



Monkey Mind



Largely reflections on religion, politics & culture. And mostly in that order. Although I'm also easily distracted by shiny things...

Thursday, December 30, 2010

An Open Letter to the Board of the Zen Studies Society Regarding Eido Roshi

30 December 2010

The Rev'd James Ishmael Ford
Boundless Way Zen
Mugendo-Ji
1030 Pleasant Street
Worcester, MA 01602

Joe Soun Dowling
ZSS Board President
New York Zendo Shobo-Ji
223 East 67th Street
New York, NY, 10065

Dear Mr Dowling,

As a member of the North American Zen teacher mahasangha I have kept my thoughts and suggestions regarding the Reverend Eido Shimano private between myself, the Reverend Roko Sherry Chayat and the Reverend Genjo Marinello. Like others in this situation I've taken some grief from those who felt that in my position I should make a public stance. I've been willing to suffer these rebukes because I've felt I could be of more use in private.

With the roshi's December 1st letter to the New York Times, however, there has been a significant turning and I feel I must now speak publicly.

About Me



James Ford

My great passion is the spiritual quest and what it means in our lived lives. This passion has taken me to a

long and winding road that has, among other things, led me to be ordained as a Soto Zen priest and as a Unitarian Universalist minister. I remain in more or less good standing with both institutions, serving as a guiding teacher at the Boundless Way Zen Network and as senior minister of the First Unitarian Church in Providence, Rhode Island. I'm married to Jan Seymour-Ford, research librarian at Perkins School for the Blind, one of the truly good karma institutions in this world. We share our lives and home with auntie Julia, two moderately evil cats and a small school of fish. It is important to note that while occasionally I say things of value that draw upon the spiritual traditions which nourish my life, for the most part what is written here is just me gassing and should not be assumed to represent anything held dear by any institution with which I am associated.

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Eido Roshi has many gifts as a teacher and commands the loyalty of many students. No doubt this complicates things for you and the Board. Additionally the way our culture tends to address matters of sexuality and sex, to my mind swinging wildly between libertinism and Puritanism, rarely balanced, makes it hard to have clear and unambiguous positions. The pressures on you must be terrible. As someone committed to the establishment of Zen institutions in the west you have my genuine sympathy.

And, the repeated and frequently shocking accounts of his abuse of his position of authority, if true, are evidence Eido Roshi should not be sanctioned as a teacher anywhere in any capacity. And, at this point in time I find it near impossible to believe these accounts are not true. It is surprising his behaviors have not led to criminal prosecution, or at least civil action.

I was among those who counseled Shinge Roshi and Genjo Sensei to seek outside intervention this past year. I was heartened that you chose to go with the FaithTrust Institute and specifically the Reverend Dr Marie Fortune. I was less sanguine to learn you, the Board, were not willing to follow their counsel precisely. At the same time I wasn't there and again I felt my task was to support Roko & Genjo as they sought a way through that could bring healing to Eido's many victims while allowing your sangha and its important mission to go forward.

With Eido Roshi's letter* it is no longer possible to seek a compromise.

I counsel you as strongly as I can to dismiss the Reverend Eido Shimano from any position of authority in the Zen Studies Society or its affiliates.


For the sake of his victims, for the sake of your sangha, for the sake of the Zen Dharma, I hope you will take this action.

Sincerely,

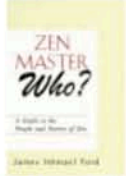
James

The Reverend James Ishmael Ford
Boundless Way Zen

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