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Rev. Eido Tai Shimano
Zen Studies Society Parsonage
333 East 69th Street, Apt. 3J
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Eido,

I hope you are in good health. It has been way too long that we faced one another. I gather Ekko was able to pass on my message to you during her visit.

A few weeks ago I had been prepared to collect and send you a basket of matsutake (pine) mushrooms, which grow abundantly in the Pacific Northwest. As you might have heard, we received unusually cold weather (minus 9 degrees C.), and the mushroom season was abruptly halted. Sadly, no more mushrooms.

In the middle of mushroom hunting, I received a letter from Soun Joe Dowling stating that you were stepping down. This came as a complete shock, and I emailed Soun asking why no one had received advance notice of this so that folks could attend. I (have still) received no answer, which forced me to look elsewhere for answers.

What I have uncovered, to say the least, saddens me to no end. I am not going to write about morality or play the role of judge or discuss putting people on pedestals. I am, however, going to discuss the preservation and future of the Zen Studies Society.

You may recall my background is business, investment banking, and business development, and that I served for years at J.P. Morgan & Co. – in addition to serving as financial advisor to Hozo and the Board of Zen Studies Society (ZSS) for a period of time in the 1990s. This background provides me a deep understanding of managing organizational risk, and this is why I am writing. The current Board's actions (or, actually, their inaction) will end in the systemic failure of ZSS.

The aim of my effort, and this letter, is to put this matter to a close once and for all and also (if possible) to save ZSS and Dai Bosatsu Zendo. There are only two paths forward: one will cause the destruction of ZSS (and this outcome becomes perilously more likely with every passing day) and the second offers a chance of salvaging at least some assets of ZSS. The Board of Directors of ZSS should understand that the decision and outcome rests entirely on their shoulders, and that if they do not act very quickly, option two will become completely unavailable to them. Right now, the Board is acting as if they are professionally clueless, as is exhibited in their attempts to white-wash current events and ignore the

recommendations that they actively solicited from the Faith Trust Institute (FTI). There is extreme organizational risk here, and the Board is not acting to mitigate that risk.

Necessary Action

To keep ZSS as a viable organization, it is time – as painful as this is for me to say – for you and Aiho-san to permanently break all links with ZSS. Your continued connection to the organization will, to use an American metaphor, bring down the house.

The following actions are the only ones that stand a chance of preserving parts of ZSS:

1. You and Aiho-san must sever all connections with ZSS.
2. The Board needs to be entirely swept clean (that is, an interim Board needs to be put in place to put the house in order and elect a new permanent Board), the number of board members needs to be expanded, and all new members vetted. The new Board should also contain representatives of other religious institutions, in addition to someone from the FTI. Transparency and integrity are the only available options to save ZSS, and the clock is ticking with little time remaining to right this.
3. The Society's bylaws need to be re-written so the Board is elected by the Sangha and that (a) the Abbot serves purely at the discretion of the Board and (b) the Abbot either has no voting rights or is not a member of the Board.
4. ZSS needs to make public, annually, a full set of audited financial statements. This is common practice for not-for-profit organizations, and will help regain the trust of the community.
5. ZSS needs to make a fund available to support the survivors (possibly through the sale of NYZ, the parsonage, and the pension/retirement fund, all of which are ZSS assets). There are people who have undoubtedly suffered heavily and likely have expended significant emotional and financial resources to deal with this ongoing trauma.

Unfortunately, the Board ignored numerous opportunities, the most recent being in ignoring the recommendations of the FTI. The only survivable path is one of **TRUTH**. Eido, this situation could very well spiral into a criminal investigation, an IRS investigation, an I.N.S. investigation, to name but a few. Time is running out, and relying on a Board that is unprofessionally muddling through this, and which does not recognize the business and legal risks they face, is asking for failure.

You have been my teacher for 30 years, and my accepting you as a teacher (in addition to my financial contributions to ZSS) were based on your claim of being an official Dharma Heir of Mitta Kutsu Soen Nakagawa Roshi of Ryutaku-Ji in Mishima, Japan. The cold hard fact of reality and practicality force me to write this. Too much is at stake here. The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the individual.

Honor and Healing

This is also about honor. Stepping down here is truly stepping up, to a higher seat, and it is something I know you have the strength within yourself to do.

I know you suffered in your early years during the closing days of World War II, and I wonder if you have suffered in others ways as well. Most who suffer this way in their youth spend their lifetime replaying the events that created their wounds in futile attempts to regain their center.

This is not the letter I envisioned writing only a few weeks ago, but the overwhelming weight of the situation necessitates my taking this position and speaking out. For the sake of the Sangha, both immediate and nation-wide, I sincerely hope you will read these words with a soft and open heart.

Is not the Dai Bosatsu legacy worth saving? Think of all the work done by hundreds if not thousands of people to "raise the barn" that is DBZ. Bill Johnstone, Mitta Kutsu Soen Roshi, Doris and Chester Carlson, Laurence Rockefeller, Nyogen Sensaki, Chuck Carpenter, Jiro Ferdando Afable.... the list is endless. Dai Bosatsu belongs to them, the Sangha collectively, and not to you, personally. To not act honorably, here, is to soil the effort of these good people.

I deeply remember your stories about Yamamoto Gempo Roshi's words to the Emperor Showa at the closing days of World War II, and sadly I see some parallels here. Again, as was the case sixty fifty years ago, the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the individual. This is our way. It is also the only way to minimize the damage you and numerous ZSS Boards have caused, and to begin the healing process. I urge you to reconsider how you move forward, and to remember all those who have carried the weight of this burden over the decades, yourself included.

With profound compassion,



CC: Zen Studies Society Board members:

- Joe Dowling, by email
- Chris Phelan, by email
- Sherry Chayat, by email
- Joe Marinello, by email
- Richard Rudin, DDS, by email
- Bonnie Shoultz, by email
- Peter Glynn, by email

The Shimano Archive:

- Rev. Kobutsu Kevin Malone, <http://www.shimanoarchive.com/>