



## *On Board with Community Engagement*

*Iris Antman*

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I was honored to be invited onto the SIMS Board of Directors last July in the new position for Community Engagement that focuses on social and environmental justice. It is a privilege to serve in this capacity for an organization that has been so important to me for the past 9 years.

I am deeply committed to socially engaged practice and, as an active volunteer throughout my time with SIMS, I've experienced the benefits of working with others to bring our practice of compassion, care, and wisdom off the cushion and into the world. We are fortunate to have the refuges and precepts to guide us, not only in our practice, but also in our work in the world, no matter where we are in our lives. When we act from wise intention with thoughtfulness and an open heart, we are participating in our lives and in the life of our community and world in ways that are beneficial - to ourselves, to those around us, and, ultimately, to all sentient beings. While the results of our actions may not always be immediately evident, we know from the law of karma that skillful intentions result in wholesome actions and that wholesome actions condition further wholesome actions.

SIMS Climate Action Group started in May 2018. We've hosted two events, a discussion forum, and a screening of a climate documentary followed by small and large group discussions. We continue to meet monthly, committed to working together in two important ways: first, to educate ourselves through reading and discussing books, sharing information and resources, and participating in an online EcoSattva Training and second, to collaborate around actions affecting our political process, such as lobbying legislators and staying abreast of relevant local and federal laws. Several of us marched together at the Climate March last September.

Many other issues of social and environmental justice demand our attention. These include homelessness, immigration, racism, misogyny, LGBTQ rights, economic disparity, and the erosion of democratic ideals in our society. Ultimately, it is incumbent upon us to wonder, how do we face the enormity of these challenges with compassion and an open heart, acting out of wise view and wise intention to move away from suffering and towards freedom? This is not a simple question. And there is no one correct answer. That is why it is invaluable to be in sangha while grappling with these challenging questions.

Having organizational support in the form of the new Community Engagement Board position is key. In working to understand how to operationalize the position, I have come to understand that I need your help. We have an opportunity for engagement with any of the issues mentioned above, as well as others. I invite sangha members to present ideas and suggestions for how you propose to learn about and take action together on the issues most compelling to you.

We each have the ability and capacity to do something. Although small actions may not seem important, they are. Every idea, every action, is like a pebble dropped in a pond, creating outward expanding ripples. When acting in concert with others, the impact is magnified through the creative exchange of ideas.

Please, seek me out, at this time through email ([antwomaniiris@gmail.com](mailto:antwomaniiris@gmail.com)) to talk about ideas you have for getting involved in an issue that's important to you and for which issues you'd like to receive support from our sangha.

Thich Nhat Hanh teaches us about our interdependence, not only with each other but with all of life. We are all connected. If there were any doubt prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little room for doubt now. The Buddha stated that sangha is the whole of the holy life. Let us heed his words, and come together as sangha to implement our individual and joint visions for a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.