

**ARISE - Black, Indigenous, People Of Color (BIPOC) Subgroup
Cultivating POC OI members/Dharma Teachers – Proposals
March 2017**

“Now is the time to define ourselves not by our wounds, but by our wholeness. Now is the time to define ourselves not by our disappointment, but by our capacity and our potential to be profoundly human. We need imagination more than ever before to reimagine ourselves, to reimagine our institution, our communities, and our capacities to be present with compassion and insight for one another.”

-Larry Ward, Teachings For Uncertain Times

ARISE Sangha distributed a community survey in 2016 to determine priorities in which to focus ARISE efforts. One of the top responses was the need for greater BIPOC “leadership” or Order of Interbeing members and Dharma Teachers in our mahasangha. As a result of this response, a small ARISE group representing Black, Indigenous and People of Color convened to discuss and develop ideas for this specific survey finding and that could address the gross under representation of BIPOC Order of Interbeing members and Dharma teachers. Below represents a list of ideas/proposals that was shared with the Dharma Teacher Council in March 2017 and to the North American Dharma Teacher Council in March 2018.

Below is a list of recommended proposals and/or action steps.

- 1) As a place to start, hold a webinar for BIPOC Order of Interbeing members, Aspirants, Sangha Leaders/Facilitators. Gather together to bring up the topic of POC “Leadership”. What support is needed to develop Sangha facilitators, Aspirants, OI members? What new ways of structure/process do we need to cultivate POC leadership? (Can survey participants prior to session to understand any issues, concerns, roadblocks)
- 2) Re-imagine “leadership”. Define the term “leadership” to include Sangha Leader and Sangha Facilitator, along with OI and Dharma Teacher. Elevate and support greater visibility for POC Sangha Facilitators/co-facilitators. Elevate and support a path for POC leaders.
- 3) Re-imagine ourselves, our current institution/current structures

Re-evaluate our current structure and processes, including OI and DT processes. And: how can the POC voice be included in current Dharma Teacher and OI communities? How can we re-imagine these spaces?

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- 4) Create greater transparency of the Dharma Teacher process and selection Process -- What is the process? What are the criteria? What is the selection process?
- 5) Re-visit criteria (requirement for # of years) for mentor, OI and Dharma Teachers

This proposal helps to address those BIPOC who have been practicing for years but have been reluctant to enter OI due to lack of BIPOC and predominance of white, dominant culture in OI

For example, rather than requiring that a mentor be in OI for 2 years
Can state: At least 2 years OI and/or Sangha Leader combined

For Dharma Teacher, rather than 7 years or 10 years as OI,
Can state: 7 years or 10 years (whatever the current requirement is) in OI and Sangha Leadership combined. Or something like, a combination of OI and Sangha Leadership, with at least “X” years OI.

Note: Serious consideration should be taken to evaluate how to “increase” BIPOC leaders, while “pausing or slowing” the process for non-BIPOC OI and Dharma Teachers.

- 6) Identify BIPOC Sanghas and BIPOC in our mahasangha – Demographics of BIPOC and white. Start with numbers of Order of Interbeing members and Dharma Teachers
- 7) Develop a BIPOC leadership “initiative” or “program” – targeted specifically to BIPOC (similar to what Insight Community has done – invitational letters directed to BIPOC to join Dedicated Practitioners Program). Note: This could be a “goal” or may be something that comes out of the POC webinar session and/or from further community input
- 8) Develop an outreach and awareness plan directed to BIPOC within our mahasangha. Find a way to bring awareness to existing POC Sanghas of one another. A way for networking, sharing resources/tools, supporting practices. Perhaps social media, e.g. Facebook (example is POC Mindfulness Facebook page – San Diego)

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- 9) Re-imagine retreats – cost of retreats and differing methods to hold retreats
- 10) Embed new processes that create inclusivity when setting up new centers, retreats, days of mindfulness, sangha gatherings

Examples:

- Include Gatha for Healing Racial and Social Inequity as a regular part of Sangha practice;
- Include Contemplations on the 5 Mindfulness Trainings as a regular part of Sangha practice;
- Review ARISE’s Vision and Mission to include/embed elements into new practice centers;
- Ensure demographically balanced organizing teams; find ways to reach out, invite, welcome POC to retreats, gatherings;
- Create ARISE pre-retreat / orientation package
- Others

- 11) Wake Up community: Partner with Wake Up community to re-imagine systems/structures/processes (and/or habit formations) such that we include and cultivate BIPOC leaders, and to avoid perpetuating same dominant culture structures (see #10 above)