

“The State of the IMCW People of Color & LGBTQ Sanghas”

Respectfully submitted by La Sarmiento on January 1, 2009

- Both sanghas have been in existence since the spring of 2005.
- The LGBTQ listserve has over 275 members; the POC listserve over 150.
- Both sanghas meet monthly. Through the generosity of Unity Woods Yoga, we meet at their beautiful studio in Woodley Park which is wheelchair and metro accessible. LGBTQ meetings attract up to 25-32 members/meeting; POC meetings up to 12 – 25.
- Monthly meetings are 2.5 hours in duration and include a 30 minute sit, 10 minute walking meditation, Introductions/check-in, a short dharma talk into a mindful discussion. This fall we began with exploring the foundations of Buddhism: The Four Noble Truths, the Three Refuges, and in the new year – The Eight-fold Path.
- IMCW initiated a policy to open registration of IMCW events and retreats to minority groups 2 weeks prior to opening registration to the general public to encourage participation.
- African-American teacher Ruth King led a Friday evening and Saturday entitled “Transforming Rage: Healing Generational Pain Patterns.” 53 participants attended, 66% of whom were either POC, LGBTQ or both.
- In October, IMCW named me as the teacher of the diversity sanghas and included me in the IMCW Teachers Council while on the teacher-training track.
- The 2009 women's retreat will be co-taught by teachers of color Gina Sharpe from NY Insight and Luisa Montero-Diaz. The retreat filled in 2 weeks and 54% of those participating are either women of color or LGBT women.
- 2 members of the LGBTQ sangha joined the IMCW Board of Directors this fall.
- In 2009, we are planning to have events with Japanese-American dharma teacher Mushim Ikeda-Nash from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship & the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland in January, African-American lesbian Toni Lester for a “Wise Speech & Social Justice” workshop in May, and lesbian dharma teacher Cheri Maples possibly in the fall.
- The “Refuge 3” sangha, whose vision is to be a socially engaged, multicultural, urban sangha that together deepens in the dharma teachings and mindfulness practices to unlearn our conditioning with wisdom and compassion for both personal and social transformation, continues to meet on a bi-weekly basis. The current sangha has 16 active and committed members, half of whom are POC, LGBTQ, or both.
- Both sanghas have sponsored a holiday banquet as a way to create community amongst themselves and the greater IMCW community. This past year's banquet attracted 46 guests.
- The IMCW Diversity Fund currently has \$4357.19 to bring diverse teachers to IMCW as well as keep registration fees low so as to make diversity-related events accessible to all through donations from affinity group members, IMCW sangha members, and the surplus from the Ruth King event.
- 3 LGBTQ KM groups continue to meet in DC, MD, and VA and meet bi-weekly.
- A new POC KM group formed and meets on a bi-weekly basis in DC.
- Several members from the POC, LGBTQ, and Refuge 3 sanghas participated in a kickball tournament last spring to benefit the DC Rape Crisis Center.
- Several members from both sanghas have volunteered at Miriam's Kitchen that provides hot, nutritious breakfasts to DC's homeless and will be looking for other ways to serve the larger DC metropolitan community
- About 10 members from the diversity sanghas and allies participated in the Fannie Mae “Help the Homeless” Walk-a-thon in November and raised a total of \$1965.00 to benefit Miriam's Kitchen.
- We maintain active webpages on IMCW's website that are updated regularly:
 - GLBT: <http://www.imcw.org/lgbtq>
 - POC: <http://www.imcw.org/people-color>