

Shambhala People of Color Retreat

Northern California*

“It was like coming home to a place I knew was mine, but hadn’t felt comfortable in before.”

“The Awakening to Freedom retreat nourished my mind, soul, and heart. I had been looking for this kind of experience for so long. I am so grateful for having the opportunity to connect with such a supportive, open, and peaceful community of people.”

“It is wonderful when people of color have the opportunity to come together to study the dharma and transform the illusion of our invisibility. We exist. We study and practice the dharma. We matter and we are not alone.”

These comments are from three participants of Northern California Shambhala’s first-ever weekend meditation program for people of color last May. Twenty-six participants and five staff people of African, Asian/Pacific Islander, Chicana/Hispanic/Latina, Middle Eastern, Caribbean, and Native American ancestry attended “Awakening to Freedom: Linking Spirit Across Differences,” led by Reverend Hilda Ryumon G. Baldoquin and Acharya Gaylon Ferguson. It offered people of color the opportunity to come to Berkeley Shambhala Center knowing we would not be in the minority.

Beyond exploring this unique togetherness, we explored how our habitual pattern of seeing others as separate and different from ourselves keeps us from embodying our innermost desire to be free in this lifetime. We left feeling a sense of community.

The weekend included meditation, experiential exercises, and dharma talks. Reverend Hilda Ryumon Gutierrez Baldoquin is a Zen priest in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. She is the editor of the award-winning anthology, *Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voices in Western Buddhism*. Acharya Gaylon Ferguson has led meditation retreats for thirty years. He is currently a visiting professor at Naropa University.

*Reprinted from *The DOT*, Winter 2007, Vol. 4, No. 3.