

Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practice of Inclusivity and Community

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Larry Yang is an ordained Buddhist monk and a passionate advocate for diversity in dharma communities. His *Awakening Together* is part spiritual memoir and part stirring call to action directed at the Western Buddhist community, asking it to consciously become more inclusive of people of color, LBGTIQ persons, and differently abled individuals.

Buddhism has Asian roots, but its practice in the United States and Europe often features a lack of diversity among practitioners and teachers. Yang argues for safe spaces that take into account the particular suffering and life experiences of marginalized groups, and his work makes so much sense that it becomes hard to believe that there is any opposition to such perspectives.

Yang sees classes that are offered to particular groups as a doorway into practice, not a permanent wall that separates communities from each other. His experiences as a teacher and leader at the East Bay Meditation Center show that diversity in practice can be a reality.

Yang affirms the collective journey and transformation of the Buddhist community as a whole and calls for diverse groups to “break together” instead of breaking apart when conflicts arise.

The compassionate, thoughtful, and inclusive teachings in *Awakening Together* provide guidance for communities seeking to be more diverse, as well as for individuals seeking diverse spaces in which to practice.

SARAH WHITE (September/October 2017)

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