

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

***A selection of quotes for inspiration, education, and contemplation  
compiled by Shambhala Diversity Contact Persons - March 2007***

All individuals have a place in Shambhala society. There should not be a sense of outer and inner, but rather a sense of being included in the compassionate embrace of heaven and earth.

—Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche  
***Treatise on Society and Organization***

You are welcome in the kingdom of Shambhala.

—Shambhala President Richard Reoch  
***Comments on the occasion of an elegant dinner  
hosted by the President to celebrate diversity in Shambhala***

When we take the Bodhisattva vow to save all sentient beings, no matter how numberless, we are making an inconceivable commitment to diversity and accessibility. No one is left out of this aspiration. Thus the commitment to finding ways to make the Shambhala Buddhist path and society available to others is at the heart of Shambhala Buddhism itself.

—Dan Hessey  
***Notes on Diversity and Accessibility***

The Dharma itself is colorless. It is not limited by the gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or church affiliation of the person studying or practicing it.

—Jan Willis  
***“Dharma Has No Color” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture***

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

The tendency to expect others to aspire to practice in the same way we do tends to create an exclusive culture that limits access to the dharma. For instance, in the 1970's and 1980's it was assumed by many people that any serious practitioner would plan on doing a dathun, attend seminary, complete the ngondro and receive abisheka as soon as possible. If a person did not feel inspired to do this, or was not able to, he or she often were regarded as a second-class practitioner. This kind of elitism was harshly criticized by Trungpa Rinpoche as missing the point of practicing for the benefit of others.

—Dan Hessey  
*Notes on Diversity and Accessibility*

I felt I had to leave myself at the door and assimilate in order to fit in. And even then, I couldn't change the way that I looked. I ended up feeling the same sense of isolation and alienation that I experience in mainstream society. Yet I knew Buddhism was my spiritual home.

—Marlene Jones  
*"Moving Toward the End of Suffering" in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture*

"Some people use 'no color' to mean 'our color'—you're welcome here as long as you act, dress, and pretend to look like everyone else here—but don't have any 'color consciousness,' so you shouldn't bring that up, okay?"

—Gaylon Ferguson  
*"All Color, No Colors" in  
Mindful Politics*

When we work across cultures, we cannot assume that what makes sense to us will be shared by others. To work effectively, we are called to pay attention to words, to what is not said, to the messages our bodies and others' bodies convey, and to our precious intuition, which attunes us to incongruencies that may indicate something is out of alignment within us or between us.

—Michelle LeBaron  
*"The Roots of Conflict" in  
Fieldnotes, April 2005*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

True consideration is not diplomacy, putting on a façade of smiles or polite conversation. It is something more than that. It requires much energy and intelligence. It requires opening up our territory rather than marching into someone else's.

—Chögyam Trungpa  
**The Myth of Freedom**

Training in equanimity is learning to open the door to all, welcoming all beings, inviting life to come visit.

—Pema Chödrön  
**Comfortable with Uncertainty**

“How can we make our group more accessible to poor, suffering black people?” I would suggest that within that well-intentioned question is the very ethnocentrism that would discourage all but the most resilient minority person from wanting to join “us.” Particularly when we are just beginning to learn the practices of an ancient Asian religion, as passed on by countless generations of Asian teachers, it is not helpful to come at the question of our own insularity by thinking like missionaries.

—Albert Kutchins  
“Letters” in  
**Turning Wheel, Summer 1992**

In our path, we'll notice bias as an obvious display of fear, when we separate ourselves from that which is unknown, which is threatening or different. We habitually react to the fear with a type of aggression, by pushing away. This behavior is at the root of the majority of what is conventionally known as bias.

—Agness Au  
***Going Beyond Bias***

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

The practice of meditation is a way of unmasking ourselves, our deceptions of all kinds, and also the practice of meditation is a way of bringing out the subtleties of intelligence that exist within us.

– Chögyam Trungpa  
***The Path is the Goal***

My part in ending all suffering was to pay attention to what happens in life as it is happening. This was the path towards liberation from the delusions of oppression and life in a dark body.

–Earthlyn Marselean Manuel  
***“Bearing Up in the Wild Winds” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture***

A color has no self. A color is made only of other colors. Looking deeply into one color, you see all the other colors in it.

–Thich Nhat Hanh  
***“The Nobility of Suffering” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture***

Seeing clearly helps us to choose our responses to a situation so that our good intentions remain grounded in wisdom.

–George T. Mumford  
***“Mind Like a Mirror” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture***

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

Meditation is key to uncovering the many stories we play in our own minds that are centered in fear. As we meditate, we can see our propensities towards self-hate, racism, sexism, homophobia float away and we also see more clearly how these work in others. When we cultivate the Brahmaviharas (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) we are substituting afflictive emotions with skillful means.

—Bonnie Duran  
“Race, Racism, and the Dharma” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

Discriminating awareness in its wisdom form perceives clearly, without developing bias towards our own liking, disliking, or ignoring of the vividness.

—Agness Au  
*Going Beyond Bias*

Wherever we are, we can train as a warrior. Our tools are sitting meditation, tonglen, slogan practice, and cultivating the four limitless qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. With the help of these practices, we will find the tenderness of bodhichitta in sorrow and in gratitude, behind the hardness or rage and in the shakiness of fear. In loneliness as well as in kindness, we can uncover the soft spot of basic goodness.

—Pema Chödrön  
*Comfortable with Uncertainty*

Skillfulness is a function not only of recognizing when racism is at play, but also knowing the most useful time to bring it to awareness and the most lucid language to invoke understanding.

—Bonnie Duran  
“Race, Racism, and the Dharma” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

Difficult learning situations, like not being accepted, serve a purpose and we can learn from them if we pay attention.

—Maria P. Vargas  
“Testimonies”  
*Diversity in Shambhala website*

“Because racism is a set of learned attitudes and behaviors (just as no child is born speaking Italian, no infant is born racist), that means that it could be ‘unlearned,’ systematically and personally undone.”

—Gaylon Ferguson  
“All Color, No Colors” in  
*Mindful Politics*

Whenever we experience separation in any form, look at it and try to understand it. How can we *include* our feeling of separation into our practice? What is there about that other situation we want to separate from, and what can we learn from that? The goal is not to homogenize everything. Everything has its distinct, vivid, diverse quality. How can we just accommodate all of it - “accommodating” meaning “to allow space for” - and still maintain the view, to allow space for whatever we may encounter, be it setting sun or Great Eastern Sun, confusion or wisdom?

—Agness Au  
*Going Beyond Bias*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

“So are you going to suggest that Buddhist practice in itself frees one from racism and all other social ills—classism, sexism, homophobia? Is that the fourth truth here, the truth of the Buddhist path?”

“Definitely not. As they say, most definitely not. It seems quite clear that, whatever the brilliance of the teachings of the buddhadharma, individual practitioners can continue for years, perhaps lifetimes, with these prejudices left largely untouched by meditation practice. One may even learn to use dharmic concepts like ‘karma’ to reinforce separation and indifference to the suffering around us. Why engage in outreach efforts, since, if those people had a ‘karmic connection’ with the dharma, they would already be living in the same neighborhoods we do?”

—Gaylon Ferguson  
“*All Color, No Colors*” in  
*Mindful Politics*

All of us in our lives will take turns being insiders and outsiders, of being included and feeling excluded, and even of being hurt and hurting others. To the extent that we are tender, brave and intelligent, we can use all those roles and experiences to benefit others.’

—Dan Hessey  
*Notes on Diversity and Accessibility*

Many of us grew up in a culture where our way of loving, which runs bone-deep in us and cannot be taken from us without doing terrible violence to our integrity, was ignored, denied or denigrated. In the face of such toxicity, coming to understand ourselves as fully human beings with beautiful hearts can be the work of decades. The Buddha Way can enable us to see our wholeness and the kinship of all beings, a kinship that can finally be expressed when we answer the question, “Who are you?”

—Myo Denis Lahey  
“*Reflections in the Mirror of Practice*” in  
*Queer Dharma*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

I only know my intention to receive this gift of age as a pointer towards clarity and freedom. I vow to see old age as an advisor on how to take care of life as it is, in this wrinkly, lumpy, creaky, and cranky body. I vow to be curious and present as well to the joy still kicking in me. Perhaps these vows will dismantle the shame I feel with the exposure. With the intention to love aging, all of it, I call on kindness, respect, and patience, from myself and from you. And so in front of all of you I declare that “I AM OLD.”

—Lee Lipp  
“I Am Old” in  
Turning Wheel, Winter 2001

In learning to understand my shadow, I found that bhavana was not enough. I had to understand the history of oppression in our society to see how I had hidden from myself the ways I had oppressed others.

—Ralph Steele  
“A Teaching on the Second Noble Truth” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture

When I discovered that it was possible to avoid becoming ensnared in the mentality of an angry black man by applying Buddhism, I felt I had found a great treasure not just for me but also for my people. I could immediately see the potential for resonance in millions of black people’s minds. I could see how this could reverberate down to the core of the hurt so many of us carry, and that one could emerge from Buddhist study and practice healed.

—Choyin Rangdrol  
“Black Buddha: Bring the Tradition Home” in  
Turning Wheel, Summer 2003

The Dharma is the most important source of insight and inspiration to me as I heal from racism and discrimination and as I work towards social justice.

—Bonnie Duran  
“Race, Racism, and the Dharma” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

I feel my role as a woman in Buddhism is to pay homage to, honor, and love deeply my own mother, grandmother, and the ancestral mothers and sisters within the Buddhist tradition.

—Michele Benzamin-Miki  
“*To Love Unconditionally is Freedom*” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

How might the presence of gay men in the Buddhist community serve to further the enlightenment of all sentient beings? Asking the question in this way serves to turn the presence of gay men in the Buddhist community from a problem to be solved, to an opportunity for transformation, not just for gay men, but for the Buddhist community as a whole.

—Jim Wilson  
“*Practicing Buddhism as a Gay Man*” in  
*Queer Dharma*

I am looking for practices in Buddhism. For me being a young Buddhist in this country means dealing with racism and patriarchy. That’s my oppression and that’s my karma, and I want to free myself from it. Where are those practices? Who’s going to teach me?

—Aran Watson  
*Turning Wheel, Fall 2002*

“The first step, the first truth so to speak, is acknowledging the existence of racism. As with suffering, things are only made worse by our denying this fact—pretending it didn’t happen, that it doesn’t continue to happen—bias, bigotry, racial discrimination, subtle and gross violence based on ethnic difference. It becomes an unmentionable presence in the room at certain moments. We perpetuate our imprisonment in neurotic suffering by ignoring it, by denial.”

—Gaylon Ferguson  
“*All Color, No Colors*” in  
*Mindful Politics*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

I do not believe that our problems are solely within, as you may find in some traditional Buddhist literature. But I think as Buddhists we certainly need to look within—within our communities, within our psyches—and take up the internalized notions of gender that we carry around very comfortably, that we don't want to examine, that we don't want to change. We need to regard them as just as important as all the other issues we're involved in as an agenda for engaged Buddhism.

—Rita Gross  
“*Pouring Water into Water*” in  
*Turning Wheel*, Spring 1999

Do the barriers we have erected arise because we have decided who should enter and who should not? Should we keep the centers inaccessible and free of too much diversity so only those who can break down the door can enter?

—Sarah Littlefeather  
“*Testimonies*”  
*Diversity in Shambhala website*

What if we started out our lives tired and wrinkled and forgetful, and then gradually our skin smoothed out and plumped up, and in the last few years of our life we got very very small, and we refused to use words, and finally we waved good-bye and crawled up in our mother's wombs? Then we'd think wrinkles were beautiful....

—Susan Moon  
“*From the Editor*” in  
*Turning Wheel*, Winter 2001

I would say to all young people and to myself, let's keep practicing, seriously and with dedication. That's what will ripen the community.

—Aran Watson  
*Turning Wheel*, Fall 2002

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

Everyone reading this will have their own scars and stories to tell from bruising encounters with that demonic trio of societal “isms”—sexism, racism, classism. We are all survivors of many battles and many wars.

—Gaylon Ferguson  
“*Liberation from Suffering*” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

[T]he idea that the Dharma is only the Dharma if it comes in the right kind of package presents a wonderful opportunity for letting go of the sort of habitual thinking that keeps us enslaved. I would even suggest that it is the same sort of thinking that leads to the racial and ethnic divisions among us.

—Albert Kutchins  
“*Letters*” in  
*Turning Wheel, 1992*

Our individual identities are falsely wrapped up in and reinforced by relations to people that are “the same” as us.

—Angel Kyodo Williams  
*Being Black*

As a sangha practicing the Mayahana path, we are committed to constantly extend our generosity and hospitality to others, putting their benefit before our own. We do so without bias as to whether we perceive them as being similar to ourselves or different, expressing equanimity, the last of the four immeasurables. Equanimity is the view that allows enlightened society to come into being.

—Dan Hessey  
*Notes on Diversity and Accessibility*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

Racism and other forms of discrimination are so fundamental to how the modern world organizes itself, that without some form of continual spiritual practice (Right Effort) promoting clarity and love, it will be very difficult to make a meaningful and lasting difference. Social justice efforts that do not include the cultivation of clarity and love are doomed to failure.

—Bonnie Duran  
“*Race, Racism, and the Dharma*” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

Only when we stop the battle within ourselves can we lay the groundwork for the truly compassionate activity of helping others to overcome suffering.

—Gaylon Ferguson  
“*Liberation from Suffering*” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

If you look back at history or you look at any place in the world where religious groups or ethnic groups or racial groups or political groups are killing each other, or families have been feuding for years and years, you can see—because you’re not particularly invested in that particular argument—that there will never be peace until somebody softens what is rigid in their heart. So it’s necessary to have to take a big perspective on your righteousness and your own fundamentalism when it begins to kick in and you think your own aggression and prejudice are reasonable.

—Pema Chödrön  
*Practicing Peace in Times of War*

At the outset of our practice, we have something in common with the fundamentalists. We share a need and a willingness to respond to the disorder and suffering of the world.

—Sandy Eastoak  
“*Fundamentalists*” in  
*Turning Wheel, Fall 1995*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

I think achieving world peace will take time. It must begin at the most basic level, with individuals and with families, and grow from there.

—His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
**Many Ways to Nirvana**

When we see someone who doesn't look like us, who has different customs from ours, and who speaks a strange language, a slow process of dehumanization begins. We may not consciously think badly of him or even wish him harm, but we don't believe that he is quite as human as we are. This is often a subtle process, and noticing it requires attention, honesty, and sensitivity. Sometimes it's not subtle at all, and people begin to act out of these conceptions, denying others basic rights and freedoms. And when they do, Levi says, then, at the end of the chain, there is the Lager [the concentration camp].

—Bernie Glassman  
**Bearing Witness**

"Tatum notes that, growing up in more or less homogeneous, racially segregated neighborhoods, as most of us do, means that we gain little direct experience and information about those who are different from us—whether that difference is ethnic, religious, or economic. And the information we do receive is often biased and distorted, exaggerating negative traits and omitting positive achievements—or the reverse! This suggests that ignorance is the prime cause of racism."

—Gaylon Ferguson  
**"No Color, All Colors" in Mindful Politics**

We can see our ignorance only if we practice skillfully, doing whatever is needed to get a better understanding of ourselves so that we can work with the collective problem. This can start by understanding our shadow: the way we hide our own motives from ourselves in ways that we've devised for ourselves and that we've picked up from the collective shadow of our society. We can do this by educating ourselves about the history, social injustice, and oppression of people of color and all people; interacting with other people from other ethnic origins; becoming culturally and ethnically diversified to broaden our view; reading literature we are not familiar with; undergoing therapy; and professionally working on our issues and ourselves to support our being an excellent person of integrity, for the collective well-being.

—Ralph Steele  
**"A Teaching on the Second Noble Truth" in Dharma, Color, and Culture**

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

In the modern world, diversity awareness has become a fundamental and basic skill that is necessary for all leaders, in particular leaders who have been entrusted with the vision of enlightened society, within a growing multicultural community that has become more and more diverse. It's an ongoing discipline. Each layer of bias we uncover will point to another layer and another layer.

—Agness Au  
*Going Beyond Bias*

There is an assumption that people on a spiritual path do not have the conditioning that people who don't have a spiritual path have. Racism is the same whether it's in the dharma center or if it's out there, it's the same.

—Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín  
*Colorlines, Summer 2005*

We all have to examine the shadow we all carry as part of this society before we can heal our unintended racism. Each of us has to skillfully do our individual work in this area so that we can work on the collective. Otherwise we'll just keep on causing suffering for ourselves and others, even when we think we're practicing and teaching the Dharma.

—Ralph Steele  
“A Teaching on the Second Noble Truth” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

[A]s a community we can learn how to work with our own differences and the conflicts that arise from them...(many of which are exactly the same as the larger issues we see in society around us) so that we can learn how to work with larger challenges. This is close to the Buddha's approach: create communities and figure out how to share and live with each other. If we ourselves learn how to deal with prejudice, aggression and all the obstacles we face, then we might become luminous as a group of people and inspire others to say, “Oh look, there is a group of human beings who have actually figured out how to live together!”

—Shambhala President Richard Reoch

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

“So a cultural politics of race needs to involve group work, community activities. It cannot be a matter of an isolated individual’s practice and exploration alone. Bondage and collective liberation are both born in social life, our humanly vibrant, lived experience with others.”

—Gaylon Ferguson  
“*All Color, No Colors*” in  
*Mindful Politics*

[W]ith the practice of good communication, deep listening, and loving speech, we can help each other remove wrong perception.

—Thich Nhat Hanh  
“*The Nobility of Suffering*” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

This seems to me to be the most fundamental message of the Buddha’s teachings. No separation. No difference. We are all One.

—Angel Kyodo Williams  
*Being Black*

Sometimes the spiritual search after oneness becomes a search for sameness, and sometimes even a search for sameness with me.

—Bernie Glassman  
*Bearing Witness*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

We need to have the opportunity to let go and learn other ways of thinking and behaving that are not ours. We have to practice opening our hearts, to learn about other cultures and other ways of thinking and behaving so we can establish communication with other nations and cultures.

—Thich Nhat Hanh  
“*The Nobility of Suffering*” in  
*Dharma, Color, and Culture*

One of the hallmarks of Buddhism is its willingness to shed its packaging and take on whatever cultural form is going to be most accessible to suffering people.

—Albert Kutchins  
“*Letters*” in  
*Turning Wheel, Summer 1992*

Every culture has something to teach us.

—Charles Johnson  
“*Buddhism is the Most Radical and Civilized Choice*” in  
*Shambhala Sun, January 2004*

Intentional engagement with difference educates, as virtually nothing else does.

—Thomas Coburn  
*Where Does the ‘Calling’ to Convocation Come From?*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

[I]ntercultural work is complex and cannot be reduced to a list of “what to do or not do when working with people from x group.” There is simply more diversity within many cultural groups than between them. Clear seeing is not about having encyclopedic knowledge of various cultural groups, but about being aware of various starting points and being able to put ourselves into different frames of reference.

—Michelle LeBaron  
“*The Roots of Conflict*” in  
*Fieldnotes*, April 2005

Being Shambhalians, knowing there is really no reference point, could we do something different among us? Can we accept each person's reality and condition as it is, recognizing each person's needs, and make our primary reference point being willing to serve others?

—Verónica Guzmán  
“*Testimonies*”  
*Diversity in Shambhala website*

We had as our guest the well-known Tibetan Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche . . . and we asked him what he thought of the tradition of Shambhala. To our astonishment, he replied very quietly, that although he had never been there, he believed in its existence and could see it in his mirror when he went into a certain state . . .

That evening in our study he produced a small metal mirror of the Chinese type. After looking into it intently for some time, he began to describe what he saw . . . The most singular thing about the inhabitants of the city was that they were of all faiths, races, and nations, and appeared to come from the four corners of the earth.

—James George  
“*Searching for Shambhala*” in  
*Search: Journey on the Inner Path*

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

There are no castes in the kingdom of Shambhala. We are all Rigden—“possessor of the family”—because we already possess our own awareness fully. To see this on the individual level, we need to wake up to the natural energy of our mind.

—Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche  
**Ruling Your World**

The Shambhala vision of Enlightened Society is by its nature a model of inclusivity and accessibility: it is a society where every aspect of human activity is integrated into the path, and where each person can practice genuinely according to their aspiration and capability. To paraphrase a passage from a Shambhala text, “The power of supreme humanness exists in everyone. The vision of the Shambhala lineage is to connect powerfully to everyone, not just the elite person alone.”

—Dan Hessey  
***Notes on Diversity and Accessibility***

The way we establish an enlightened society is not complicated or difficult to understand. We don’t have to fight and compete, criticize each other, make the best deals, slaughter the competition, spy on them, and cut them off. We don’t need to worry about ourselves—no matter what our personal history. We can wake up here and now, work together, and care for others. We can develop maitri, loving kindness, for ourselves and others and allow each other space to make mistakes...We can only go forward in the vision of the great eastern sun rather than let ourselves slip into the darkness of the setting sun.

—Jeremy & Karen Hayward  
***“Establishing Enlightened Society” in  
Sacred World***

So war and peace start in the human heart. Whether that heart is open or whether that heart closes has global implications.

—Pema Chödrön  
**Practicing Peace in Times of War**

## ***DIVERSITY QUOTATIONS: Words Beyond Bias***

---

Once we fully accept other people as they are without the slightest judgement or reservation—as all the enlightened being accept us—then there is no basis for problems in our relations with others. Problems do not exist outside our mind, so when we stop seeing other people as problems they stop being problems. The person who is a problem to a non-accepting mind does not exist in the calm, clear space of patient acceptance.

—Geshe Kalsang Gyatso  
*How to Solve our Human Problems*

Civilization is an open mind.

—Thich Nhat Hanh  
*“The Nobility of Suffering” in  
Dharma, Color, and Culture*

The awakened heart of bodhichitta is the basic goodness of all beings.

—Pema Chödrön  
*Comfortable with Uncertainty*

*Compiled by the Shambhala Diversity Contact Persons, March 2007*