

From Minneapolis to Oakland: Heart Opened to Compassion

by Eli J. Grobel

My name is Eli J. Grobel, and I recently visited the beautiful Sangha that is EBMC. I have been searching for a community in which I can grow, learn and be an agent for social change that practices the Dharma. In speaking with my mentor in Minneapolis, she recommended I visit EBMC. I flew across the country to Oakland to connect with Sangha, and through the compassion of others, I definitely achieved this goal.

I stayed in Oakland from September 11-17, 2014. I was received by Center director Brenda Salgado, a warm being who welcomed me with open arms. While I was in Oakland I attended multiple programs and volunteered at EBMC as a Temple Keeper with Doe Restrepo Macias, a kind and gentle soul. I also helped paint Room 2 with Kazu Haga, a heart-and-mind warrior for social justice. As well, I received great wisdom and guidance from the Center's community coordinator, Mushim Ikeda, who helped facilitate my visit. And I was honored to be able to stay in guest lodgings provided by Paul Ciske, an EBMC community teacher. Without access to the housing that he provided me, I most likely would have been unable to come to Oakland.

What I found at EBMC was connection. EBMC's Sangha members, teachers and staff helped me to feel a sense of belonging. I was treated like family. The compassion that I was shone was immense. It inspires me now to further commit to my Dharma practice, as I hope that someday I can pour out love with as much ease as those with whom I came into contact.

I am hoping now to move to Oakland and engage in the White Allies Active and Awakening program in order to further develop myself as a white ally. My time at EBMC has instilled in me a sense of commitment to action. A commitment to change myself. A commitment to work in the direct of changing the oppressive systems we live in. And a commitment to open my heart to compassion.

Thank you, EBMC. I am eternally grateful.



Thanks to volunteers Eli and Kazu, EBMC's Compassion Room got a fresh coat of paint in September.

At EBMC, volunteers are doing hundreds of tasks, from weekly cleaning by our Temple Keeping team to fundraising to coordinating regular meditation groups and to designing a new website! All volunteer positions are leadership development positions; training and ongoing support is provided by staff. Join us!

For more information, see eastbaymeditation.org/index.php?s=66