

Dear Kobutsu,

Here is a post I made this morning in answer to Zogen's post dated 12/16/10:

Zogen,

Thank you for your strong letter. I appreciated your sensitive introduction which expresses the complex “loyalty trap” experienced by the directors of the Zen Studies Society Directors while they try to protect a “beloved teacher” from whom they “derive authority from Zen training, ordination, and for some of you, Dharma Transmission from Eido Shimano Roshi”.

This is, and historically has been, the “outstanding dilemma” blocking a just resolution to the 40 + years of outrageous abuses to students by Eido Shimano and the ZSS Board’s complicity. You wisely and rightly suggest that ALL contributors to ZSS, past and present, should have a voice in the future and renewal of the ZSS.

“We are all “stakeholders” of Zen Studies Society – Teachers and students, residents and visitors, who come back for more, nuns and monks, ordained and never ordained, Dharma heirs acknowledged or not – ALL who want to participate in extricating our organization from the autocratic control of one man who has no ounce of legitimacy left”.

As you say, some will want to point out that Eido Shimano and his wife Aiho, have stepped down from the board, have retired (initially worded “resigned”) and therefore no longer hold positions of authority. However, there is no question that Eido Shimano continues to be a strong influence on the present board which includes two dharma heirs (one to become the new Abbess) and Genjo Marinello. Eido Shimano will continue to reside at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and will continue to give teishos there and at Shobo-ji in NYC. His influence and authority is further empowered by edified descriptions on the ZSS website such as “his incomparable Dharma”.

In the meantime, there are Sangha that expend energy, and still hope for accountability/renewal and restorative justice, but the wheel stops turning as it meets those few board members left who hold the only active and decisive trustee position for unbiased change and renewal.

Someday, when Eido Shimano Roshi gets past his denial, he can explain what this Dharma is that gets kicked around like a soccer ball and allows for an esteemed teacher to repeatedly commit serious abuses, lies, and slandering of students who try to speak the truth of their experience? I personally was asked by Eido Shimano to lie “for the sake of the Dharma”. These are exact words from him. I now know that I am not the only person who has been asked by him to deliberately lie. How many times has he done this? How many in the ZSS have “protected the Dharma” in their silence?

Dharma Heir Genjo Marinello recently related that he has “always done what he thinks is best for the Dharma”, and some are genuinely moved by the struggle and difficulty he is having in resolving his own mixed issues. But while Genjo uses this process of introspection to straddle a fence, caught in the “loyalty trap”, time passes. We wait. We wait and watched resignation turn to retirement, recommendations from the Faith Trust Institute largely ignored, and plans for his future residence at both DBZ and Shobo-ji .

Years of experience, clear and equally introspective such as yours, Zogen, and that of other former ZSS members who are now disenfranchised, go unheeded and brushed aside.

Somehow, at the end of the day, Genjo, you have to act. By straddling the fence you can keep the convenience of being able to shift to whatever side presents you in the most favorable light. If you can do it long enough all the commotion may pass and nothing too major really has to change. As a fellow Quaker who continues to practice zazen, please return to the fundamental Dharma Teaching:

To do no evil;
To do good;
To save all beings.

“To live in the virtue of that Life and Power that takes away the occasion for all war”“Takes away the occasions for war”..... May we seek through honesty, transparency, and inclusiveness, occasions for Peace.¹

1. - Quaker Testimony of Peace, George Fox 1651

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So, Zogen, to sum it up so far, “moral indignation”, is where we are stuck. Your vision of including ALL past and present members of ZSS is democratic, healing, and enlivening. The last few sentences in your letter are so beautiful and freeing that I repeat them here...

“Nothing less will begin to restore our hope that ZSS might become, one day, what it was meant to beacome:

a serence place of practice and learning,
an oasis of Buddhist wisdom,
an inspiring example of Right Living,
of Precepts as a living reality.”

I hope my letter has correctly reflected yours, and please continue to participate in this greater maha-sangha conversation.