

Resources for and about African American Buddhists

Books, Audio/Video

Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace by Angel Kyodo Williams (Viking Compass, 2000). Writing from her perspective as a black woman and ordained Soto Zen priest, Williams offers principles and tools for overcoming greed, anger, and fear in order to achieve self-acceptance and community empowerment in terms easily understood by readers not familiar with Buddhism. While essentially aimed at the black reader, this book offers practical guidelines for readers of any faith or race who are interested in a beginning look at Zen teachings. — Virginia Hickey

Buddhist Women on the Edge: Contemporary Perspectives from the Western Frontier edited by Marianne Dresser (North Atlantic Books, 1996). Includes essays by bell hooks, Lori Pierce, and Jan Willis.

Dreaming Me: From Baptist to Buddhist, An African American Woman's Spiritual Journey by Jan Willis.

Finding Freedom: Writings from Death Row by Jarvis Jay Masters (Padma Publishing, 1997). Masters began and continues his Buddhist practice in his cell in San Quentin, where he has been incarcerated since age 19. Now on death row, he writes movingly about his efforts to overcome the violence of prison life. Available from Padma Publishing, 877/479-6129, or from the Free Jarvis Web site, <http://www.freejarvis.org>. The Web site also contains information about Masters's life, his legal case, and efforts to get him released from prison.

Making the Invisible Visible: Healing Racism in Our Buddhist Communities. Booklet prepared by a group of Buddhists of color for a conference of Western Buddhist teachers at Spirit Rock in June 2000. Contains personal essays by people of color and their allies about the impact of racism, practical suggestions and strategies for making predominantly white sanghas more inclusive, an excellent bibliography, and a variety of diversity-related resources (several of which are also mentioned here). Available at www.spiritrock.org/html/diversity_2invisible.html or in printed/bound form from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, \$7 per copy (postage included), 510/655-6169.

Pema Chödrön and Alice Walker in Conversation, audio cassette or videotape, available from Sounds True, 800/333-9185, www.soundstrue.com.

Turning the Wheel: Essays on Buddhism and Writing by Charles Johnson. See review, page 47. See also his books *Middle Passage*, (Simon & Schuster, 1998) and *Oxherding Tale* (Dutton/Plume, 1995).

Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem by bell hooks.

Internet

Black Practitioners of Nichiren Shoshu, www.proudblackbuddhist.org. Independent, unofficial Web site for African and African American practitioners of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, published by Anthony Elmore, a longtime Nichiren Shoshu practitioner.

Diversity Page at Spirit Rock Web site, www.spiritrock.org/html/diversity.html. Information on various resources, including retreats at Spirit Rock (Marin County, CA) for people of color, an ongoing meditation and discussion group for women of color, interviews with African American Buddhist practitioners George Mumford, Lawrence Ellis, and Ralph M. Steele, and the Diversity and Multicultural Initiative at Spirit Rock.

Internet Listserve for Black Buddhists. To subscribe, e-mail: <blackbuddhists-subscribe@yahoogroups.com>. For information about a separate list for Buddhists of color, contact <boc_caretakers@hotmail.com>.

Rainbow Dharma, www.rainbowdharma.com. Founded by Choyin Rangdröl, an African American lay teacher in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the author of two booklets, *Buddhist Meditations for African Americans* and *Black Buddha: Living Without Fear*, both available from the Web site. The site also includes a calendar of events (primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area), Dharma teachings, and discussions on a variety of topics.

UrbanPEACE Initiative, www.urbanpeace.org. Founded by Angel Kyodo Williams to integrate awareness and individual transformation with social activism. Sponsors a variety of events, retreats, trainings, and projects, including newDHARMA, which provides a forum for teaching by Dharma teachers of color. Operates primarily in New York City.

Groups, Gatherings, and Dharma Communities

Brooklyn Buddhist Association and **Direct Mind Zendo**. Both organizations are associated with the Jikishinkan Aikido Dojo in New York, headed by Joseph Jarman, an African American Aikido master, Jodo Shinshu priest, Zen teacher, and jazz musician. The Brooklyn Buddhist Association is dedicated to Shin (Pure Land) practice; the Direct Mind Zendo practices Rinzai Zen and a variety of Zen arts. See www.directmind.com/buddhism.htm.

Informal Gatherings in Oakland, CA. A weekly event every Wednesday for meditators of color, meets 6:30 P.M. at the Organic Cafe, 1050 40th Street (between Market and Adeline), near MacArthur BART station. Phone: 510/653-6510. Vegan dinners at the cafe range from \$7 to \$11.

Mindfulness, Diversity, and Social Change Sangha, blending mindfulness practice in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh with social change work, meets weekly in Oakland. Contact Olga at 510/540-0141; <mindful@rightbox.com>.

Ordinary Dharma/Manzanita Village. A Buddhist community and retreat center in Warner Springs, California, offers retreats for

people of color led by resident teacher Michele Benzamin-Miki, a biracial woman and a teacher of Aikido and Iaido. The community draws upon both vipassana practice and the Zen teaching of Thich Nhat Hanh. See www.ordinarydharma.org.

People of Color Sitting Group. Meets once a month on Sunday, 1:00–3:30 P.M., at San Francisco Buddhist Center, part of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO). The group also hosts occasional residential retreats for people of color. For more info, see www.sfbuddhistcenter.org and click on the “people of color” link, or contact Viveka at 415/282-5918; <viveka@igc.org>.

Retreats for Activists of Color. The Vallecitos Mountain Refuge in Taos, New Mexico, hosts a variety of retreats specifically for activists of color and for multicultural groups of activists. For details, see www.vallecitos.org and click on the “Retreats for Activists” link.

Sangha for Buddhists of Color meets monthly in the San Francisco Bay Area for meditation, Dharma talks, and mutual support. For information, call 415/789-8359; <boc_caretakers@hotmail.com>.

Soka Gakkai International. This is the most ethnically diverse form of Buddhism in the United States. It was formerly associated with Nichiren Shoshu, a Japanese Buddhist organization, but the two groups split several years ago. For more information, see www.sgi_usa.org.

Women of Color Sitting Group. Vipassana group meets monthly in Marin County, CA, facilitated by Marlene Jones, a woman of African ancestry, activist, and longtime meditator. Info: 415/488-0164 x314.

The Color of Dharma. Various programs and events at San Francisco Zen Center, including sitting groups for people of color; a teacher-in-residence program for teachers of color; daylong retreats and teachings for people of color from all spiritual traditions; meditation instruction in Spanish; daylong events for people of color and their allies; and diversity training for Zen Center staff and residents. A weekly meditation and discussion group for people of color meets Thursdays 7–8:30 P.M. For more information see www.sfzc.org or contact Lee Lipp, 415/863-3761; <sfzclea@yahoo.com>.

The Dharma of Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend course at San Francisco Zen Center with Hozan Alan Senauke of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Saturday–Sunday, August 16–17, 2003. Participants will study MLK’s writings and actions, and share experiences and concerns. Cost: \$80; \$72 for SFZC members. For more information, see www.sfzc.org.

The Untraining, workshops designed to help white people unlearn racism. Ongoing groups: 510/235-6134. ❖

—compiled by Shannon Hickey