



## SANGHA HARMONY ADVISORY COUNCIL

*There are strong aspirations to realize one's true self in the midst of lay practice, monastic life and in all intersections of humanity. I want our sangha to see this, feel this, and be able to say: "Oh there is a body that looks like mine, there is a heart I resonate with that is immersed deeply in this human project. Maybe I can speak, trust and be trusted. Maybe I can truly enter here."*

—Hojin Sensei

### ***What is the Sangha Harmony Advisory Council and why are we creating it?***

The MRO leadership asks to create a new, more inclusive leadership body that will represent the sangha and advise those in teacher lineage positions. The Sangha Harmony Advisory Council (SHAC) will be composed of diverse and dedicated sangha members who will endeavor to represent the needs of its historically excluded members as well as the larger sangha as a whole. Although SHAC is empowered by the MRO teachers and Board of Directors, its authority ultimately derives from its trusted representation of the entire sangha.

Although the SHAC may not have ultimate decision-making authority, in the spirit of collaborative leadership its recommendations will be taken seriously by the MRO leadership and the reasons for not acting on any of its recommendations will be made clear to the SHAC members and/or the greater sangha as is appropriate. The intention is for SHAC to become a trusted and credible, representative body of the larger sangha. We believe that decisions informed by the wider sangha will contribute to the realization of a harmonious, inclusive MRO where Dharma practice is part of a joyous human collective experience.

Mission statement:

### ***The chief purposes of the SHAC are:***

- 1. To help promote unity, harmony, inclusivity and diversity within the sangha, and to help create an MRO culture in which people of all identities and a range of abilities feel welcome and supported, particularly those from groups that have been historically underrepresented or excluded.*
- 2. To empower people from diverse backgrounds to promote horizontal leadership within the MRO.*

3. *To hold decision-making bodies accountable for a timely response to specific suggestions and requests from the SHAC, and to advocate for open and trustworthy governance.*
4. *To represent the lay sangha's perspectives and suggestions regarding matters relevant to practice and training within the MRO, and to share these with the MRO teachers, senior training staff, Board of Directors, Temple Advisory Council, Affinity Groups and Program Committees.*
5. *To model deep respect for each other's humanity and identity in order to help manifest a beloved community through the MRO.*

#### Activities:

1. *Work with teachers and staff to promote initiatives that foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) within the MRO.*
2. *Convey the concerns of the affinity groups to the MRO leadership and wider sangha community.*
3. *Hold twice yearly meetings with the sangha at large, one of which may be the annual Sangha Treasure meeting, to report on the SHAC's activities, and to seek input regarding the sangha culture that is being collectively created within the training environment. This includes both formal and informal points of contact in person and online.*
4. *Help lead a timely sangha response to tragic or consequential events, both publicly and internally.*

## APPLICATION FOR FOUNDING MEMBERS

Thank you for your interest in applying to be a founding member of this new and important leadership body within our sangha. As a founding member, you'll be part of a small and active group working to establish this Sangha Harmony Advisory Council (SHAC) working with the support of MRO teachers and dharma holders.

#### ***What kind of support will you receive?***

As a founding member, you'll participate in an orientation session and a kickoff meeting with the teachers. The founding group will also receive some training in leadership skills, meeting facilitation, and conflict resolution to support a proactive and harmonious working environment.

The SHAC Planning Group members are conscious that conflicts and tensions often arise in diverse groups. We want to support this group in every way that we can. This will include coming together with facilitators to establish and agree upon guidelines for skillful conduct within the group, suggestions for what to do in cases where tension arises, and a supported process for resolving conflict.

We are committed to offering the time, resources and attention that the SHAC needs to be a positive experience for its members. Learning about what these needs are, and expressing

them to MRO leadership so that they can be met, will be an aspect of the Council's work together.

It is our hope that your generous participation will promote greater well being in the Sangha, and in return, that you will grow, learn and benefit from this experience.

***Who is eligible to apply?***

Founding members should be sangha members in active training within the MRO. While it is not necessary to be a formal training student, we are looking for people who have been engaged with the sangha in an ongoing way for at least two years and see themselves as ready to deepen into this commitment for the foreseeable future.

We intend to select SHAC members who embody a range of diverse identities: racial, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, newer students, and longtime practitioners. It is our hope that the SHAC will have at least one liaison from each of the MRO affinity groups.

***What kind of time commitment can you expect?***

The SHAC terms will be staggered terms of 2 or 3 years. Following an orientation and start-up meeting, council members should be able to attend one 2 hour Zoom meeting each month for the first 3 months, with possible additional time given to subcommittee work. The Council itself shall determine meeting frequency beyond that. We anticipate that SHAC will be more time intensive in starting up.

***Who would enjoy participating in SHAC?***

SHAC members will be offering themselves in service to the Sangha, in ways similar to members of the Board, Ethics Committee, Temple Advisory Council, etc. Such selfless service is an important aspect of the Bodhisattva Path. Working on SHAC will be collaborative, so people who enjoy working together with others, those who enjoy thinking about the big picture, and those who enjoy working with the nitty gritty details of making things happen. Being able to both step forward and share one's perspectives, as well as stepping back and letting others do the same will be essential. Also, a willingness to take responsibility for one's impact on the group process will be vital.

You'll find being part of SHAC rewarding if you feel that the evolution, maturation and development of our sangha is an important priority in your spiritual life.

***How will applicants be selected?***

The SHAC Planning Group will consider all applications and select a group of 8-10 people as founding members. The teachers will then review this selection and offer final approval.

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Please review the overview, mission, and activities of the SHAC included above before you complete the application questions. Email your response to [SHAC@dharma.net](mailto:SHAC@dharma.net). If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out and let us know. Applications are due by October 3rd.

Your name

Your email address

1. Write a paragraph about what is motivating you to apply to participate in the Council. Please reflect on your experience within the MRO Sangha and where you feel the sangha needs to grow, change, or shift in order to mature, evolve, and develop so that it can be a true refuge. You are welcome to share your fears, anxieties, hopes and dreams. You can also mention those aspects of the Sangha that you feel are positive, healthy and should be maintained or strengthened.
2. Being a founding member of SHAC will be an important part of forming this new body and shaping the culture of the MRO. Write about your investment and commitment to dharma practice in the MRO.
3. An important aspect of SHAC is the shift to more horizontal leadership within the MRO, as well as a focus on DEIJ (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice) within our sangha. What skills or experience would you bring to the group? Consider facilitation experience, experience working with groups, or other work or training in DEIJ contexts.

