.



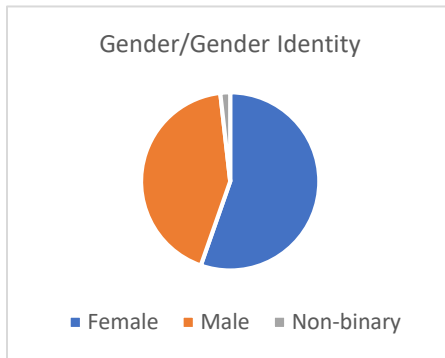
4% have household incomes between \$0-24,999,
17% between \$25-49,999, and 8% \$150,000 or higher.



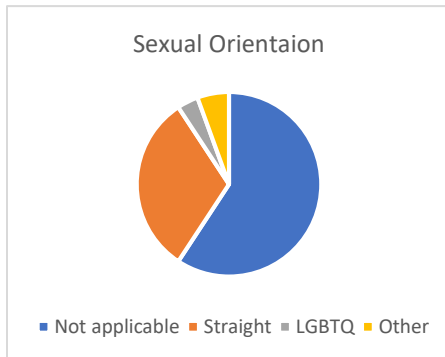
Survey Demographics: Dharma Garden Children (n = 57)



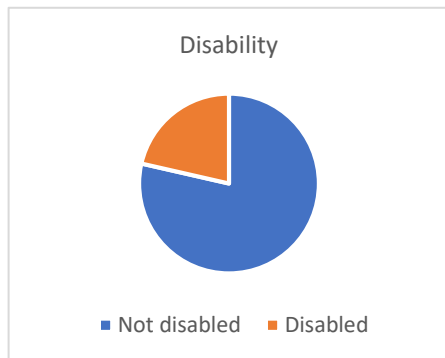
37% report that their child is a people of color, including 21% multiracial/other, 11% Asian and 5% Latino.



55% report that their child identifies as female and 2% as non-binary.



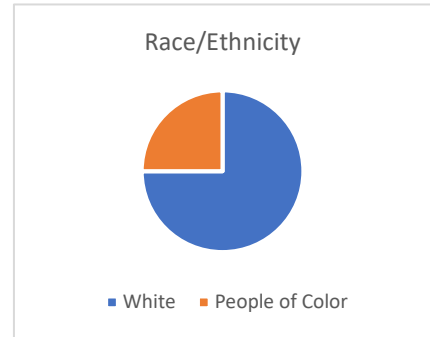
4% report that their child identifies as LGBTQ and 6% as other. 52% selected “not applicable” given the young age of their child.



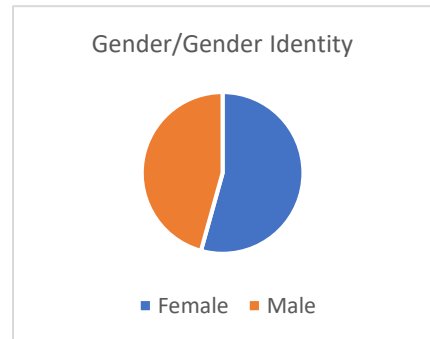
21% report that their child is living with a disability.

Survey Demographics: Dharma Garden Parents (n = 72)

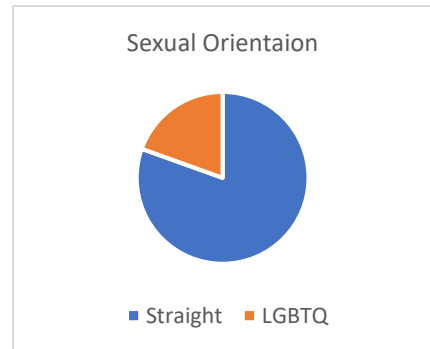
25% identify as people of color, including 10% multiracial, 7% Latino, 7% Asian and 1% Native American.



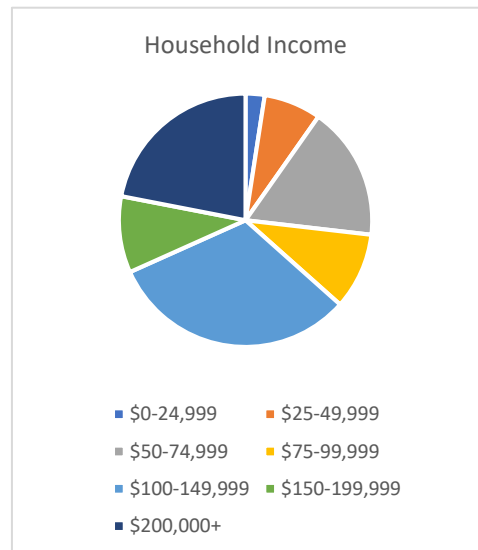
54% identify as female.



20% identify as LGBTQ.

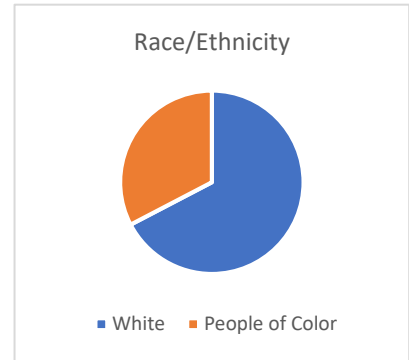


2% report household income between \$0-24,999 and 32% report income of \$150,000+.

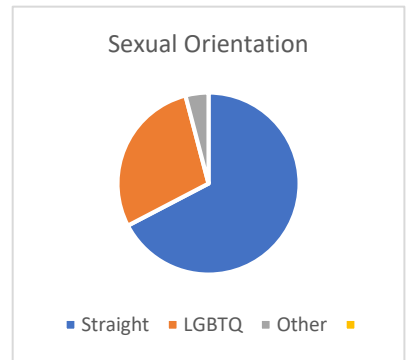


Survey Demographics: Prison Sangha (n = 49)

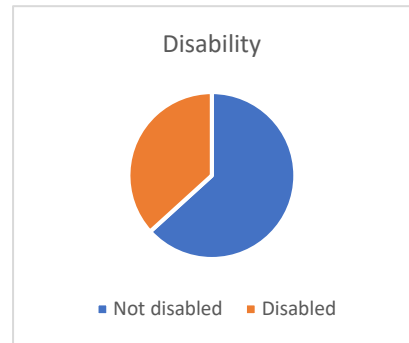
27% identify as people of color, including 14% multiracial. People of color comprised 32% of the inmates in Oregon’s corrections system at the time of the survey.



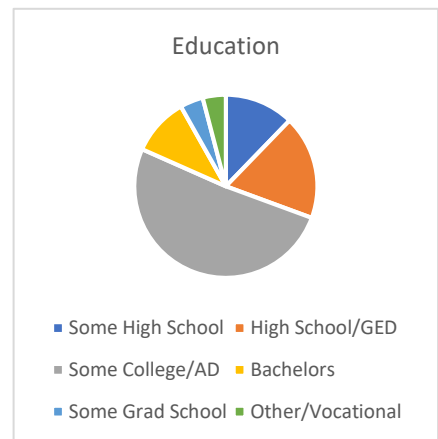
29% identify as LGBTQ and 4% as other.



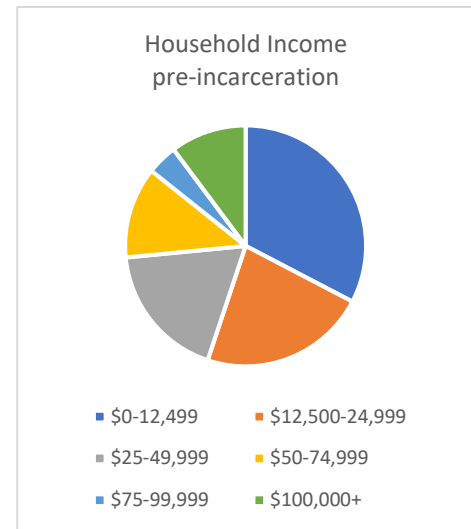
37% report living with a disability.



*30% have some high school or a high school diploma/GED.
10% have a bachelor’s degree.*



37% report pre-incarceration household income between \$0-12,999 and 10% at \$100,000+.



What These Surveys Tell Us

Interpreting responses from written surveys, especially responses to open-ended questions, is a combination of art and science. Recognizing those limits, some common themes seem clear.

Support for DEI. There is strong support for DEI work, with a decisive majority reporting a desire for Dharma Rain to become more diverse (90%), more equitable (90%) and more inclusive (90%).

Not Everyone Supports DEI. While 90% express support for DEI work, that view is not unanimous. 10% of respondents expressed negative or skeptical views of pursuing DEI, some strongly. It will be important for Dharma Rain to acknowledge this negativity, while not allowing it to hinder or slow its DEI work.

Diversity-Equity-Inclusion. Respondents were able to differentiate between diversity, equity and inclusion, as indicated by their different scores between the three areas.

Weakest in Diversity. Only 30% of respondents see Dharma Rain as diverse now, while 60% see us as equitable and 75% see us as inclusive.

Inclusive vs. Equitable vs. Diverse Now. Respondents give Dharma Rain highest marks for being very inclusive (55%), and low marks for very equitable (15%) and very diverse (10%).

Inclusive Culture. When asked in what ways DRZC has done a good job with DEI, respondents most frequently describe Dharma Rain as welcoming, open, kind, respectful and friendly. This trend is seen across members, dharma garden and prison sanghas.

Other DEI Strengths. Respondents identified additional DEI-related strengths at Dharma Rain, including dharma garden and prison programs, the strong presence of women and LGBTQ among leadership, and improved accessibility and accommodations for seniors and people with disabilities.

DEI Weakness. When asked in what ways Dharma Rain has *not* done a good job with DEI, respondents most often identify a lack of racial and ethnic diversity, and outreach to and engagement with communities of color. This trend affirms DRZC’s decision to focus this assessment and plan primarily on race and ethnicity.

More Diverse Than We Think. As a whole, DRZC is more diverse than we realize. Racial and ethnic diversity is greater among dharma garden youth (24% estimated) and people who are incarcerated (27% survey respondents) than adult members (7% estimated). People in these programs can enrich our collective practice, and help to inform our DEI work.

Other Diversity. When invited to identify other types of diversity they bring to Dharma Rain, respondents most often report having been raised, lived or worked abroad, speaking more than one language, and/or having a family member who is a person of color. This “tier 2” diversity could be leveraged as an asset in Dharma Rain’s DEI work.

Members Highly Educated. Over half (53%) of adult member respondents have a master’s degree or higher. 61% have done work at the graduate school level. This fact can unintentionally contribute to the experience or perception of Dharma Rain as unwelcoming, intimidating, less accessible or less relevant to people with less formal education.

Survey Respondents Skew Diverse. More survey respondents identify as female, people of color and LGBTQ than are estimated to be in the Dharma Rain community. It is not uncommon for DEI surveys to be of greater interest or perceived relevance to these groups. As a result, survey responses may skew more favorably toward DEI than not.

Women at Dharma Rain. While Zen has grappled with gender equity for many years, women are well-represented across Dharma Rain. Women are 80% of monastics, 75% of lay teachers, 55% of members and 55% of dharma garden youth. The exception to this trend is people who are incarcerated, who skew male.

Household Income. Annual household income is significantly higher among dharma garden families (32% \$150,000+) than among members (8% \$150,000+). High levels of formal education among members does not automatically translate to higher incomes. Among people who are incarcerated, pre-incarceration household income is significantly lower than among dharma garden and members: 37% \$0-12,500.

Prison Sangha and Class Disparities. There are wide disparities in formal education and household income between dharma garden families and members, and people who are incarcerated. These disparities are at the heart of class distinctions in our country, and will require significant attention from Dharma Rain to ensure it is welcoming, accessible and relevant to people who are released from prison.

DEI Organizational Self-Assessment©

In addition to surveying members, dharma garden families and people who are incarcerated, Dharma Rain’s Board of Directors, Dharma Council and staff were asked to complete an organizational self-assessment. This tool inquires about evidence-based policies, procedures and practices commonly found in organizations considered to be high performers regarding DEI.

The assessment included ten questions in each of four areas: Governance, Workforce, Programs and Services and Communications. Respondents answered the question, “My organization...” with a 1 for “no”, 2 for “some”, 3 for “mostly” or 4 for “yes”. Each section had a total possible score of 40, and all sections combined had a total possible score of 160.

Of 18 eligible respondents, 12 completed the assessment, for a 67% response rate. One respondent left 25 (63%) of inquiries blank or marked not applicable, so those responses are included in the average score for each question answered, but not in aggregated responses.

Governance Questions	Average
• Incorporates DEI into our mission, vision, and values statements?	2.5
• Has made a public commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?	3.3
• Collects and reports data on the demographic composition of our Board?	1.4
• Includes DEI as a priority in recruiting new Board members?	1.9
• Reflects demographics of our community and/or people we serve on our Board?	2.5
• Provides DEI-related education to Board members on a regular basis?	1.3
• Integrates DEI goals and outcomes into our Board-approved strategic plan?	2.1
• Allocates financial resources to DEI work in our annual budgeting process?	1.5
• Monitors, assesses, and reports progress on DEI goals in our strategic plan?	1.5
• Includes progress toward DEI goals in the performance evaluation of our CEO?	1.1

Workforce Questions	Average
• Has written policies to increase recruitment, retention, promotion of diverse staff?	1.2
• Incorporates DEI-related skills into our job descriptions and job announcements?	1.2
• Screens for DEI-related skills and experience in interviewing/hiring new staff?	1.6
• Collects and reports data on the demographic composition of our workforce?	1.8
• Our staff reflects the demographics of our community and/or people we serve?	2.5
• Provides DEI-related training/skills-building for our workforce on a regular basis?	1.3
• Has an internal structure, mechanism, or position dedicated to workforce DEI?	1.6
• Has effective procedures for addressing DEI-related issues and concerns?	1.9
• Regularly reviews HR policies for ways to decrease disparities/increase access?	1.2
• Includes progress on DEI-related goals in employee performance appraisals?	1.0

Programs & Services Questions

Average

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Regularly assesses/addresses gaps in delivery of programs to diverse communities? | 1.8 |
| • Engages diverse communities in the development of our programs/services? | 1.8 |
| • Studies culture, values, communication, decision-making of diverse communities? | 1.4 |
| • Engages diverse communities in evaluating effectiveness/impact of programs? | 1.4 |
| • Reports and assesses program evaluation results to and with diverse communities? | 1.2 |
| • Collects and reports demographic data on our customers, clients, or constituents? | 1.5 |
| • Provides programs and services in the languages spoken by our diverse clientele? | 1.7 |
| • Ensures cultural responsiveness/competence in delivery of our programs? | 1.7 |
| • Provides education on best practices to effectively serve diverse communities? | 1.2 |
| • Communicates/markets programs in culturally-specific ways to diverse groups? | 1.3 |

Communications Questions

Average

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Integrates messages about importance, relevance of DEI into communications? | 1.8 |
| • Communicates about DEI-related initiatives, including outcomes & lessons learned? | 2.1 |
| • Leverages communication to raise awareness of DEI issues, needs, opportunities? | 1.6 |
| • Regularly includes voices, stories, faces of diverse constituents in communications? | 1.8 |
| • Communicates with underserved communities regarding availability of programs? | 1.7 |
| • Seeks feedback from diverse constituents on effectiveness of communications? | 1.2 |
| • Seeks education about best practices for communicating with diverse groups? | 1.8 |
| • Integrates DEI considerations into outreach, marketing, advertising strategies? | 1.6 |
| • Evaluates effectiveness of DEI marketing, outreach, advertising; adjusts as needed? | 1.3 |
| • Makes our DEI-related messages and materials visible and easy to find/access? | 1.8 |

All Responses	Governance	Workforce	Programs/Services	Communications	Total
Respondent 1	16	10	15	11	52
Respondent 2	18	16	14	12	60
Respondent 3	25	21	19	20	85
Respondent 4	15	15	13	15	58
Respondent 5	16	13	16	21	66
Respondent 6	18	15	15	18	66
Respondent 7	17	12	17	14	60
Respondent 8	22	17	14	17	70
Respondent 9	21	15	13	15	64
Respondent 10	26	20	16	12	74
Respondent 11	15	12	12	23	62
Average Score	19	15	15	16	65
Percentage Score	48%	38%	37%	41%	41%
Point Spread	11	11	7	12	10
Percentage Spread	28%	28%	18%	30%	25%

What This Organizational Self-Assessment Tells Us

Low scores overall. Respondents scored DRZC low - below 50% - in each of the four areas, reflecting a consensus that significant DEI-related need and opportunity exist. Low scores are common in organizations that are newer to DEI work.

Embedding DEI. Given the consistency of low scores, Dharma Rain has great opportunity to embed DEI into its policies, procedures and practices across the organization. This process can be implemented over time, and become a standard component of updates and revisions as they occur.

Governance highest. Respondents scored DRZC highest in Governance (48%). This trend likely reflects the view that even though the Board is 100% white, it is seen as largely reflective of people's perception of our current adult membership.

Programs and services lowest. Respondents scored DRZC lowest in Programs & Services (37%). Additionally, spread (range in scores) was smallest (18%) in this area. This trend reflects a consensus that significant need and opportunity exist programatically. As a result, Dharma Rain may choose to focus much of its initial DEI work in this arena.

Differing views of DEI. There was significant spread (range in scores) in all four areas. This trend indicates that there are significantly different views, perceptions, experiences and expectations regarding DEI among respondents. Dharma Rain would benefit by educating people on these terms, and developing a shared understanding of these concepts.

Workforce. DRZC has nine compensated staff: five monks, one bookkeeper and three preschool teachers. None of the nine has traditional advancement opportunities seen in other workplaces. As a result, some of these DEI policies and practices will be less relevant. That said, Dharma Rain lacks processes and procedures to proactively recruit a diverse applicant pool for jobs that do come open.

Phase 5: Gather Input via Focus Groups & Interviews

This phase evolved to include four key conversations: individual interviews with co-abbots Gyokuko Carlson and Kakumyo Lowe-Charde; discussion at a disciple meeting; and discussion at a prison group meeting.

Gyokuko Carlson and Kakumyo Lowe-Charde Interviews; May 2018

- We have been given a tremendous gift and we owe it to the past and future to keep opening it up to anyone who can make use of it. We should enter the marketplace with bliss-bestowing hands.
- Some people coming here seek “transformation” - the deep work. Others seek “translation” - how this can be a tool for everyday problems. There is a permeability between the two. Some people pick and choose. I don’t begrudge them that. I have no ownership of people.
- Zen has historically had very few people of color. We have done better with gender and LGBTQ.
- Zen’s strength is in “going deep.” Dogen image is deep. Keizan image is broad. We can do both.
- We discuss these (DEI) issues around the meal table and in small groups, but not sangha wide.
- We hoped that by moving to this more diverse neighborhood more diverse people would eventually come through the doors.
- Our geographic proximity to more people of color has helped fuel our community partnerships.
- Despite the stereotype of Zen practitioners as upper income, we’ve had people who weren’t sure they should stay here because they had wealth
- In terms of inclusion, we listen for people to shift from “you all” to “us” in their language
- We are hoping for more cohesion around these (DEI) issues, and ideas about what would be helpful, so that we can do more than hope and wait.
- For people who carry an assumption they are about to be judged, our forms add another layer. It’s about the ability to be confident in strange situations. We need to work with our white privilege to make this practice available to people who don’t have the luxury of that confidence.
- I recall a Latina who was a member for many years and eventually fell away. At that time, she never had another Latina here to relate to.
- People often need other people like them to reflect back so they see themselves. Having more people of color here helps other people of color feel confident, comfortable, relaxed. It’s almost like needing to reach a tipping point of sorts.
- The lesson from our work with evangelicals: even when there seems no way in, there is a way in. How do we apply that lesson with people of color? Perhaps some neutral ground space that could turn into meaningful dialogue.
- How much does our whiteness matter? I don’t really know.
- We don’t want to be pushy (i.e., leaflet the neighborhood and invite people here) and don’t want to be dismissive, either.
- I am open to ideas for meeting people where they are: more events on the property that are less intense, more focused, more practical; taking programs out into the community; programs specifically for people of color; bringing teachers of color to town or piggybacking on a visit to another sangha; allowing for more contemporary services in our zendo, as long as the traditional isn’t disregarded for the contemporary.

Disciples Meeting; June 2018; 18 attendees

“What experience, training, conversations have you had with DEI?”

- 8 people mentioned having DEI-specific training or education, 6 of those through their workplace.
- 2 people spoke to starting with their own marginalization (gender and sexual orientation) and extrapolating from there to race.
- Courageous conversations have been about race, gender and sexual orientation, but “Who has the power?” nuances are situational; everyone can feel they have no power.
- 3 people commented that many/most/all of us have felt like we don’t belong here at some point
- People have to want to practice Zen to walk in our door.
- Yes, but what is Zen? What container stuff are we including with our dharma?
- Do folks who are not white and middle class stick around?
- DRZC is white and has white culture.
- My Zen anxiety was assuming that people here had their stuff together, financially and otherwise. Can I bring my friends here? My experience has been pushing against things that marginalize me and my friends out of anger.
- Discussion so far is about people coming “here”. DEI is about outreach and not just coming here.

What are people’s hopes around DEI at DRZC?

- We can help just by doing our practice.
- Not excluding people who want to be here; growing as a sangha; called to examine our forms that are off-putting or a barrier.
- It’s not just about people of color, lots of people struggle with form.
- Yes, but people of color experience additional alienation here that white people don’t.
- We need to ask more people of color what we need to do to feel more comfortable.
- It feels good that we’re talking about this; it feels complicated and that’s ok; it’s lifetime work.
- Sitting still in a room may not be good, practical, useful for all people. We keep thinking about the zendo, it’s not all about the zendo. We can keep developing other ways in: Zen and Gardening, Zen and Calligraphy, Zen and Tai Chi. Etc.
- We’re white people, and we found this Zen thing that is good for us, and we want others to come here to make it more diverse. Is that OK?
- People of color live in different cultures and have different religions than ours, and that’s OK.
- I know we are making community connections with diverse groups, but we need to convey that, communicate that with our sangha.
- Dharma teachings on how community partnerships fit within us as a sangha, and are another part of our practice.
- There are fabulous teachers of color we could host; revere these people and their teaching and show that we respect it.
- 6 people shared the idea of partnering/engaging with faith institutions of color in some way.
- Make our space available for people of color, including other meditation groups.

- Go into spaces that are primarily people of color and have a presence vs. always coming here.
- Continue building relationship with groups of people that are different from us. Let's connect and see what's there.
- Intro workshops for people of color.
- Connect with dharma garden families; cultivate and welcome them more.
- Training on bias would be helpful; ongoing education is needed.

If our forms are an obstacle for some, which are you willing to adapt/relax?

- Responses included none (2), dharma names (2), robes (2)
- Forms do not keep people of color away
- We need to ask people of color what would work better for them
- Form is both adaptable and important, but changes have to be more organic - not from trying to please people. We all bump up against form and that's what it's for.

Prison Group, November 2017, 12 attendees

- Race is a huge identity issue in prison. Who you hang with, who you affiliate with. The racial lines are fierce. You come here and it's all oneness and sameness. That's a huge shift.
- Great gratitude for Dharan frains;s work
- If I were in prison and some organization like DRZC asked for my input or help, I would be honored. You care what I think? I can be of help?
- I left a place where I lived with people who committed murder, rape, assault. I attend a discussion group here and people are agonizing over stepping on insects. Really? That's people's reality here?
- I came here after being released and someone said, "Welcome." I thought, "I've been part of this sangha for years. Do you not know that? I should be welcoming you."
- I assumed that people here knew I was practicing in prison. They didn't.
- 4 people commented they did not realize how many prison groups DRZC facilitated, how many people used them annually, and/or how many people in prison had received the precepts.
- So, in any given week, there are as many or more people meditating with DRZC in prison than in this zendo? I had no idea.
- 3 people voiced surprise at the very small numbers of people who maintain contact with Daram Rain once released.
- Reintegration is stressful. You have limited time, money and energy, and lots of practical demands. How you maintain a practice with a sangha can be low on the list.

Phase 6: Conduct Research

DRZC developed a web based survey in partnership with the Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZTA), which was sent by SZTA, Lay Zen Teachers Association (LZTA) and American Zen Teachers Association (AZTA) to its members. Survey questions were identical across the three groups, except that SZBA choose to solicit information about the gender and age of its respondents.

Given some overlap in membership between SZBA, AZTA, and LZTA, people were asked to complete the survey only once, and to have only one person per sangha complete the survey.

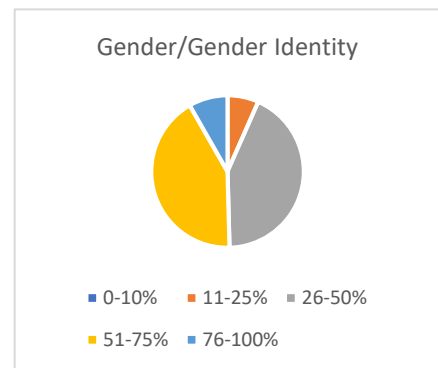
A total of 124 responses were received, as follows:

	Member Sanghas	Survey Responses	Response Rate
Soto Zen Buddhist Association	250	91	36%
Lay Zen Teachers Association	50	20	40%
American Zen Teachers Association	60	13	22%

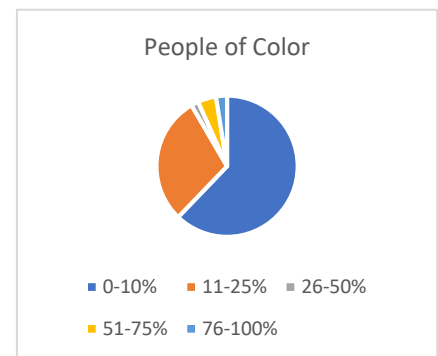
Survey Responses

Q1. What is the demographic composition of your sangha now? (Feel free to estimate.)

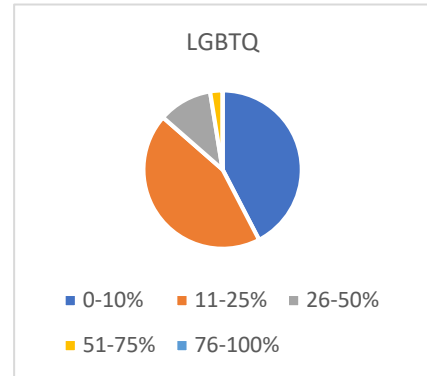
50% report that more than half of their members are female, and 50% report that fewer than half are female.



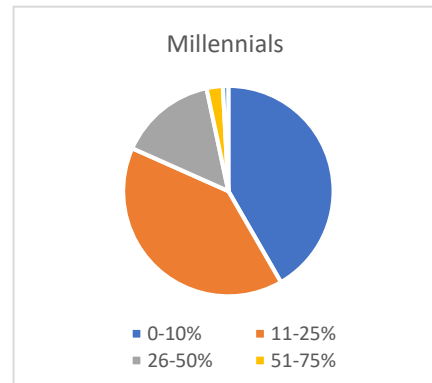
62% report that 10% or less of their members are people of color, and 29% report 10-25% of members are of color. People of Color comprise 39% of the U.S. population.



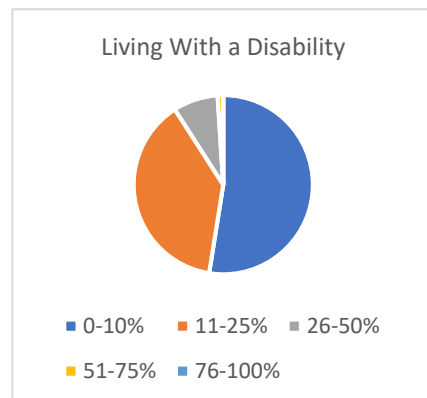
42% report that 10% or fewer of their members are LGBTQ, and 44% report 10-25% of members are LGBTQ. LGBTQ are estimated to comprise approximately 5-10% of the U.S. population.



42% report that 10% or fewer of their members are millennials. Millennials comprise 23% of the U.S. population.

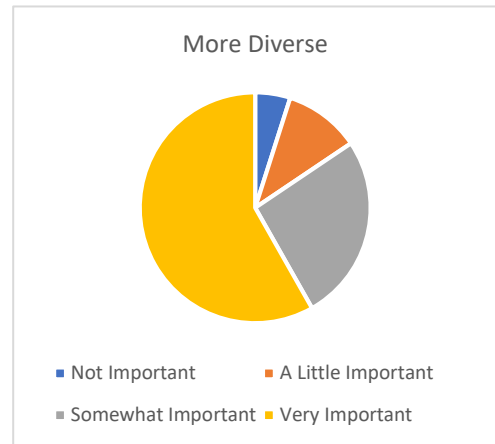


61% report that 10% or fewer of their members are living with a disability. People with disabilities under the age of 65 comprise 9% of the U.S. population.

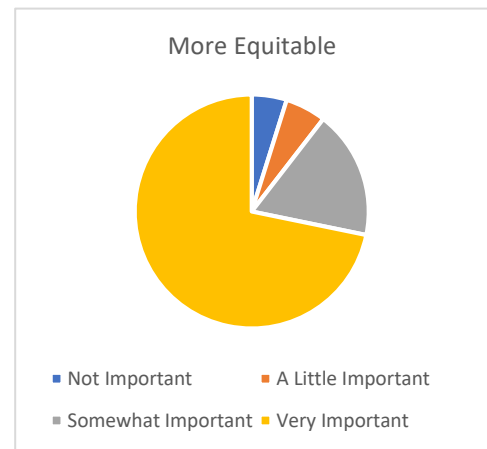


Q2. How important is it to you that your sangha become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive?

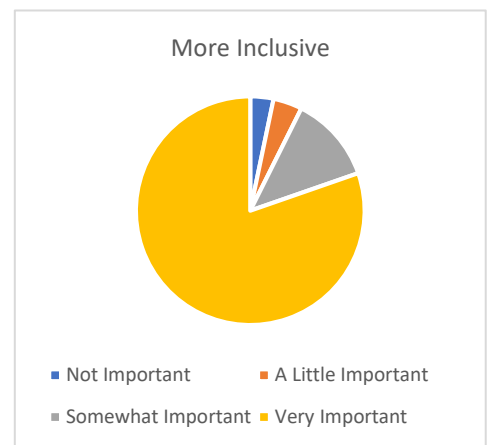
84% report that becoming more diverse is very important (58%) or somewhat important (26%).



90% report that becoming more equitable is very important (72%) or somewhat important (18%).



92% report that becoming more inclusive is very important (80%) or somewhat important (12%).



Q3. What, if anything, has your sangha done to try and diversity your membership? (Complete all that apply.)

Appointment of diverse members to leadership roles (n = 67)	# Responses
• Lay, Seniors, Service, Practice Roles	36
• Board of Directors	32
• Priests, Teachers	18

Internal Education/Training (n = 66)	# Responses
• around issues of race, privilege, implicit bias	36
• around issues of gender	4

Partnerships or Memberships (n = 58)	# Responses
• with local community organizations	36
• with interfaith groups	22
• with other Buddhist organizations, sanghas	12

Community Outreach (n = 57)	# Responses
• to communities of color	18
• through local community organizations	6
• to LGBTQ community	5
• through interfaith groups	4
• to people with disabilities	3
• through prison programs	3
• by inviting diverse teachers	3
• through statements of inclusivity	2
• at universities/colleges	2
• through web and social media	2

Other Strategies (n = 43)	# Responses
• Programming	15
• Word of mouth	4
• Accessibility of space	3
• Inviting diverse teachers	3

Marketing or Advertising (n = 35)	# Responses
• to people of color	10
• through the web, social media	9
• through local community partnerships	7
• to people with disabilities	6
• to LGBTQ	3
• through newspapers, flyers, photos	3

Q3. If you have worked to diversify your membership, tell us about any increases you have seen in any of the following groups, including how much of an increase. (Feel free to estimate.)

Content Theme	# Responses
• Millennials	30
• People of Color	24
• People with Disabilities	17
• LGBTQ	15
• Women	14
• Other (socio economic, seniors, men, interfaith)	7

Q5. What, if anything, has your sangha done to try and become more equitable in your operations and inclusive in your culture? (Complete all that apply.)

Content Theme	# Responses
• Developed an equity statement	45
• Conducted DEI training or education	37
• Recruited diverse members to our Board (gender, race, youth)	29
• Other strategies (accessibility)	19
• Revised or developed policies and procedures	17
• Revised our communication strategies	17
• Made materials available in languages other than English	12
• Revised our by-laws	9
• Formed an equity committee or work group	8

Q6. If you have worked to increase equity and inclusion, has that work resulted in change regarding the communities below? If so, what kinds of change, and how much change? (Feel free to estimate.) n = 35

Content Theme	# Responses
• Women	10
• People of Color	9
• Millennials	8
• People with Disabilities	7
• LGBTQ	6
• Other (seniors, in recovery)	2

Q7. If you have other comments or thoughts about diversity, equity, and/or inclusion in your sangha, please share those here. n= 61

Content Theme	# Responses
• Non-specific supportive or aspirational statements	21
• Sharing specific experiences or stories about DEI	13
• Comments about being small, under resourced, limited capacity	11
• Comment about being diverse, in part, due to geography/location	9
• Non-supportive or skeptical statements	6

What These Surveys Tell Us

Interpreting responses from written surveys, especially responses to open-ended questions, is a combination of art and science. Recognizing those limits, some common themes seem clear.

Interest and support. There is broad interest in and strong support for DEI work, with a decisive majority of respondents reporting a desire for their sanghas to become more diverse (84%), more equitable (90%) and more inclusive (92%).

Inclusive-Equitable-Diverse. Respondents are more interested in their sanghas becoming more inclusive and equitable than diverse.

- Inclusive - 92% important; 80% very important
- Equitable - 90% important; 72% very important
- Diverse - 84% important; 58% very important

Not everyone agrees. While a large majority express strong support for DEI work, that view is not unanimous. 7% of respondents expressed negative or skeptical views of DEI. As one respondent stated: “I am shocked that a Buddhist organization would even think to conduct a survey like this one.”

Women. Women are well-represented or over-represented in 50% of sanghas, and under-represented in 50% of sanghas.

People of color. People of color are dramatically or significantly under-represented in 91% of sanghas.

LGBTQ. People who are LGBTQ are well-represented or over-represented in 86% of sanghas.

Millennials. Millennials are significantly under-represented in 42% of sanghas.

Disability. People living with disabilities seem to be adequately represented; however, the average age in many sanghas would lead one to expect higher rates of disability. It is likely that this demographic is underreported and that disability is being defined narrowly.

Diversity efforts. Over half (57%) of sanghas report having done intentional work to diversify their membership. In order of frequency, the most common strategies have been:

- appointment of diverse members to leadership roles
- internal education/training

- partnership development
- community outreach

Equity and inclusion efforts. More than half (57%) of sanghas report having done some intentional work to increase equity and inclusion. On order of frequency, the most common strategies have been:

- development of equity statements
- internal education/training
- recruiting diverse members to their Boards

Training. Over half (53%) of sanghas report having done internal education or training, and most frequently around issues of race, privilege, and/or implicit bias. Some version of the White Awake curriculum is most frequently mentioned.

Partnerships. Almost half (47%) of sanghas report developing partnerships as part of their DEI efforts. These partnerships are most often with local community organizations, followed by interfaith and other Buddhist groups. It is not known how many of these partnerships are with culturally-specific groups or organizations.

Community Outreach. Almost half (46%) of sanghas report having done community outreach as part of their DEI efforts. Among those, most have done demographic outreach to people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ. Others have diversified the channels through which they do outreach.

Marketing/Advertising. Few (28%) of sanghas report having done some degree of targeted marketing and/or advertising to enhance DEI. Of those that have, most have marketing to people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ. Others have diversified the channels through which they market or advertise.

Sanghas are different. Sanghas are heterogeneous in terms of size, resources, and capacity. Quite a few describe themselves as small and with limited capacity, including for DEI work.

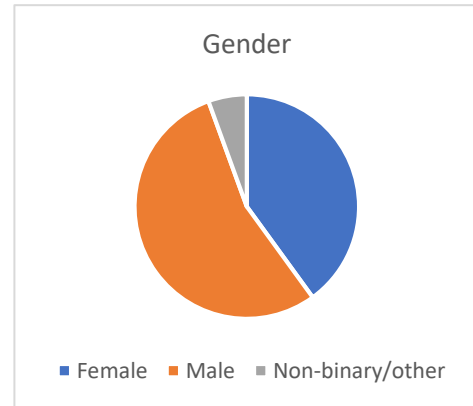
Geography matters. Some sanghas attribute their diversity to geographic location and proximity to diverse populations more than their intentional efforts. Conversely, some sanghas report being in very homogenous communities, making DEI more challenging.

Minimal-modest progress. Among sanghas who report having worked to increase diversity, equity and/or inclusion, actual increases in participation of women, people of color, people with disabilities, LBGTQ, other (seniors, people in recovery), and millennials have been minimal to modest, at best.

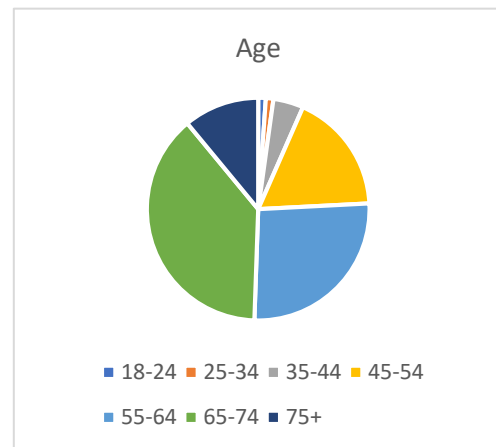
Uncertainty. Other than equity statements, training/education, and diversifying Boards, sanghas seem to lack evidence-based strategies for advancing DEI, and are trying an array of tactics in hopes that something works.

Survey Demographics: SZBA (n = 91)

54% of SZBA survey respondents were male.



50% of SZBA survey respondents were 65 or older.



DEI and Common Zen Orthodoxies

It is important to recognize that when dominant culture organizations - including American Zen groups - set out to do DEI work, that work assumes a level of intentionality and deliberateness. Like learning a new language, this work is not done organically. To be successful, organizations must be deliberate, explicit, consistent, and committed over time. As when developing a new habit or skill, the effort involved can feel stilted, artificial, forced, labor- and time-intensive and self-conscious.

Additionally, this work will require DRZC to examine our attachment to some commonly-held and oft-repeated orthodoxies. Whether they are fact, fiction or some combination of both, these orthodoxies include the following:

- *We teach sameness and oneness, not difference.* DEI recognizes the differences among people, and views those differences as assets to be seen, learned from, and celebrated.
- *We don't recruit or promote.* While not recruiting, per se, DEI work involves intentional efforts to reach out to, engage with, and invite underrepresented communities through outreach, marketing and advertising.
- *We don't chase after people.* While not chasing people, DEI strategies include reaching out to people who don't show up, become inactive, or drop out in order to learn how to be more inclusive and equitable for others in the future.
- *Zen isn't for everyone.* While recognizing Zen is a self-selecting path, DEI work assumes that some people may not be accessing the dharma because of perceptions or experiences of Zen as: not welcoming or inclusive; uninformed about the unique suffering of people or color; or disinterested in addressing suffering created by race and ethnicity.
- *We're hands-off.* DEI work acknowledges that dominant culture organizations have not always been equally accessible to everyone, and takes proactive steps to ensure that people are able to find their way in and through the organization.
- *We keep a distance and don't smother.* DEI work, particularly when focused on communities of color, is relational, and requires a willingness to "lean in" interpersonally. It recognizes that for many people, the quality of the relationship is a critical factor in making choices and decisions.
- *We're welcoming for anyone who wants us.* DEI work acknowledges that members of the dominant culture are quicker to assume belonging, relevance, and confidence in our capacity to get our needs met. It understands that marginalized communities cannot assume the same.

Some will find it difficult to act in ways they consider unaligned with these orthodoxies. Dharma Rain should be prepared to articulate how DEI work is complementary, rather than opposed, to Zen practice.

Possible Paths Forward for Dharma Rain

DRZC has several choices regarding DEI, including:

- I. Stay the Course, letting whatever evolution of diversity, equity, and inclusion happens happen organically, with little intentional or deliberate effort.
- II. Lean In, and begin doing intentional, deliberate work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- III. Lean In Further, and prioritize the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion by examining our attachments to orthodoxy, form, and ritual.

What follows is an outline of these three scenarios, with recommended actions for each. These recommendations are not all-or-nothing propositions. DRZC could select from among the recommendations based on the perceived importance, relevance and feasibility of each. Dharma Rain could also stagger implementation of recommendations over time, based on limitations in its organizational capacity.

Scenario I. Stay the Course

“We can help just by doing our practice.” - a longtime Dharma Rain member

In this scenario, DRZC would continue doing what it does how it does it, with little deliberate or intentional adjustments for purposes of diversity, equity, or inclusion.

While this view is held by a minority at DRZC, it exists nonetheless. As examples:

- 10% of members surveyed said that it was “not important” or “a little important” that DRZC become more diverse. As one respondent stated, “What we end up looking like should be the least of our concerns.”
- 5% said that it was “not important” or “a little important” that DRZC be more equitable or inclusive. As one respondent stated, “There is value in the experience of not being included.”
- When asked to identify their gender, a member respondent replied, “This is a silly, vain question. Should stick to Buddhist teachings.”
- When asked for other thoughts about DEI, a prison sangha respondent replied, “I thought the object of Buddhism was to dissolve identity, not to elevate it to a central role with the current fad of liberal identity politics.”

It is important to acknowledge that some people may view focusing on DEI as inconsistent with Buddhist teachings of sameness, oneness, and non-differentiation. Others may believe that targeted outreach to any group is a form of recruitment that runs the risk of proselytizing. Still others may view “leaning in” relationally as invasive, overbearing or hand-holding.

Recommendations in Scenario I

1. Examine our privilege, implicit biases, and microaggressions.

Even if DRZC opts to pursue the Stay the Course scenario, it should, at a minimum, invite the sangha to an individual and collective self-examination of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is a version of the “First Do No Harm” component of the Hippocratic Oath. Increasing awareness of our privilege, bias and microaggressions would help us avoid unintentional harm, injury or offense to others if and when they come to Dharma Rain. Initial areas of focus would include:

- *Privilege* – A right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people; a particular benefit or advantage enjoyed by a person, company, or class, beyond the common advantages of others.
- *Implicit/Unconscious Bias* - the bias in judgment and/or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes (i.e., implicit attitudes and stereotypes) that often operate below conscious awareness and without intentional control.
- *Microaggressions* - Brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership; the casual degradation of any marginalized group.

This work would best be done in a cohort setting, last for some months, and be primarily self-reflective rather than didactic. DRZC might consider Zen Community of Oregon’s (ZCO) recent work in this area. Adapting the White Awake curriculum to better fit their needs, ZCO has twice convened cohorts of 30-40 members for a six-month process of self-examination. Pre-selected readings and videos are assigned each month. Participants meet briefly as a large group, and then divide into subgroups of 6-8 people to share their experience with the materials without cross talk, discussion or debate. People commit to the entire six months, and subgroups remain consistent. This model recognizes that sustained, longer term work tends to have a greater impact than one-off workshops or seminars.

Scenario II. Lean In

In this scenario, DRZC would pursue a series of intentional, deliberate strategies with the intent of advancing diversity, equity and inclusion over time. This scenario is strongly supported by survey respondents, with large majorities stating that it is “important” or “somewhat important” for Dharma Rain to become more diverse (85%), equitable (90%) and inclusive (92%).

The following recommendations are intended to help Dharam Rain begin to embed DEI into its organizational fabric, rather than approaching it as a stand-alone, time-limited special project.

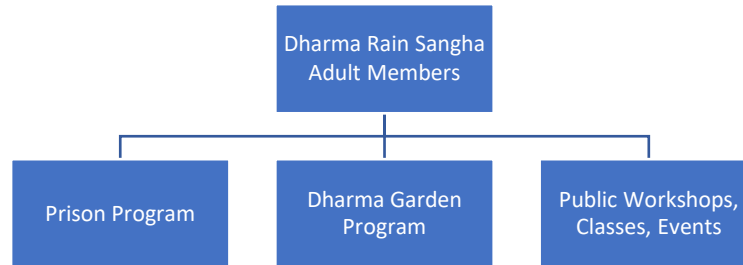
Recommendations for Scenario II

1. Examine our privilege, implicit biases, and microaggressions.

For any DEI work to be successful, DRZC would need to start by adopting Recommendation 1 in Scenario I above. Refer to that section on the previous page for more information.

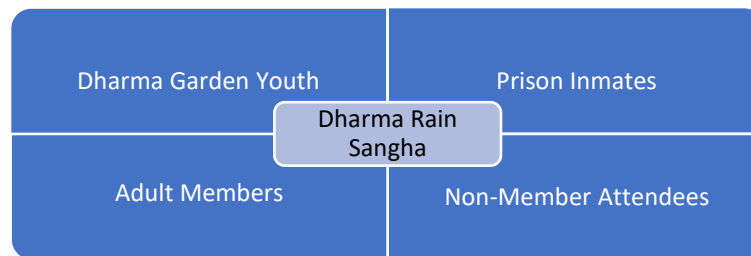
2. *Adopt a more inclusive view of sangha.*

Generally speaking, DRZC tends to think and talk about itself as a sangha as the adult members who practice in the Sodo, and who have a children’s program, prison program, and workshops and classes open to the public. This view has the effect of acknowledging the practice of adults in the Sodo over others.



Current view of sangha

A more inclusive view of sangha would be to shift our action, speech, and thought to a sangha comprised of prison inmates, youth, adult members, and non-member attendees. This view recognizes as equal the adult in the Sodo, the child learning about compassion in dharma school, the inmate meditating in prison, and the non-member newcomer studying the precepts. While subtle, this shift would likely result in language, attitude, and behaviors that are experienced as more equitable and inclusive to more people over time.



Proposed inclusive view of sangha

3. *Embrace dharma garden families and people who are incarcerated.*

Racial and ethnic diversity at Dharma Rain is found, primarily, among the children and families in Dharma Garden and people who are incarcerated through the prison program. The demographic differences are significant:

	Adult Members	Dharma Garden	Prison Sangha	Multnomah County
People of Color	7%	24%	28%	30%

Engaging dharma garden and people who are incarcerated is a natural extension of the “more inclusive view of sangha” recommendation above. In this context, “embracing” means explicitly identifying them as part of our sangha, and increasing efforts to integrate them into our community

Over the years, Dharma Rain has attempted - with little success - to maintain relationships with dharma garden alumni and people who are incarcerated and released to the Portland metro area. Challenges will remain – youth go away to school and people released from prison are busy rebuilding their lives. But if DRZC made even modest gains with these groups, the gifts they could bring to the temple and its DEI work could be significant, including:

- as contributors to a broadened perspective on practice
- as a resource to help inform our DEI work
- as potential Board, council and committee members
- as future members, leaders, monks and teachers

4. Collect and review demographic data.

DRZC does not solicit or request demographic data on its members or program participants. As one interviewee stated, “We don’t do that. I’m not sure what we would do with that information.” As a result, conversations about the sangha’s diversity are anecdotal, with members making different assumptions about our diversity based on what they personally see and experience.

Visibility into who we are demographically is necessary to inform our DEI efforts going forward. DRZC should routinize the collection of demographic data on members, program participants and, to the extent possible, visitors and guests. This practice is intended to help organizations move away from assessing diversity from an anecdotal perspective to an objective data-based perspective. It also conveys a message to members/constituents that an organization cares about and is being attentive to its demographic diversity. These questions would be added to existing forms, and be voluntarily self-reported. Decisions not to disclose some or any information would be respected. Information solicited would mirror that collected on the surveys used for this project, including the following:

- race/ethnicity
- age
- gender/gender identity
- sexual orientation
- ability/disability
- education
- household income
- additional types of diversity (open-ended question)

DRZC would aggregate and review demographic data for evaluation of its DEI efforts, and report out to major bodies for discussion, twice a year. Adjustments to DEI strategies would be made, in part, in response to trends in data.

5. Teach explicitly about diversity, equity and inclusion.

DRZC as a sangha skews socially and politically progressive. As a result, themes of equity and social justice are often woven into dharma teachings. While helpful in creating an organizational culture that values equity, broad themes are not a substitute for teaching directly and explicitly to and about racism and other forms of oppression. A talk that references race-based oppression as one of many points is one thing. A talk entitled, “Race and the Dharma” is another.

DRZC’s Dharma Council should prioritize the inclusion of DEI-related teachings in its programming schedule. Venues would include Sunday morning dharma talks, Wednesday evening classes, term student program, seminary/dharma studies classes, dharma garden lessons, and prison program talks. Teachers and senior students would regularly give talks and lead discussions on privilege, implicit/unconscious bias, and microaggressions.

6. Amplify the voices of teachers of color.

Of DRZC’s 12 transmitted teachers (4 monastic and 8 lay), 100% are white. As a result, there is a marked absence of racial/ethnic diversity in voices, perspectives, and faces. Because Soto Zen places such emphasis on the role of the teacher as spiritual guide for practitioners, this absence is a critically important one to address and mitigate.

There is no more impactful DEI strategy than seeing teachers of color on the haishiki, in the sanzen room, and in the classroom. DRZC’s Dharma Council should actively pursue opportunities to amplify the voices of teachers of color - whether local or visiting from elsewhere, and whether from Soto Zen or other Buddhist schools. These voices should be integrated into DRZC’s existing teaching platforms and venues, rather than be add-on special events. Teachers of color should be promoted as being for the DRZC sangha itself, and not just as outreach events to attract diverse visitors and guests.

DRZC could also amplify the voices of teachers of colors by including their writings in class curriculum, referencing their work in dharma talks, studying their teachings in discussion groups, and disseminating their articles through Dharma Rain’s communication channels.

7. Prioritize recruitment of people of color in leadership.

Equity requires that people be at the table where decisions are made. As a result, it is important that DRZC intentionally and proactively recruit people of color to its Board of Directors and Dharma Council. Using a more inclusive view of sangha (recommendation 2 above) would help by reminding us to consider the prison sangha and dharma garden families when recruiting for these leadership roles.

Similarly, more people of color need to be invited to serve in ceremonial roles at Dharma Rain. Besides honoring their practice, marginalized communities often need to see themselves reflected in an organization in order to feel comfortable and included.

Initial efforts to diversify all-white governing bodies can be experienced as tokenism or burdensome by people of color who are invited to serve. If the invitation is solely about race, or about representing or speaking for an entire group, the invitation is tokenism and burdensome. If the invitation is about experience, skills, talents *and* one person’s perspective on race, it is inclusive. Additionally, it is

important to avoid recruiting a single person of color and declaring the group diverse. Being one of anything can feel like tokenism. Seeing multiple people of color in various positions across the organization will make the effort authentic. While not every person of color invited will accept, the effort needs to continue.

8. Improve our communications.

How an organization communicates is directly linked to perceptions of its inclusivity and accessibility.

DRZC seeks to be a transparent communicator, and often succeeds. Its website calendar is well-maintained, its weekly e-bulletin is consistent and timely, meeting summaries of its major bodies (Board, Dharma Council, Mandala Council) are summarized and widely distributed, many important documents and materials are accessible on its website, and staff respond to inquiries in a helpful manner.

At the same time, DRZC has outgrown its current communications structure and capacity. What worked well-enough on SE Madison is now insufficient. The reasons are obvious. The temple has become more programmatically complex. Plans for development of Siskiyou Square are complex, multi-layered and evolving. Our public profile has been raised, community partnerships have increased and fundraising has accelerated. The volume of information to be shared has grown exponentially, as have expectations of the sangha.

Dharma Rain is good at informing people about the what, when and where. But it struggles to communicate the broader context - why and wherefore, outcomes, where-next - of what it does. Even when informing, DRZC tends to underestimate how often, and through how many different venues, the same information needs to be shared before it is heard, understood and remembered.

The sense of who knows what, who has what information, and who is “in the loop” can create an insider-outsider dynamic. For people from marginalized communities who come to Dharma Rain, this can be a particularly important factor in being included, and having equitable access to information.

DRZC should invest in developing a multi-channel communications strategy that not only informs, but clarifies, engages and inspires, as a component of becoming more inclusive, accessible and navigable.

9. Embed DEI in our communications.

DRZC should leverage opportunities to embed DEI into all standing communications venues and platforms. Visibility, consistency and regularity of messages will help create a culture where DEI is woven into the fabric of the temple, rather than presenting DEI as a time-limited special initiative or project. These channels include websites, e-bulletins, emails, yahoo list-serves, flyers, signage, bulletin boards, and announcements at various events.

Besides honoring the practice and service of people of color, it is important that people of color see themselves at Dharma Rain. For that reason, our materials and communications should include the voices, stories and faces of diverse sangha members.

10. Embed DEI in meeting agendas.

To help create a culture of expectation, continuity and commitment around DEI, Dharma Rain’s Board, Dharma Council and other groups should add DEI as a standing agenda item at meetings. Discussion would include current DEI-related efforts of that body, including progress or lack thereof, successes, mistakes, lessons learned and next steps.

Like with other standing agenda items, content will vary meeting-to-meeting, and discussions will be more robust at some meetings than others. Even so, this could be an important way to weave DEI into the fabric of the temple, rather than approaching it as a time-limited special project. It also helps to instill accountability and transparency around this work – making it harder to forget, bury, back-burner or delegate to others.

11. Increase outreach & programming for communities of color.

The following are examples of strategies that could help increase the visibility, relevance, and access of DRZC in and among communities of color.

Relational Access. Increase the volume, frequency, and depth of year-round partnerships with communities that are diverse and geographically proximate, including:

- Madison High School. 66% of students are people of color, including: 24% Latino; 17% Black; and 14% Asian.
- Roseway Heights School. 36% of students are people of color, including: 11% Asian; 10% Black; 8% Latino; 4% Multiracial; and 3% Indian.
- Madison South neighborhood. 26% of residents are people of color, including: 9% Asian; 8% Latino; 4% Black; 3% Multiracial; and 1% Other.
- Asian Communities. Given Buddhism’s roots in Southeast Asia, coupled with Dharma Rain’s geographic proximity to Asian communities at Madison, Roseway and Madison South, DRZC might chose to focus its initial DEI outreach and programming on Asian communities. This strategy could also involve deeper collaboration with Asian Buddhist temples in the region.

Linguistic Access. Make DRZC’s website and primary program materials available in Spanish, and eventually in other most-commonly spoken languages.

Geographic Access. When creating new programs or expanding existing programs, expand out rather than in – specifically, where communities of color live, work, and play. Field-based programming might include introductory workshops, classes, discussion groups, and sitting. Possible locations could include culturally-specific organizations, community centers, schools, neighborhoods or businesses.

Programmatic Access. Develop culturally-specific programming for people of color at Siskiyou Square, including an affinity group, sitting groups, retreats and/or sesshin for and led by people of color.

Visibility Access. Market programs and services to people of color who have some expressed interest in or affinity for contemplative spiritual traditions, meditation, mindfulness or Buddhism.

Outreach is an important component of any effective DEI strategy. That said, outreach alone is insufficient. The equity component of DEI requires that organizations examine and change the way they do what they do internally, and not just increase outreach externally.

Scenario III. Lean In Further

In this scenario, Dharma Rain would adopt all or most of the recommendations in Scenario II above, and go even further.

Additional Recommendations for Scenario III:

1. Enhance pastoral care.

Many people, including many people of color, look to their spiritual community expecting to be known, cared for, emotionally supported and practically assisted in times of need. In addition to the spiritual teachings and practices, there is typically an assumption that the relationship with clergy and other members is strong and personal. As a result, pastoral care – in practical terms and not just conceptual – is a critical component of the relationship.

Some staff and teachers at Dharma Rain are inclined toward pastoral care, and others less so. So cool are we in aggregate that a significant number of adult members are not known to any staff member or teacher. In other cases, we know relatively little about some of our members. In a more relational model, monastic and lay teachers as a group would lean in to the following practices as routine:

- Set out to know more about individual sangha members and their lives.
- Reach out to sangha members who become disengaged or inactive.
- Expand and promote use of the sangha support network as a component of pastoral care.
- Have pastoral care meetings where the spiritual, emotional and practical needs of sangha members are discussed and addressed.

2. Be more relational.

Given Zen's reputation for coolness, coupled with the strong relationship-based values for many people of color, Dharma Rain should work to become more relational - not just in its demeanor, but in its structure.

For example, rather than guests and newcomers entering to dimly-lit silence and foreign forms, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening programs would begin with tea, announcements, and visiting, followed by sitting and services. This format would put the personal interaction first, provide context for the dimly-lit silence and foreign forms to follow, and allow for an easier entry for some guests and visitors.

Similarly, the more Dharma Rain's communications focus on people and their stories, the more relational, known and seen we become. Over time, the temple becomes more of a community and less of a place - familiar, accessible and inclusive.

3. Follow-up with guests and visitors.

As an extension of being more relational, Dharma Rain could follow up with guests and visitors by phone, letter or email within a few days of their visit. The follow-up message would be succinct and warm. Content themes would include items such as:

- Thank you for visiting us
- Let us know how it went, and what questions you have
- Here are some upcoming introductory events that you might find helpful
- Come back anytime
- You are welcome here

4. Conduct informal “exit interviews”.

Dharma Rain has a long history of people coming and people going. We expect significant churn and attrition, and explain it as a natural, unavoidable part of Zen practice. Even when people who have practiced with Dharma Rain for years go, we sometimes greet their departure with the equivalent of a collective shrug. In a relational model, departures are normal and expected, but also treated with more care. The departure of someone - even under positive circumstances - is recognized as a loss of sorts for the community.

A component of being more relational is reaching out to people who drop out or become inactive. Conducting informal exit interviews, when possible, provides Dharma Rain a window into the real-life experiences of its participants. If and when DEI issues are a factor for people who are departing, DRZC can learn how to be more inclusive and equitable for others in the future. Those lessons could then be shared with leadership and those working in pastoral care.

Exit interviews are not about blame or guilt for either party, but a component of the continual feedback loop. By having more consistent, timely information about what is and is not working for people, Dharma Rain has the opportunity to consider adjusting its DEI efforts.

5. Examine our comfort with public expression of strong emotion.

The stereotype of Zen as cool, calm, collected, quiet and dispassionate is firmly entrenched in the minds of the general public. People who have been practicing for any length of time understand that the reality of practice is more complex than the stereotype. We can work to cultivate a mental calm, and to develop a different relationship with our thoughts and emotions. We can also laugh loudly, hug tightly and cry openly. Some of us are even extroverts.

It would be stereotyping, and inaccurate, to say that all people of color are more emotionally expressive than all white people. That said, it is important to acknowledge that different cultures have developed different relationships with public expression of strong emotions, including within their spiritual communities.

At Dharma Rain, the public expression of strong emotion can be viewed as appropriate in some select settings (sanzen, dokusan, small groups) and unskilled or underdeveloped in others. The message about emotions can be mixed. In some settings we hear, “Be authentic...be yourself...bring your messiness...

show yourself...be seen.” In other settings, the verbal message about emotions may not be different, but the behavior that is rewarded and generally viewed as more spiritually mature skews toward the stereotype. As a result, we can end up reinforcing our own stereotype.

In honoring the practice of people of color, and working to become more inclusive and equitable for communities of color, Dharam Rain will need to examine - and likely expand - its comfort with public expression of strong emotion.

6. *Examine our attachment to form and ritual.*

“There is intense preference to maintaining a strictly Japanese style. Can make what they are teaching really inaccessible to the general public and, by doing so, makes what we teach not relatable to the lives of minority...people. This can create a sense of alienation that we are unwilling to meet people where they are and forcing them to come to us.” – Member survey respondent

The overtly Japanese aesthetic and associated rituals of Zen as practiced by Dharma Rain hold great power for some, and are simultaneously off-putting to others. Gold, blue, and black robes, Japanese signage, Japanese art, Japanese statuary, Japanese dharma names, chanting in Sino-Japanese, Japanese gardens. For some, including some people of color born and raised in the West, the forms themselves are the barrier.

For committed practitioners, dharma, form and practice are interwoven. While some are immediately drawn to Zen forms, others develop that integrated view over time. Once developed, we can hold that view tightly, becoming attached to the form itself. Having ourselves experienced the power of the forms, we can insist on their “rightness” for others.

Attachment to ritual and form is not unique to Zen. Many faiths have grappled with adapting their forms over time in order to meet the needs of diverse constituents. This is why, for example, some Christian churches now have both “traditional” and “contemporary” services on a Sunday morning – one to meet the needs, expectations, and preferences of older or more traditional worshipers, and another to do the same for younger or less traditional worshipers. In these cases, teaching and doctrine remain the same, but expression is what varies.

Form can be a struggle for many Zen practitioners, including white people. We are taught that grappling with form is an important part of our practice. But when viewed through an equity lens, the question is not, “Are our forms an obstacle *only* for people of color?” but, “Do our forms have a *disparate impact* on people of color?” An equity lens acknowledges that white people in a dominant culture organization may face challenges, but are able to assume a confidence, competence and belonging that people of color cannot. In those cases, it is the *additional* burden or obstacle that is the DEI issue.

In creating opportunities for more people of color to find their way into Zen, Dharma Rain could take several paths to meet people where they are, including:

- engage in ongoing conversations with communities of color about form, and the degree to which it may or may not be an obstacle
- create more events where form is intentionally suspended or set aside

- develop “form-light” programs on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings while maintaining current programs
- intentionally lighten, or even set aside, forms that are the most commonly perplexing or intimidating to newcomers

Examining our attachment to form in the service of DEI raises substantive questions that may not be comfortable, such as:

- What is the dharma?
- What is the difference between the dharma and the forms?
- What is essential Zen? What is optional Zen?
- What is Zen practice if we relax, set aside or suspend some form?

As is typical of Zen teaching, perhaps the questions are more important than the answers. Or maybe there are only right answers. Or maybe there are no answers.

Managing Our Expectations

The long haul. Becoming more diverse, equitable and inclusive is not a short-term special project. Progress is not measured in six-month increments. Relationships take time to build, nurture and maintain. Trust takes time to earn. Long-term commitment and consistency are critical.

Marginalized communities, including communities of color, are accustomed to dominant culture organizations doing DEI work in short-term spurts, and out of various motivations, including:

- white guilt
- liberal indignation
- self-righteousness
- missionary zeal
- atonement and need for forgiveness
- gain or benefit for our organization
- feeling better about ourselves
- being able to say we did it

The key to sustainability is to weave DEI into the fabric of our temple over time, including its existing policies, practices and procedures. This approach establishes DEI as a lens through which we everything, rather than approaching it as a separate add-on. It also means that, when faced with choices, we choose to lean toward DEI.

Limited resources. Lack of resources is a common reaction and reality when organizations consider doing DEI work. There are, in fact, many people at Dharma Rain who are at or beyond capacity in terms of their service. There are also many people who are less engaged. In addition to members, this report points to dharma garden families and people who are incarcerated as critical resources for our DEI work.

DEI work is not an all-or-nothing proposition, nor an all-at-once endeavor. When taken as a whole, these recommendations may seem overwhelming. If and when we find ourselves reacting with, “We’re all overstretched and can’t do this.” it is important to ask:

- How much of this could we do?
- What would it take for us to be able to do this?
- How might we stagger implementation over time?
- How can we embed this work as opportunity presents itself?
- Who in our sangha is not at-capacity or over-capacity and might help?
- How might we engage dharma garden families and people who are incarcerated in this work?

We tried that. This report acknowledges that Dharma Rain has made some DEI-related efforts through the years. As just one example, DRZC has developed partnerships with nearby schools and neighborhoods that are directly related to DEI. Other efforts have been made, with less success. When we find ourselves reacting with, “We tried that and it didn’t work.” it is important to ask:

- Who did it?
- What did they do, specifically?
- How did they do it?
- In what context did they do it?
- How long did they do it?
- How resourced was the "it"?
- What happened, specifically?
- What lessons were learned?

An assessment of past effort may indicate that a particular strategy does not work or is not applicable to Dharma Rain. But that decision is made after a thoughtful analysis.

Diversity within diversity.

One of the elements of DEI work that can be perplexing for dominant culture organizations is the enormous diversity of thought, experience, and opinions within diverse communities. Within every marginalized community there are many realities. Communities of color are no exception. Not all Asians will experience Dharma Rain the same way. Not every Black person will be reached through the same strategy. Not all Latino families will have a need for Spanish-language materials. Communities of color themselves can disagree on the most effective ways to reach their communities.

Rather than being surprised, confused or overwhelmed by these differences, Dharma Rain should expect them. Reaching more Asians, not all Asians, is a step. Developing a partnership with one segment of the Black community, not every Black person, is progress. Becoming more accessible to some Latino families, not every Latino family, is helpful. No approach, strategy or tactic will work for or resonate with all people in any community.

Mistakes and missteps.

In leaning in to DEI work, it is inevitable that Dharma Rain will make mistakes and missteps. We will:

- say the wrong thing, use the wrong term
- make assumptions that are not true
- try things that do not work
- do things that fall flat
- ask questions that others find elementary
- look or sound uninformed
- disappoint ourselves and others

Fear of mistakes and missteps often keeps dominant culture organizations stuck or frozen-in-place. We want to avoid creating further injury. We do not want to offend and make matters worse. We want to do this work "right." Perfection becomes the enemy of the good.

While it is important that we think, act and speak as skillfully as possible, at the end of the day, it is important that we actually think, act and speak. Adopting a learning culture lens, where mistakes are expected and treated as opportunities to learn, will help facilitate this work.

Summary of Options & Recommendations

Scenario 1. Stay the Course

- Examine our privilege, implicit biases, and microaggressions

Scenario 2. Lean In

- The above
- Adopt a more inclusive view of sangha
- Collect and review demographic data
- Embrace dharma garden and prison sangha
- Teach explicitly about diversity, equity and inclusion
- Improve our communications
- Embed DEI into our communications
- Amplify the voices of teachers of color
- Prioritize recruitment of people of color in leadership
- Increase outreach & programming for communities of color

Scenario 3. Lean In Further

- All the above
- Enhance pastoral care
- Be more relational
- Follow-up with guests and visitors
- Conduct informal “exit interviews”
- Examine our comfort with public expression of strong emotion
- Examine our attachment to form and ritual

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