



EAST BAY MEDITATION CENTER

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Dear Alameda County Supervisors,
Scott Haggerty, Richard Valle, Wilma Chan, Nate Miley, Keith Carson

I am writing you today to express my deep concerns about the controversial Urban Shield training and weapons expo held in Alameda County. I have learned that funding proposals to the Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative will be due on October 14 and feel strongly that the Board of Supervisors should exclude Urban Shield from any funding proposals for Fiscal Year 2017. Alameda County has an opportunity to seek funding for emergency response resources that prioritize health and wellbeing and not militarized policing; I hope the Board takes this opportunity to defund Urban Shield now.

As a Buddhist practitioner and a member of the East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, this mobilization is important to me because I want to live in communities that are safe for all of my neighbors. My Buddhist practice inspires me to work for a world in which all beings can be safe and free, and inspires me to see the best in all of my community members and government leaders.

While I am extremely supportive of Alameda County developing, supporting, and increasing its capacity to respond to emergencies, I am not supportive of divisive and dangerous programs like Urban Shield. Since 2007, the lion's share of funding that could be supporting emergency preparedness in the Bay Area has been poured into increasing the militarization of local law enforcement. The climate of increased police killings, militarized SWAT raids and sweeps, and surveillance technologies including drones has frayed already tattered community/police relations, destabilized our neighborhoods, and broken up families across the Bay Area.

The time has come for the Bay Area to shift its orientation to preparing for emergencies in ways that uplift community support and resilience, like the work of the Community Emergency Response Team and Learn, Lead. I urge you to allow health and wellbeing impacts of disaster preparation to lead our efforts, rather than deeper criminalization. Now is the time to mobilize UASI funding to support that shift.

I'm asking you and the Board of Supervisors to use your power to restrict the resources for which the Sheriff's Department applies, and reject or pull any proposal for UASI funds that include Urban Shield. Thank you for your attention and action on this important matter. As always, I would be enthusiastic about meeting with you and discussing these issues further.

Sincerely,

Noliwe Alexander
Co-Chair – Leadership Sangha
Melissa Green
Co-Chair – Leadership Sangha
East Bay Meditation Center

Founded to provide a welcoming environment for people of color, members of the LGBTQI community, people with disabilities, and other under-represented communities, the East Bay Meditation Center welcomes everyone seeking to end suffering and cultivate happiness. Our mission is to foster liberation, personal and interpersonal healing, social action, and inclusive community building. We offer mindfulness practices and teachings on wisdom and compassion from Buddhist and other spiritual traditions. Rooted in our commitment to diversity, we operate with transparent democratic governance, generosity-based economics, and environmental sustainability.

East Bay Meditation Center is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization