

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Dharma Rain Zen Center - July 2020 - April 2021

CHARTER

Beings are numberless; I vow to free them.

Delusions are inexhaustible; I vow to end them.

Dharma gates are boundless; I vow to enter them.

The buddha way is unsurpassable; I vow to realize it.

0. Brief Definitions¹

Diversity is a set of demographic characteristics of how people differ, such as race, ethnicity, and gender. It includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It can also include ideas, perspectives, and values.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, and identifying and removing barriers that prevent full participation. Equity is promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as the distribution of resources. The term “equity” is used as a shorthand for the overall work of DEI.

Inclusion is creating environments where people feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive group is by definition diverse but a diverse group isn't always inclusive. Recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations intentionally address inclusivity. Inclusion is an outcome of diversity and equity.

Sangha is the group of individuals who form a community of Buddhist practice. When we refer to 'sangha' in this charter, we refer to all individuals in our extended Dharma Rain community, including those who don't physically practice at the Dharma Rain temple. We recognize that there are many sanghas within our wider sangha, and that they have their own goals and vision.

¹ References: [D5 Coalition](#), [Independent Sector](#), and [Racial Equity Tools](#).

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1. Purpose of this Charter

The purpose of this charter is to serve as a north star to guide equity work at DRZC.

Dharma Rain Zen Center² is undertaking work to address racism. What does it mean to awaken to suffering caused by oppression? What does the Bodhisattva vow “to free all living beings” and taking up the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts, mean for our organization in the context of equity? How does Dharma Rain’s ethics statement illuminate this path?

In September 2019, the seven-person Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee was formed to envision and plan how Dharma Rain will work to address racism and become an ever more welcoming sangha.

The purpose of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is to provide planning, coordination, and guidance for staff, sangha members, and leaders at DRZC. The committee will be responsible for collaboratively developing a plan for Dharma Rain’s DEI work. The intention is to be flexible enough to respond to what the Dharma Rain

² *Our temple’s name references the Lotus Sutra’s parable of the medicinal herbs that is a metaphor for the inclusivity of the dharma.*

community learns and how it grows. Dharma Rain will also need help from external professional resources.

2. Vision for Equity Work at Dharma Rain

The vision for equity work at Dharma Rain is that sangha members who wish to consciously include working with issues of diversity and racism as part of their practice have the opportunity to do so. The vision is to be a sangha that can collectively work with issues of race and other inequities, even as we recognize that each individual in our sangha is on their own path. Not all sangha members will want to consciously engage in this work now, or ever, and Dharma Rain does not wish to exclude them from meaningful practice.

Dharma Rain has the potential to be a place where sangha members can transform their individual and collective conditioned relationship to racism and other forms of identity-based oppression. This work is part of the work of liberation from suffering, which is not simply for ourselves individually, but for the benefit of all beings. It is about dismantling systematic oppression on a collective level.

Much like work with the precepts, Bodhisattva path, the Brahmaviharas, and the Noble Eightfold Path, it is our understanding of the nature of the Dharma that all our work here is deeply interconnected. As in the metaphor of Indra's net, wherein each interconnected jewel reflects all others, racism and the karma that perpetuates it affect all beings, whether or not we are aware of or engaged with these connections.

The more we practice, the more the nature of our own suffering is revealed; some of our suffering is caused by racism, regardless of our race. The Dharma can dissolve the illusory boundaries of separateness that arise from racism and other forms of structural oppression. Practicing directly with issues of race and oppression can become part of our practice as it evolves.

3. What Difference Will it Make?

Like the Bodhisattva Path, this work is continuous. The impact will be evident at three levels:

- Individual level
- DRZC organizational level
- Systems/community level

As an organization, Dharma Rain will actively work to create conditions that foster anti-racism at these three levels. Sangha members will be offered the opportunity to

engage in authentic conversations about justice and race. We engage each other skillfully, as a community, in settings such as the Sangha Forum. We will actively strive to make DRZC ever more welcoming.

4. Major Milestones

These are the high-level measurable outcomes for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee. Plans that the Committee develops and proposes to the Board and Dharma Council will be updated quarterly.

- DEI Committee is up and running (includes roles and responsibilities).
- Charter that expresses the purpose and work of the committee.
- Approval of the charter and plans by the Board and Dharma Council.
- A strategy and a plan for DEI work at Dharma Rain.
- A communications plan.
- Training needs and goals identified for DRZC.
- A plan to track, monitor, and evaluate progress and accountability for DRZC.

5. Factors of success

How Dharma Rain does this work is as important as the work itself. The work of discerning what to do is continuous and includes a broad engagement with the Dharma Rain community.

This work depends on critical factors:

- Accountability of leaders at all levels of our sangha.
- On-going, actively expressed support from leadership.
- Financial and human resources.
- Dedicated time on council agendas and cohort gatherings.
- Documented operational and leadership roles and responsibilities.
- DEI committee's plan to monitor the work and a commitment to on-going learning and accountability for the committee itself.
- A forum where concerns, experiences, appreciations, and issues can be raised and responded to.
- Visibility and engagement of the sangha through diverse communication channels.
- Time to listen with gentleness
- Tolerance of ambiguity and discomfort

7. Roles and Responsibilities of the DEI Committee

The Board and Dharma Council are the primary decision-making bodies at Dharma Rain. The work of diversity, equity, and inclusion therefore falls within their usual stewardship. They have set in motion the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and oversee it.

The role of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is to provide planning, coordination, and guidance for equity work at DRZC.

Operationally, equity work will be carried out within the existing Mandala Model by the various temple bodies such as staff, Dharma Teachers, cohorts, teams, councils, programs, and sangha members.

Structure

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is a committee with (currently) seven members drawn from the sangha as a whole. There is one Board representative and one Dharma Council representative/Communications Liaison. There is a designated Coordinator and Facilitator. The Tasks and Decisions Tracker position rotates. All committee members are individual contributors.

Membership

The initial membership on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee emerged organically in the year after the Assessment Report. The Committee is committed to establishing the size of this body, terms, member responsibilities, and creating a transparent process and criteria established for future potential members within three months of the charter's approval, ideally by October 2020 but no later than December 2020.

Responsibilities of the DEI Committee to align DRZC with its vision for an inclusive sangha.

- Generate **vision** and momentum to take specific actions to cultivate and support equity in the sangha.
- **Keep** the conversation going. Ask questions. Make sure things happen. Integrate it into the sangha.
- Provide **direction** and **guidance**.
- With the community, **identify** needs for education, training, resources, and policy changes.
- Create a **plan** and keep it updated.

- Constantly **assess** progress.
- Keep people **informed** and updated through multi-channelled communications (synchronous and asynchronous).
- The committee will **hold** itself accountable.
- **Navigate** the organizational culture to take action.
- Committee members will **model** compassionate and mindful engagement during difficult conversations and change.
- Report regularly to the Board and Dharma Council

What is out of scope?

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is not responsible to:

- Design and deliver training
- Carry out the work tasks, operationalize the work (except where tasks are specifically assigned to the Committee)

8. Risks and Challenges

It will be important to anticipate risks and develop mitigation plans.

A primary challenge is organizational capacity. Pursuing and operationalizing this work will strain an already stretched staff and volunteer base, and perhaps our existing facilities. To move this forward, we anticipate having to think strategically about the programs we currently offer, and what might be (temporarily or permanently) reduced to free up resources for this work.

Equity and anti-racism work can be uncomfortable and unsettling. Membership might increase or contract as a result of this work.

A challenge for us as individuals is the urge to self-censor an unpopular point of view and isolate oneself. As a community we make room for differences of opinion, varied viewpoints, and tolerance of ambiguity.

9. Resources

As we identify resource needs, whether financial, human, or material, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee will submit them to the Board for funding. In subsequent Board adopted budgets, diversity, equity, and inclusion activities will have dedicated lines. We expect to submit budget proposals to the Board by the end of June each year.

TIMELINE and PLAN of ACTIVITIES

April 2021

OVERVIEW

This plan fulfills one of the primary DEI Committee responsibilities established in the committee's Charter. The purpose of this document is to communicate the DEI committee's plan and timeline for anti-racist equity work at DRZC. It outlines the committee's accomplishments since its formation, and sets out priorities for the next two years.

Activities are grouped in four categories:

- 1) Planning, research, and communications,
- 2) training and learning
- 3) programs and projects
- 4) policies, management, and operations.

COMPLETED WORK

1. In 2016 the Dharma Rain Zen Center (DRZC) Board and Dharma Council decided to focus on diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) work.
2. Thomas Bruner conducted research and reported results to the sangha in October 2018.
3. A series of forums were held about the Bruner report in the summer of 2019.
4. In September 2019, a six person committee was formed to coordinate and guide the work of DEI and be a resource to DRZC.
5. The Strategic Plan added a new chapter about DEI.
6. DRZC has had six dharma talks which focus on DEI topics, including two talks presented by people of color.
7. Made a five-minute presentation at the April 12, 2020 Sangha Forum to update the sangha on the committee's work to steer DEI at DRZC.
8. Made a five-minute presentation at the October 18, 2020 Sangha Forum to update the sangha on the committee's work to steer DEI at DRZC and to invite interested parties to join or contribute ideas.
9. A charter was approved by the Board and the Dharma Council that defines the role and work of the DEI committee. DRZC decided that race would be the primary focus, in other words, to "lead with race".
10. DRZC conducted the first Awakening to Whiteness program from September 2019 to July 2020.

11. A second Awakening to Whiteness program began in January 2021 and will continue through June 2021.
12. A third, condensed Awakening to Whiteness program is being planned for 12 weeks in summer 2021.
13. We led a Wednesday class discussion on managing difficult emotions that may arise when discussing anti-racism.
14. We developed and received approval from the Board for a budget for DEI work at DRZC.
15. The Daoren proposed a list of books to add to the DRZC Library and provided book reviews of the anti-racist books added to the library.
16. The DEI committee requested that DRZC establish a policy for its relationship with the police; work on this project is ongoing.
17. A protester support group was held in September 2020 to support those who were involved in the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests.
18. A [glossary](#) and [charter](#) are available online for the sangha to peruse.
19. A book group on *Radical Dharma* was developed and meets multiple times a month.

CURRENT AND FUTURE WORK

“Proposed Accountable Person or Team”: This is the person or team (council, body, group, cohort, etc) accountable for the activity and/or delegating it with oversight. They will define the work (scope, time, and resources), identify who implements the activity, and decide who to consult for guidance and input.

A. ACTIVITIES CURRENTLY UNDERWAY as of January 2021		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Proposed Accountable Person or Team</i>
Planning, research, and communications	1. Clarify and communicate the role of the DEI Committee: a) within the committee itself, b) to leader, councils, temple officers, the mandala families, etc., and 3) to DRZC as a whole and the sangha.	DEI
Planning, research, and communications	2. Submit on a regular basis content for the newsletter and/or blog with the intent of sharing the work we are doing and to create awareness about anti-racism and equity issues within the sangha.	DEI and sangha members identified by DEI.

Planning, research, and communications	3. Publish the DEI glossary. Update it quarterly, as needed.	DEI
Training and learning	4. Update the orientation for Guestmasters with an anti-racist equity lens.	DEI and Guestmaster Team Lead
Programs and Projects	5. Explore whether to offer affinity groups (BIPOC, etc.) now or at a later date.	DEI
Programs and Projects	6. Deliver a second Awakening to Whiteness program with adjustments and refinements based on the experience of the first program. Afterwards, create a list of possible follow-up work in response to both A2W sessions.	DEI
Programs and Projects	7. Offer book study groups and contribute book reviews focusing on dharma and race.	DEI and Daoren
Policy, management, and operations.	8. Make a list of policies to create using an anti-racist lens (e.g. hiring announcements, interviews, and decisions; required training for staff and leaders; etc.)	Kanin and Assistant Kanin and DEI
Policy, management, and operations.	9. Offer diverse voices and representation in dharma expression.	Abbot and Dharma Council
Policy, management, and operations.	10. Develop and publish a list of non-police resources that is accessible to staff and residents. Review and update it quarterly.	Health and Safety Committee and Kanin

B. NEXT ACTIVITIES - Start by September 2021		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Proposed Accountable Person or Team</i>
Planning, research, and communications	1. Find allies and partners for this work among other sanghas. Reach out to learn from each other about responses to racism and other forms of discrimination.	DEI

Training and learning	2. Plan equity training for staff and leaders. Develop a list of learning objectives and requirements for staff and non-staff leaders' equity training. This includes basic awareness of anti-racist work and a commitment to DRZC's decision to lead with race. Propose learning objectives for each of the roles described in the Green Book.	Board, DEI, and external expertise
Programs and Projects	3. Serve as a safe place for dialogue, where people can bring questions, concerns, experiences, issues, etc., and where responses are aligned with precepts.	DEI.
Programs and Projects	4. What kind of anti-racist training and education do folks need who are leading Dharma Garden Council programs?	Dharma Garden Council with DEI, and external expertise
Programs and Projects	5. Hold a forum or a series of conversations surrounding issues of race and equity	DEI

C. FUTURE ACTIVITIES - Start by March 2022 or later		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Proposed Accountable Person or Team</i>
Programs and Projects	1. Create and implement the policies identified last year and ensure people receive training on those policies.	Kanin and Assistant Kanin
Programs and Projects	2. Update the Ethics Book (Green Book) to incorporate language about anti-racism, equity, and power.	Ethics Council, Dharma Council, and external expertise.
Programs and Projects	3. Figure out how to put the Green Book in action, to let people know about it, and to use it in various contexts.	Kanin
Planning, research, and communications	4. Develop relationships with Asian Buddhist sanghas in the Portland area to express solidarity and gratitude.	Kanin
Policy, management, and operations.	5. Create a plan to monitor DEI work and hold the committee and members accountable to ongoing anti-racist work	DEI and external help.

Policy, management, and operations.	6. Conduct organizational reflection about the ways we implicitly and explicitly perpetuate racism and other forms of oppression that prevent us from being welcoming.	Board and Dharma Council
Training and learning	7. Deliver training for staff and leaders. Anyone moving into leadership roles will be expected to meet these minimum learning objectives.	DEI and external expertise

RACI Matrix

R = Responsible (for making it happen, for doing the work)

A = Accountable (the person who is ultimately accountable that it happens, though they might not be the one to do the work)

C = Consult (gives input, advice, feedback, contributes. Important to consult this person/role)

I = Inform (Inform this person/role that it is happening and the impact on them, what is expected of them, if anything)

GLOSSARY of TERMS

Our intention in developing this glossary to provide a framework for a shared language in our discussion of race, equity, diversity, and inclusion. It is meant to be a resource, a conversation starter, and a foundation on which to build our efforts to cultivate equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at Dharma Rain Zen Center.

We recognize that there are many perspectives and experiences within our community. This glossary is not intended as a rigid or prescriptive formula to limit individual thought. However, we also recognize that language is powerful and that words carry potential to both heal and harm. In our effort to abide by the principles of right speech, we offer this glossary as a way to thoughtfully, intentionally, and specifically address the various dimensions of equity, diversity, and inclusion at Dharma Rain Zen Center.

We are specifically highlighting aspects of race and racism in this document because we recognize this is an area for considerable growth within our sangha and within American Buddhism as a whole. We also embrace an analysis of intersectionalism, which recognizes that aspects of one's social and political identities (e.g. gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) might combine to create unique modes of discrimination. By centering race in our conversations and EDI work we acknowledge the profound impact that racism and white privilege have in our

culture as a whole. Through centering a racial justice lens in all our work, we will inevitably uplift all marginalized groups, making us a more authentically diverse and inclusive sangha.

Term	Definition
Accountability	In the context of racial equity work, accountability refers to the ways in which individuals and communities hold themselves to their goals and actions and acknowledge the values and groups to which they are responsible. To be accountable, one must be visible, with a transparent agenda and process.
Ally	Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways.
Discrimination	The unequal treatment of members of various groups based on race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion and other categories.
Diversity	Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued.
Equity	Ensuring access, opportunity, advancement, and fair treatment for all while identifying and mitigating barriers that prevent the full participation of marginalized groups.
Ethnicity	A social construct that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base.
Implicit Bias	Implicit bias is a negative association that people unknowingly hold. It is expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behavior that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess.
Inclusion	Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Intersectionality	Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how aspects of one's social and political identities (e.g. gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) might combine to create unique modes of discrimination.
Microaggression	The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.
Oppression	The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group. Oppression = Power + Prejudice.
People of Color	A collective term for referring to non-White racial groups. It is important whenever possible to identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning.
Power	Certain individuals or groups wield greater power than others in our society, thereby allowing them greater access and control over resources. Wealth, whiteness, citizenship, patriarchy, heterosexism, and education are a few key social mechanisms through which power operates. The importance of the concept of power to anti-racism is clear: racism cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one.
Prejudice	A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. Such negative attitudes are typically based on unsupported generalizations (or stereotypes) that deny the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized and treated as individuals with individual characteristics.
Privilege	Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because we're taught not to see it. Nevertheless, it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it.
Race	A social construction to describe a group of people who share physical and cultural traits, as well as a common ancestry. <i>Race has no biological basis and racial designations have changed over time to reinforce hierarchies of power to maintain white privilege.</i>
Racial Justice	The proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that

	produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.
Racism	Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power • Racism = a system of advantage based on race • Racism = a system of oppression based on race • Racism = a white supremacy system Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.
Whiteness	Whiteness refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color. Whiteness is conceptualized as a constellation of processes and practices rather than as a discrete entity (i.e. skin color alone). Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times and myriad levels. These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all, but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people.
White Privilege	An unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are white. A system of white domination that creates and maintains a belief system that makes current racial advantages and disadvantages seem normal. White privilege manifests at individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.
White Supremacy	White supremacy is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

Sources:

https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/RET_Glossary_Updated_October_2019_.pdf
<http://dharma-rain.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/DRZC-DEI-Assessment-Plan-4th-DRAFT.pdf>

Appendix A - Statement from SZBA

"In deep grief over the recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, the Soto Zen Buddhist Association acknowledges the deep seated, systemic and structural racism that poisons life in the United States of America. We vow to continue the work we are currently engaged in and call for a fresh and coordinated effort to dismantle racism at every level of our culture, society, government, our Zen communities, and our own hearts." - June 2020