

February 16, 2020

Dear North American Dharma Teachers Council,

We know you are there and this makes us feel supported.

The ARISE sangha is humbled and nourished to provide comments in supporting this beautiful path of ordaining into the Order of Interbeing. This path is a courageous intention to continue in the Bodhisattvas footsteps, always noting what else can be transformed in order to help others in their own transformation.

We wholeheartedly support the recommendations of our dear Sister Valerie. Included here are a few more reflections intended to deepen our collective aspiration to provide the broadest support for aspirants and mentors.

We recommend language be included in the application in regards to the importance of developing familiarity and comfort in looking deeply and sharing about race, intersectionality and social equity as a path of awakening. [The recommendations below are only a guide to existing resources; the link to the ARISE website includes more resources that can continue this journey of deeper understanding of the dharma door of race, intersectionality, and social equity.] Perhaps both mentor and mentee might select one or two of these resources to read and share during the aspirancy process. Some of us have experienced it to be useful for the mentee to have a Second Body through the OI Aspirancy Process and discuss this material with that person. In addition it would continue this collective consciousness-raising if the mentee discussed their learning with the local sangha who will be supporting the person's application.

We recommend that these questions be added to the application:

-How have I learned to recognize and heal the racism and other forms of oppression that I have internalized?

-How have I learned to recognize and heal the racism and other forms of oppression that I participate in?

In some areas of the country aspirants in marginalized groups may not feel comfortable with the existing Dharma teacher or mentors in that region. To welcome in all mentees into the Order of Interbeing and increase racial and social equity, it might therefore be helpful to include some language in the application process that guides applicants to potential mentors or Dharma teachers from marginalized groups who reside outside the region. This is not an attempt to hurt anyone; instead it is an opportunity to assure that everyone feels comfortable to walk this path and see themselves in this path.

Below is a concise list of potential resources to help familiarize applicants, mentors, and Dharma teachers with race, intersectionality, and social equity:

Mindful of Race by Ruth King

Fragrant Palm Leaves by Thich Nhat Hanh

Awakening Together by Larry Yang

The Path to Racial and Social Equity: Mindfulness Bell

<http://arisesangha.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/gomez-brown-path-of-racial-equality-final-pdf.pdf>

Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People, by Kelsey Blackwell

<https://arrow-journal.org/why-people-of-color-need-spaces-without-white-people/>

For a more inclusive list please visit ARISE website: <https://arisesangha.org/resources/>

The ARISE sangha is inspired that this process for OI ordination is being looked into in regard racial and social equity. Thank you for this opportunity to participate in helping our community of practice become more inclusive and inviting for all.

With palms joined,

ARISE Sangha