

# Mid America Dharma News

Offering Insight Meditation to the Heartland | Fall 2017



## Living in Mindfulness: A Householder's Non-Residential Retreat

By Robert Brumet and Joe McCormack

Retreats are a wonderful way to deepen our practice. And yet, the true value of the Dharma lies in our ability to practice it in our everyday life, at home and at work or school. Every experience of our day is “grist for the mill.”

This retreat consists of relatively short segments of time spread over a period of one week. We will meet for about seven hours per day on Oct. 15, 21, and 22, then for 2½ hours on the evenings of Oct. 16, and 19. At each meeting we will focus on how one can engage the practice in his or her everyday life experience at home or at work. Participants will be given assignments in the form of specific practices or reflections to apply throughout each day. Each gathering will include a review of how one has (or has not) been able to maintain a daily practice in the time between formal sessions.

**Robert Brumet** leads the Unity Sangha in the Kansas City area. For more information, please see page 8.

## Love is the Answer: A Metta Retreat Nov. 10-12, 2017

By Spring Washam

The Buddha once said, "We can look the whole world over and find no one more deserving of our love and kindness than ourselves." Metta practice protects the mind from falling into habitual patterns of reactivity that undermine our sincerest intentions to be happy. Also referred to as a mind liberating practice, it can awaken powerful healing energies that brighten and lift the mind to increasing levels of joy and clarity. Our greatest and most challenging task on the spiritual path is to learn to love and accept ourselves in every moment. Self-hatred, inner aggression and self-criticism are rooted in a mind that is confused and suffering. When we really love and honor ourselves there are no more questions. This is an excellent weekend retreat for all those who feel energetically stuck in the past and are unable to break free and move forward. In this retreat we will focus on Metta practice, self-compassion and forgiveness in order to let go.

**Spring Washam** is a core teacher at East Bay Meditation Center, Oakland, CA. Retreat information, page 8.

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We offer 2 ways to register for our retreats—online or by mail:

1. **Online**
  - Visit [midamericadharmadharma.org](http://midamericadharmadharma.org)
  - Click Mid America Dharma Retreats
  - Register for your preferred retreat by clicking On-line Registration
2. **By Mail**
  - Complete and mail-in the enclosed registration form.



We post up-to-date info on our Facebook page. Comment or message us anytime – we love to hear from you!

# Conscious Living in a Crazy World: A New Year Retreat

By Robert Brumet

It's not easy to live mindfully—even at a retreat. It's much more difficult to live mindfully in our every day life, particularly at a time when just about everything in our world—from politics to the weather—seems to be going crazy.

Today many of us are challenged by feelings of uncertainty, helplessness and frustration as we see our world views challenged and our values undermined. Many of us who are committed to living mindfully and ethically wonder what, if anything, we can do.

This retreat does not focus on what actions should be taken but does focus on how to cultivate the qualities of mind and heart that help us discern what constitutes right action in all arenas of our life: personal, interpersonal, social and political.

In his Essay on Self-Reliance, Ralph Waldo Emerson writes, "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man [woman] is he [she] who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

Although it isn't easy to live mindfully and ethically in the world, it is now imperative that we do so. We must turn to the ancient wisdom traditions and employ these teachings in a way that is relevant to our world today. We must each become what Emerson calls "the great man/woman." Awakening must become a way of life.

At this retreat we will explore the Dharma, engage its practice and discuss its application in our lives in these turbulent times. Sitting, walking and eating in the silence constitutes much of the retreat; group instruction and mindful dialogue is also included.

The retreat begins Thursday evening (12/28) and ends at noon Monday (New Year's Day.) This retreat is open to individuals with all levels of meditation experience (including none). Join us at this turning of the New Year for a deep exploration into your own heart and mind.

**Robert Brumet** leads the Unity Sangha in the Kansas City area and offers meditation retreats throughout North America. For more information, please see page 9.

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## Retreat Basics: The Five Precepts

We ask everyone participating in our retreats to make a commitment to follow the Five Ethical Precepts, a foundation for our practice. The precepts create the community of harmony and safety necessary for our work of turning inward. The self restraint we show by following the Precepts is essential to settle the mind.

Through this we develop confidence in our work and ability to do the practice. Following the Precepts bestows a sense of happiness with our own goodness.

- ▶ I undertake the training of refraining from taking the life of any living being.
- ▶ I undertake the training of refraining from taking what has not been given.
- ▶ I undertake the training of refraining from any form of intentional sexual activity.\*
- ▶ I undertake the training of refraining from false and harmful speech.
- ▶ I undertake the training of refraining from intoxicating drink and drugs that lead to heedlessness.

\* A more general form of this precept is "I undertake the training to refrain from sexual misconduct," but at retreat we commit to the version stated above.

# The Brahma Viharas: Awakened States of Heart

By Heather Sundberg

## What are the Brahma Viharas?

The Brahma Viharas, or Divine Abodes, are the naturally present sublime states of heart-mind, which can be accessed when the mind is not startled, angry, or confused. The word ‘Brahma’, refers to the “god-like” or divine quality of the heart, which like the god Brahma cannot hate another.<sup>1</sup> The word ‘Vihara’ translates as ‘abode’ – a place to settle in and live. Therefore, I think of the Brahma Viharas as the places our heart abides when conditions are ideal.

These four attitudes, or qualities of heart are the flavors of lovingkindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkah). When the heart is open, warm, and friendly in response to experience, lovingkindness is naturally present. When this same open, warm, friendly heart meets the experience of pain, it manifests as compassion. When it meets the experience of joy in another, it manifests as sympathetic joy. When this same open, warm, friendly heart rests settled in the midst of the changing conditions of the worldly winds of life (pleasure/pain; gain/loss; praise/blame; fame/disrepute), it manifests as equanimity.

## How Does One Train Using the Brahma Viharas in Meditation?

Though the experience of the Brahma Viharas is naturally available, it can also be cultivated through traditional training. The Buddha first taught loving-kindness practice to a group of monks who had gone on Rains Retreat and become frightened by a group of devas (sometimes translated as angels) who were trying to force the monks to leave their forest by emitting horrible sounds and smells while the monks tried to meditate. The Buddha offered the monks the solution of practicing lovingkindness, which proved to be so successful the devas later became protectors of the monks. Interestingly, we do not know the mechanics of the lovingkindness practice the Buddha taught the frightened monks, or the meditation mechanics of the other flavors of the Brahma Viharas. The formal meditation techniques we use today were developed in the early 5th Century by the monk Ven. Buddhaghosa and laid out in Chapter 4 of the commentary text Vissudhimagga (The Path of Purification).

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*Continued on page 4*

## Whatever the flavor of Brahma Vihara one practices, try focusing on the following:

1. First, develop a set of phrases, which resonates for the meditator.
2. Get clear on the progression of categories of beings to whom one could send the wishes, depending on the brahma vihara.
3. Settle down in a comfortable posture. Visualize the person/being to whom you will send your wishes.
4. Begin sending this person/being your wishes through the phrases. Find your own pace of repeating the phrases.
5. Take a little time between each phrase (the space of a breath), and set of phrases to feel the resonance or “echo” of the phrases in the body. Bring an attitude of acceptance to whatever resonance (or lack of it) which arrives. The practice of the Brahma Viharas is a practice of purification. Therefore sometimes we send phrases and the opposite quality arises. We say “may I be protected and safe” and suddenly feel fearful. This is not a sign of doing the practice wrong. This is a sign of the practice working through your heart, revealing and untangling that which causes our hearts to not be open.
6. Have fun with your Brahma Vihara practice. Make it your own. Allow it to “sing” to your heart-mind. Drink in the sweetness of the sublime qualities it evokes

## The Brahma Viharas: Awakened States of Heart

*Continued from page 3*

The technique for each flavor of the Brahma Viharas developed by Ven. Buddhaghosa involves the use of successive phrases, or intentions. These intentional phrases are used as a tool to settle and concentrate the mind, which allows the heart to begin to open into its natural radiance. The meditator begins the brahma vihara practice sending the phrases to someone easy, and progressively works through more difficult relationships, finally breaking through all dualities between self/other to radiate wishes towards all beings in all directions. The traditional categories are sending wishes to yourself, a benefactor (mentor/teacher), a good friend, a neutral person (familiar stranger), a difficult person, and to all beings. Depending on the brahma vihara flavor one practices, the order of the categories changes.

### A Daily Life Practice in the Brahma Viharas

What we have in terms of the Buddha's direct words on the Brahma Viharas point to a possibility of an engaging practice in daily life. In the Metta Sutta, the Buddha first discusses the type of appropriate conduct one should aspire to when cultivating the heart of lovingkindness.

*"Let them be able and upright, straightforward and gentle in speech, humble and not conceited, contented and easily satisfied, unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways, peaceful and calm and wise and skillful, not proud and demanding in nature."*<sup>2</sup>

These are all qualities we can endeavor to cultivate to support nurturing a more peaceful harmonious world. As stated by the late Theravadan monk, Nyanaponika Thera,

*"These four attitudes (the brahma viharas) are said to be excellent or sublime because they are the right or ideal way of conduct towards living beings (sattesu samma patipatti).*

***They provide, in fact, the answer to all situations arising from social contact. They are the great removers of tension, the great peacemakers in social conflict, and the great healers of wounds suffered in the struggle of existence.***

*They level social barriers, build harmonious communities, awaken slumbering magnanimity long forgotten, revive joy and hope long abandoned, and promote human brotherhood against the forces of egotism."*<sup>3</sup>

The Metta Sutta also encourages the practitioner to engage in the practice during all activities.

We can practice the Brahma Viharas as we drive, as we enter a store, by identifying suffering and training ourselves to internally say "I care" as a first response, and by taking a breath with our hardening heart which believes there might not be enough good fortune for all — to name a few ways to practice.

I encourage you to have a copy of the Metta Sutta in your meditation area at home, where it can be available for repeated recollection and inspiration. The basic passage from the Buddha on the Brahma Viharas is another wonderful sutta to have in your personal collection.<sup>5</sup> Both suttas can also be found in a form for chanting.<sup>6</sup> My favorite book on the Brahma Viharas continues to be Sharon Salzberg's *Lovingkindness*.

I very much hope each of you finds your own creative ways of bringing the spirit and practice of the Divine Abodes into your life.

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### Resources:

1. [www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html)
2. [www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.9.amar.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.9.amar.html)
3. [www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html)
4. See reference #3.
5. Digha Nikaya 13
6. [www.abhayagiri.org/book/chanting\\_book/](http://www.abhayagiri.org/book/chanting_book/)

**Heather Sundberg** has taught insight meditation since 1999 and completed the Spirit Rock/IMS Teacher Training. Heather has studied with senior teachers in the Insight Meditation and Tibetan traditions. Join Heather in St. Louis in April, 2018 for a six-day retreat. See page 9.

## Two Short Essays By Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

### Beyond To-ing and Fro-ing

Tanhā is the movement of the mind that keeps taking exception to what is—wanting things to be another way (bhava tanhā), not wanting them to be the way they are (vibhava tanhā), or just being preoccupied with sensory experience (kāma tanhā). Tanhā is a restless agitation—“relishing now here and now there,” as the Buddha put it—that makes it impossible to be content with things as they are.

Fortunately, we are practicing with the four satipatthānas. Over the months and years of practice and the increasing capacity for non-attachment that this brings, we are slowly training the mind to override the deeply entrenched habits of craving and ignorance. Instead of being caught up in the to-ing and fro-ing of

the unawakened mind, we are finding a place of peace in the presence of it. This represents a radical shift in the way we relate to experience. Whether we realize it or not, by working with the four satipatthānas, we are developing an openhearted acceptance of things as they are, a simple contentment with what is.

This kind of openhearted acceptance doesn't develop overnight. We seem to have to go through an often-painful process of seeing for ourselves that longing and resisting don't bring about the desired results. In fact, they only serve to lock us into the behaviors that we are trying to overcome.

Ajahn Chah said: “Practice to the point where you can't go forward, you can't go back and you can't stand still. Then you will understand what it means to transcend suffering.”

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### Apparent Contradiction

In Buddhism there is no shortage of lists of all the nasty states that one needs to see and overcome—the taints, the fetters, the cankers, the hindrances, the defilements. One can really feel quite burdened with the heaviness of it all. If we aren't careful this kind of teaching can play right into the hands of what is already a highly developed capacity for self-loathing in Westerners. We hear about all these things that we need to overcome and this just precipitates new ways to beat up on ourselves. You get the feeling that you have to squash and pounce and beat things down.

But the effort here is to acknowledge that we all have highly conditioned states that don't serve us. Yes, we

need to become skilled at recognizing these, but we have to learn to do that in a way that is profoundly impartial, kind and compassionate. Our karma is such that we think, do and say things that cause harm to ourselves and to others. We have to see that ... and ... it has to be okay so that we can receive it, not judge it, or quarrel with it. Then we are well-positioned to learn if it serves us. Impartiality is the name of the game.

So while it is clear that the Buddhist teachings encourage us to clean up our act, they also encourage us to open to and accept the way we are. Sometimes the teachings seem to say one thing and then the exact opposite. Our task is to reconcile these apparent contradictions.

For an article on the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness, the topic of Gloria's retreat in June 2018 please visit <https://www.bcbsdharma.org/article/the-fourth-foundation-of-mindfulness-2/>

**Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia** studies and practices within the Thai Forest Tradition, specifically the disciples of Ajahn Chah. She serves as a Core Faculty member at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. She has been a Dhamma teacher since 1990. She is the co-author of *Older and Wiser: Classical Buddhist Teachings on Aging, Sickness, and Death*. To learn about her June 14-17, 2018 retreat in St. Louis, please see page 9.

## Dana For Our Sangha

Mid America Dharma operates through the generosity of our volunteers and the financial gifts of our supporters, which help to cover our operating expenses, support our teachers and scholarship fund.

In the Pali language, generosity is called dana. Generosity is part of a 2500 year old tradition of supporting the Buddha's teachings, Dharma teachers, and sangha through gifts. The practice of dana is more than just providing financial support. It allows each of us to explore the experiences of giving and receiving.

Mid America Dharma is very grateful for all the support we receive. If you are interested in giving dana to Mid America Dharma, you may donate on-line by going to the donate page of our website or fill out the form below.

### Yes, I want to support the work of Mid America Dharma!

- Donate **online** at [www.midamericadharmadharma.org/index.php/donate/](http://www.midamericadharmadharma.org/index.php/donate/) using your credit or debit card
- Enclosed is my **check** to Mid America Dharma for \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
Please mail to Mid America Dharma, c/o Amy Zoe Schonhof  
P.O. Box 8472, Kansas City, MO 64114

I would like to support the following: (Please indicate your choice(s)).

- MAD Operating Support
- MAD Scholarship Fund
- MAD Teachers



## Are You Willing to Serve?

By Marnie Hammer and John Flaherty

The Buddha was asked by Ananda, his cousin and attendant, what was the value of spiritual friends. The Buddha replied that true friends that shared the path were the whole of the path.

Twenty-four years ago a small group of meditators, including the two of us, met over several months to figure out how we could support our own practice and that of other Midwestern meditators. The outcome was Mid America Dharma. Since then Mid America Dharma has provided well over a hundred Insight Meditation retreats, supported the development of local teachers and sanghas, and provided thousands of dollars in scholarships to make sure that the practice was available to all who wanted to explore it.

This happened because for each member of that first board the Dharma was precious and we wanted to share it. We wanted to see if Mid America Dharma could attract teachers from across the country and support

students from around the Midwest.

Those intentions have continued over the years including with the current board. Of the current board only the two of us participated in those first organizing sessions. We are now ready to step off the board and let others shape Mid America Dharma's direction. It has been a privilege to serve and support your meditation practice.

We are left with a question: Who is willing to join the board, to do the volunteer work that makes retreats happen, and devote four Saturdays a year to guiding Mid America Dharma? Are you one of the 'true friends' who will help to provide the whole of the spiritual life for the Midwest?

**To express your interest or for more information, please contact Phil Jones at [phil@midamericadharmadharma.org](mailto:phil@midamericadharmadharma.org) or 573-673-6713.**

## Becoming Mindful of Race and Racism

By Rose Metro

It's nighttime, a quiet evening in a small Midwestern city. I'm sitting in my car, checking my messages. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a figure approaching: a young Black man in a hooded sweatshirt. Before my mind processes a thought, my hand reaches out for the little button to my left. As the locks click into place, the man looks up for a second, and I see his face. I want to take it back, but it's too late. I feel remorseful, ashamed.

I should know better, or so I think. As a white person, I try to be an ally to people of color. During my years teaching 9th grade in the Bronx, I saw the pain my Black students felt as they grew from kids into young adults who were feared by white society. As a follower of the Buddha's teachings, I think I should be the kind of person who can reduce habitual reactions that cause suffering for myself and others.

That evening as I sat in my car, I thought about the brokenness of racial relations in our country. The killings of Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Philandro Castile. The white talk show hosts I hear on the conservative radio station I listen to—as a spiritual practice in order to temper my reactivity—who so often say that they “don't see color.” My own sangha, filled with predominantly white, well-intentioned liberals like myself.

A few days later, I found an article by Ruth King called “Being Mindful of Race.” She discusses the “racial suffering” she has experienced as an African-American dharma teacher and practitioner of Buddhism. She recommends that people with racial privilege—e.g., white people—form “Racial Affinity Groups” in which they mindfully explore their relationship to race, in a setting where they won't re-traumatize people of color. I decided to start one of these groups at Show Me Dharma, where I am part of the Teachers Collective.

A few weeks later, I gave a dharma talk about the experience I'd had with the man on the street, examining the body sensations, conditioned reactions, and thoughts that come up around race. I imagined what might be going through sangha members' minds: What does

racism have to do with Buddhism? I spoke this worry out loud, trying to acknowledge the discomfort many people feel with these topics. When I broke people up into pairs to share their reactions after my talk, some jumped into animated conversations, while others sat in silence.

A small but committed group of people responded to my invitation to join a Racial Affinity Group. We started by discussing our definitions of race and the personal experiences that had brought us to them. It felt strange to discuss race in a context that was neither academic nor activist—we slowed down in order to notice our physical and mental reactions to what each person said.

Sangha members outside the group raised questions. Why only white people? It's a good question, one also raised by the Venerable Pannavati, an African-American dharma teacher from North Carolina who offered a retreat at Show Me Dharma last spring. She expressed a different view from Ruth King. She said it would be more beneficial for the whole sangha to explore teachings that could break down the belief in identity based characteristics like race.

It was interesting to observe my mind's reaction to her recommendations. I saw how my own “desire for being”—the desire to be the kind of person who would bring up an important social issue, the desire to be praised—was intermixed with my wholesome intention to reduce suffering around racism.

As happens so often when I feel unsettled, I find refuge in the Buddha's words. On a retreat with Phil Jones and Shaila Catherine, I encountered this quotation from the Honeyball Sutta: “Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates. What one has mentally prolifer-

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# Mid America Dharma Retreats

## Robert Brumet and Joe McCormack Living in Mindfulness: A Householder's Retreat Unity Village, MO, Non-Residential

Oct. 15, 16, 19, 21-22

*Registration is now open. It closes Oct. 8, 2017.*



**Robert Brumet** has practiced Insight Meditation since 1988. He has been leading a local sangha and conducting meditation retreats throughout North America since 1995. In the early 1990s he received vipassana facilitator training from Shinzen Young. In January 2000 he graduated from the Community Dharma Leader training program, sponsored by Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Robert is one of the founding members of Mid America Dharma. He lives in Kansas City and teaches at Unity Institute and Seminary near Lee's Summit, MO.

**LISTEN** to Robert's retreat recordings at [www.midamericadharm.org/audio.html](http://www.midamericadharm.org/audio.html).

**Joe McCormack** has practiced insight meditation since 1995. He has been a member of the Show Me Dharma Teachers Council since 2002. Joe leads an insight meditation group in Jefferson City, and has taught insight meditation to prison inmates since 1998. His teachers include Ginny Morgan, Phil Jones, and Matthew Flickstein. In January 2008, he completed the Community Dharma Leader training program through Spirit Rock Meditation Center. In his dharma instruction, Joe draws from traditional Theravada Buddhist teachings, Zen and Dzogchen practice, Advaita teachings, and the Diamond Approach. He is also trained as a psychologist and practices psychotherapy in Jefferson City.

Fee Range:

Actual Cost ..... \$60      Supporter: ..... \$90

## Spring Washam: Love is the Answer: A Metta Retreat St. Louis, MO, Non-residential, Nov. 10-12, 2017

*Registration opens Sept 10, 2017 and closes Nov 3, 2017.*



**Spring Washam** is a founding member and core teacher at the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, CA. She is the founder of Lotus Vine Journeys, an organization that blends indigenous healing practices with Buddhist wisdom. She is a healer, facilitator, spiritual activist and writer. Her upcoming book, *A Fierce Heart: Finding Strength, Wisdom, and Courage in Any Moment* will be released in Oct. She has practiced and studied in both the Theravada and Tibetan schools of Buddhism. She is on the teacher's council at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Spring is a pioneer in bringing mindfulness based healing practices into diverse communities and is committed to enriching the lives of disenfranchised people everywhere.

**TO LEARN MORE** about Spring visit her website at [www.springwasham.com](http://www.springwasham.com).

Fee Range:

Full Weekend Actual Cost, Single...\$60      Friday Night Only Cost: .....\$5  
Full Weekend Supporter Cost.....\$90      Saturday and Sunday Only Cost: ....\$55



# Mid America Dharma Retreats

## Robert Brumet

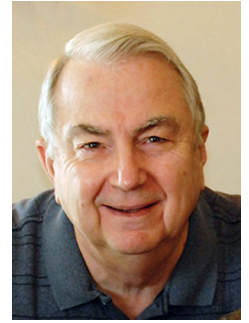
### Four Day New Year Residential Retreat, St. Louis, MO

December 28, 2017- January 1, 2018

Registration opens Sept. 28 and closes Dec. 14, 2017

#### Fee Range:

Actual Cost, Single: ..\$550	Reduced: .....\$525	Sponsor: .....\$600
Minimum:.....\$500	Supporter: .....\$575	Benefactor: .....\$650



## Heather Sundberg

### Six Day Divine Abodes Residential Retreat, St. Louis, MO

April 17-22, 2018 Registration opens Jan. 17 and closes April 3, 2018

#### Fee Range:

Actual Cost, Single: ..... \$725	Supporter: ..... \$750
Minimum:..... \$650	Sponsor: .....\$775
Reduced: .....\$675	Benefactor: ..... \$825



Heather Sundberg has taught insight meditation since 1999 and completed the Spirit Rock/IMS Teacher Training. Heather has studied with senior teachers in the Insight Meditation and Tibetan traditions. She has completed 2.5 accumulated years of silent retreat. She was the Spirit Rock Family & Teen Program Teacher & Manager for a decade. She has training in both Somatic Experiencing and Hakomi Mindfulness Somatic Therapy and offers individual meditation support sessions. Heather's style is warm and practical. Her general emphasis is embodiment including strong heartfulness in practice. She supports a combination of a 'less is more' easeful style of practice and a passionate 'no holds barred' attitude about awakening.

**TO LEARN MORE** about Heather, visit her website at <http://www.heathersundberg.com/about.html>.

## Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

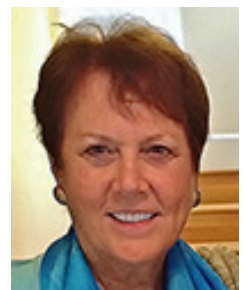
### Four Day Residential Retreat, St. Louis, MO

June 14-17, 2018

Registration opens March 14 and closes June 1, 2018

#### Fee Range:

Actual Cost, Single: ..\$390	Reduced: .....\$365	Sponsor: .....\$440
Minimum:.....\$340	Supporter: .....\$415	Benefactor: .....\$490



Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia studies and practices within the Thai Forest Tradition, specifically the disciples of Ajahn Chah. She serves as a Core Faculty member at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. Taraniya also served as resident teacher of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts from 1996 through 1999. She has been a Dhamma teacher since 1990. She is the co-author of *Older and Wiser: Classical Buddhist Teachings on Aging, Sickness, and Death*.

## On New Year's Retreat 2016

By Thea Nietfeld

Softly, I notice that what I might have said is unnecessary, silence is restful. Gently, major insights emerge, flicker, leave a glow. Unhurried, I walk back to day to day life after the silent retreat over New Year's weekend.

Several months earlier, I had begun looking for a silent New Year's Retreat. A meditator friend suggested Mid America Dharma and I was grateful to find the plan. Eagerly anticipating the inner adventure, I waited for registration to open.

The rural monastery setting was simple and welcoming; bare hills and wind turbines soothed weary eyes. Robert Brumet skillfully guided 25 yogis over 4 days. Carl and others managed the group's logistics with grace and humor. Sandy brought ingredients for a New Year's Eve celebration.

Where we begin and what we bring to an inner adventure is unknown to others. What I saw is people practicing steadily, including outdoor walking meditation in frigid wind.

For me, the first sitting session before breakfast lasted a lifetime. Then the joy available to each of us opened and the sessions became blissful. It was a coming home to myself, a chance to touch wholeness. Suddenly, after following the breath for concentration, when I noticed body sensations, negative memory images came to mind. They seemed to want to be neutralized and they

were. I named it a purification. I became aware that the resource to neutralize the negative emotions that can come with difficulties is always with me.

We heard about possibilities and hindrances in the instructions and talks which helped me name where I was and to label memories that arose with body sensations. We were invited to practice bare attention for a wider, neutral view of reality. One evening, we were invited to welcome mystical connection with the Big Consciousness, the Universal Mind. To experience non-dual reality is an eternal spiritual quest.

As the retreat moved on, insights emerged that seemed to be simultaneously memories and discoveries. I named what was happening "open system mind"...a healthier way to be myself. I wrote a love letter to Universal Mind, with gratitude for the loving patience it had shown.

It's my choice to shine the light of awareness on what needs to be examined. This is the adventure that can save my life...and support the lives around me. Amazingly, I can do this every day, wherever I am.

I was a meditation drop out before this retreat. What I experienced showed that no matter where I live or the times or wind gusts, there are inner resources that connect me to the universe and its affirming energies. It's a New Time and I'm so grateful.

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## Becoming Mindful of Race and Racism

*Continued from page 7*

ated as the source, perceptions and notions born of mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye."

This passage describes what happened when my eye encountered the form of the man in the street. It both deflates my "selfing" reaction of guilt, and intensifies my responsibility to guard the sense doors as the stimuli I construct as "race" arise. The more attentive I am to perceptions as they occur, the better chance I have of

reacting wisely to them.

I don't claim to have a solution to the complex problem of racism. But I do believe that the Buddha's teachings can ameliorate social problems while guiding us toward liberation from suffering, both ultimately and little by little.

**Rose Metro** is part of the Teachers Collective at Show Me Dharma, in Columbia MO. She has been practicing vipassana meditation since 2005.

## Retreat Registration

**Insight Meditation offers** an easily accessible way to free the mind from the distortions of self-centeredness, negativity and confusion. Through concentrated awareness, we see that our experience is a constantly changing process, in which all aspects of life are accepted with increasing balance and equanimity. This insight leads to the possibility of living each moment fully, with compassion and genuine freedom. Insight Meditation requires no belief commitments and is compatible with religious affiliations. Unless specified, no previous meditation experience is required.

**Retreat Format:** Periods of sitting meditation and/or Dharma teachings alternate with walking meditation. Retreats are held in silence, with talking only during specified teaching periods. Beginners should be present from the start of the retreat to receive initial instructions.

Please bring a meditation cushion or bench and a soft floor pad for meditation. Standard chairs are available and may also be used. Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Please do not wear or bring strongly scented lotions, perfumes or incense.

**Residential retreats** begin with check-in at 4 PM on the first day and run through lunch on the last day. Participants are guided through group or private interviews and daily general lectures. Meals are simple. A tea table is provided.

**Registration:** Information about retreat site, starting times, etc., is available online or will be sent after you register.

**Fees:** Retreat costs are listed under each retreat heading and on the mail-in registration form at the end of this newsletter.

**Sliding Scale:** Costs for each retreat are listed as a range. Any amount paid above the actual cost will be regarded as a tax-deductible contribution used to support retreat expenses and scholarships.

**Residential:** a minimum deposit of \$75 must accompany registration; full payment is due before the start of the retreat. Non-residential retreats: please pay the full fee when you register.

**Registration Opening Dates and Deadlines:**

are listed on the specific retreat pages. Registrations are not accepted prior to the beginning date for each retreat. If the registration fee for a residential retreat is not received by the deadline, there is a \$25 late fee.

**Refunds:** We will refund fees if requested before the deadline. Refunds requested later than this are made at the discretion of Mid-America Dharma's Board of Directors.

**Scholarships:** We do not want inability to pay to prevent you from attending. We offer a reduced rate on residential retreats. If further financial support is needed to attend residential and non-residential retreats, we offer scholarships. Learn more about these options when you register online or the registrar can send you written materials. Applications must be received by the registrar no later than three weeks prior to the retreat.

**Teacher Support:** Our retreats are led by teachers who freely give the teachings without payment. All retreat fees go for retreat expenses, such as facility rental and meals. It is central to this tradition that students support teachers through their dana (donations). There is no expected amount, but please give to the extent you are able. Dana is completely voluntary.

## Mid America Dharma

2756 County Road 338  
New Bloomfield, MO 65063



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## Mid America Dharma Upcoming Retreats

- Oct. 15, 16,19, 21-22 ..... Non-residential Householder Retreat  
Robert Brumet and Joe McCormack, Unity Village, MO
- Nov. 10-12, 2017.....Non-residential retreat, Spring Washam, St. Louis, MO
- Dec. 28, 2017- Jan. 1, 2018 .....Residential retreat, Robert Brumet, St. Louis, MO
- April 17-22, 2018..... Residential retreat, Heather Sundberg, St. Louis, MO
- June 14-17, 2018..... Residential retreat, Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia, St. Louis, MO

For all of our 2017 & 2018 retreats, see [WWW.MIDAMERICADHARMA.ORG/RETREATS](http://WWW.MIDAMERICADHARMA.ORG/RETREATS).

# Mid America Dharma Retreat Registration form

## RETREAT SELECTION:

**Robert Brumet and Joe McCormack**

Oct. 15, 16, 19, 21-22, 2017

Householder Retreat  
Multi Day Non Residential  
Unity Village, MO  
Registration Opens: Aug. 15, 2017  
Registration Closes: Oct, 8, 2017  
Fee Range:  
Actual Cost: \$60, Supporter: \$90  
Fee Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

**Robert Brumet**

Dec. 28, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018

Four Day Residential Retreat  
St. Louis, MO  
Registration Opens: Sept. 28, 2017  
Registration Closes: Dec, 14, 2017  
Fee Range: Actual Cost, Single: \$550  
Minimum: \$500; Reduced: \$525  
Supporter: \$575; Sponsor: \$60  
Benefactor: \$650  
Fee Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

**Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia**

June 14-17, 2018

Four Day Residential Retreat  
St. Louis, MO  
Registration opens March 14, 2018  
Registration closes: June 1, 2018  
Fee range: Actual Cost, Single: \$390  
Minimum: \$340; Reduced: \$365;  
Supporter: \$415; Sponsor: \$440;  
Benefactor: \$490  
Fee Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

**Spring Washam**

November 10-12, 2017


Non Residential, St. Louis, MO  
Registration Opens: Sept. 10, 2017  
Registration Closes: Nov. 3, 2017  
Fee Range:  
Full Weekend Actual Cost, Single: \$60  
Full Weekend Supporter Cost: \$90  
Friday Night Only Cost: \$5  
Saturday and Sunday Only Cost: \$55  
Fee Amount: \_\_\_\_\_


**Heather Sundberg**

April 17-22, 2018

Six Day Residential Retreat  
St. Louis, MO  
Registration opens: Jan. 17, 2018  
Registration closes: April 3, 2018  
Fee Range: Actual Cost, Single: \$725,  
Minimum: \$650, Reduced: \$675,  
Supporter: \$750, Sponsor: \$775,  
Benefactor: \$825  
Fee Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

- If registering for multiple retreats, please indicate the payment currently being made for each retreat as well as the total per retreat that you will pay.
- A \$75 deposit is required for all residential retreats. Please register as early as you can as this greatly helps our planning.

 To register online, visit [www.midamericadharma.org/retreats](http://www.midamericadharma.org/retreats)

 To register by mail for the **October retreat**, send this form with check payable to: Mid America Dharma, c/o Carl Wingo, 11900 N. Dripping Springs Rd., Columbia, MO 65202. To register for any of the **other retreats**, send this form with check payable to: Mid America Dharma, c/o Phil Jones, 200 E. Parkway Dr., Columbia, MO 65203

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

### The Five Precepts:

Please check the box below to indicate you agree to honor The Five Precepts during your retreat. The Five Precepts assure everyone has a safe and wholesome retreat experience.

Yes, I have read the Retreat Basics on page 2 and agree to honor The Five Precepts during retreat.

### How do you identify your gender?

Female  Male  Transgender or gender diverse (e.g. gender queer, gender fluid, agender, etc.)

Is this your first Insight Meditation retreat?  Y  N

### People of Color Affiliation

As part of MAD's commitment to diversity and equity, we have an intention to increase the participation of people of color in our retreats. To help bring this to fruition, we are trying to better understand the current level of diversity of our attendees.

Please let us know if you self-identify as a person of color.  Y  N

### **For Residential Retreats only:**

1. Will you arrive after 7 PM on the first day?  Y  N
2. Do you snore?  Y  N

If you have special needs, please contact the registrar at [registrar@midamericadharma.org](mailto:registrar@midamericadharma.org) or call 573-874-0881.