

Monkey Mind

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

Friday, December 31, 2010

Letters from Zen Teachers to the Zen Studies Society



On the 1st of December, 2010, the Reverend Eido Shimano wrote a letter addressed to the NY Times, although not published there, stating that he had not resigned as abbot of the Zen Studies Society and its affiliate organizations as a result

of his embroilment in a series of sexual misconducts. As a result a number of Zen teachers have written to the Zen Studies Society requesting that he not be allowed to continue in any capacity that allows him access to students. I've offered to post these letters for those willing for them to be public. There are nineteen letters & twenty signatores. The first letter is Eido Roshi's to the New York Times, transcribed by Al Billings.

December 1, 2010.

News Editor
The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10018

Re: "Sex Scandal Has American Buddhists Looking Within" –
published Saturday, August 21, 2010, The New York Times
National section

Dear Sir,

It has been three months since the article written about me appeared in your National Section. In this day and age, it quickly spread all over the world and, I am told, was translated into Japanese. I was hurt deeply. However, I endured for more than three months and endeavored to calm down. Since this is the year that I am planning to retire, I do not wish this article and my retirement to be linked. One has nothing to do with the other – there is no cause and effect.

As the date for my retirement is nearing, I think that at the very least, I need to point out the inappropriate attitude of the writer of the article and the misinformation contained in his piece. I



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.

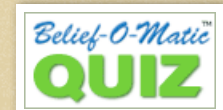
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Would You Like to Contact Me?

While I do not accept comments for publication at this blog, I very much welcome your thoughts, corrections and objections. Please write me at:

**monkeymind (at)
live.com**

What's Your Religion?

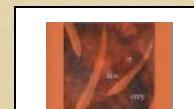


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highlight the following:

1. Mr. Oppenheimer did not interview me for this article, nor did he speak with Mr. Aitken or the young woman who is referred to in the article. The article states that he attempted to contact me and that I did not return several phone calls – this is just not true. I was never contacted by Mr. Oppenheimer, nor did I receive any correspondence from him at either my Livingston Manor address or my New York City address.

2. It is clear to me from reading the article and knowing the facts, that Mr. Oppenheimer obtained his information from second and third hand sources and the opinions expressed therein are neither factual nor backed up by proof. In fact, none of the individuals who have been quoted in the article were at the dinner table when the purported statement was made and there could not have “overheard” what was said.

3. In addition, I have no resigned because of these false accusations. At the beginning of this year, during a meeting of the Board of Directors in January, I made an announcement that 2010 was the 50 year anniversary of my being in America and that I planned to do a final fund raising for a mountain gate entrance to the monastery and would step down from the Abbot. This fundraising was to be the final act in a 50 year career in the United States. The article falsely states that I am stepping down from the Abbot because of allegations.

Moreover, I would like to mention the following: When the article appeared, I was in Switzerland doing a silent retreat. When I returned to the United States, many people brought the article to my attention. The effect has been profound. Many people are hurt and confused. As an aside, minutes from our Board of Directors meetings are private documents. If they wound up in Hawaii or in Mark Oppenheimer’s possession, they were improperly obtained and/or delivered. Did anyone question why Mr. Aitken would write about a Buddhist monk for 50 years, when I have had contact with him only twice since 1964. I shall look forward to what your journalist, Mark Oppenheimer, has to say about the contents of my letter.

Very truly yours,

signed

Eido T. Shimano, Abbot

From James Myoun Ford, Roshi

30 December 2010

The Rev’d James Ishmael Ford

Boundless Way Zen

Mugendo-Ji

1030 Pleasant Street
Worcester, MA 01602

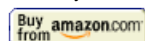
Joe Soun Dowling
ZSS Board President



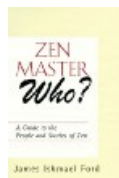
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[Soto Zen Buddhist Association](#)

[Unitarian Universalist Association](#)

[Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship](#)

Blogs I Read, or at Least Check Out Regularly

Shambhala SunSpace

When life hands you snow...

45 minutes ago

egregores

A Witch Burning in Ghana: How the roll of Christianity has been obscured (Part One)

52 minutes ago

Worst Horse

Karma Police, arrest this small forward

3 hours ago

Pluralist Speaks

Will Make No

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.

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,

Difference
5 hours ago


 **OpenSecrets Blog**
Improving Lobbying
Disclosure, Netflix
Hires Drobac and
More in Capital Eye
Opener: January 12
8 hours ago


 **Clear View Blog**
Darlene Cohen/Surei
Kenpo — Gone Into
the Mystery
8 hours ago


 **Bartholomew's
Notes on Religion**
EDL Makes Link with
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League in Canada
10 hours ago


 **The Wild Hunt**
Vodou Killings, and
Haiti One Year Later
12 hours ago

 **Whispers in the
Loggia**
Beato Subito: JPIL
Beatification Gets
Green-Light
15 hours ago

 **Rev. Danny Fisher**
A Gift of Dharma for
1.11.11
18 hours ago


 **Killing the Buddha**
Why Not Share?
23 hours ago

 **Open Buddha**
The Buddhist
Lifecoach or Charging
Fees for the Dharma
1 day ago

 **The Buddhist Blog**
Assault Weapons,
Violence and Anger.
1 day ago

 **HARDCORE ZEN**
NEW SUICIDE GIRLS
ARTICLE and
ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS
1 day ago

 **The Website of
Unknowing**
Snow at the
Monastery
1 day ago

 **Smilin Buddha
Cabaret**
"Only a Crazy Person
Would Do That"
1 day ago

 **Wild Fox Zen**
2 days ago

No Zen in the West

James

The Reverend James Ishmael Ford

Boundless Way Zen

From Joan Halifax, Roshi

Dear Daibosatzu Board and Practitioners,

I am Founding Abbot of Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a woman, a Zen practitioner since 1965, and someone who was sexually assaulted by one of her Buddhist teachers years ago. I have been following the discussion on the AZTA listserv for many months about the Eido Shimano "case". I use the term "case" not to mean koan, but in a legalistic sense. For just as the former Israeli president has just been convicted in a court of law of rape and sexual harassment, so also is Eido Shimano vulnerable to such an indictment.

For many years, I have heard about the sexual behavior of Eido Shimano toward his female students; there has long been talk about many of the Buddhist teachers who have violated sexual boundaries with their students. Sadly, the list of Buddhist teachers who have had intercourse with their students is not short. We have also been aware of not only of teachers having sex in the dokusan room but of teachers engaging in sexual violence toward their students as well.

For those of us who are not only teachers but women, the misogyny that we have encountered when we have brought these violations to the attention of others has been often concerning. For like many rape victims, we have been seen as somehow culpable, have been ignored, criticized, or shunned.

I want to say that I am grateful and am relieved that Eido Shimano has resigned from his abbacy and the Zen Center Board, and that you have identified good, strong leaders to take over your center. We live in a time when there should be zero tolerance of the violation of professional boundaries, and most particularly sexual abuse on the part of leaders, whether they be a president of a country, a prime minister, or a minister, whether psychologist or social worker, whether monk or manager.


Somehow, many of us in the Zen mahasangha thought this situation at your center was moving toward a decent resolution under the aegis of the Faith/Trust Institute. I need to tell you that, among many others, I am shocked and dismayed by the seeming lack of real remorse and understanding on the part of Eido Shimano as per his recent letter to the NYTimes. His behavior verges on sociopathy, or a total lack of feeling, of shame, and of regard for others.

This situation is complicated by another level as well. Perhaps it is too difficult for Eido Shimano's students and the Board of his organization to

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2 days ago

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reminders
2 days ago


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3 days ago


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 **Zen Mirror**
Introducing Chán Master Pawhui
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Gratitude and Faith
1 week ago


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Boston-area nerds...
1 week ago

 **Toledo Buddhist**
Happy New Year!
1 week ago

 **firefly hall**
encounter on a New Year's Day walk
1 week ago

 **Perspectives**
New Year's Vow
1 week ago

 **Boston Unitarian**
Here He is!...
2 weeks ago

 **Zenosaurus**
Zen 2.0 The Zenosaurus Course in Koans 3.3
4 weeks ago

Gustav Ericsson
December 2010
4 weeks ago

look with clear eyes at the depth of his delusion. Forgive my presumption, but let me share a little psychology with you. Accordingly, the Antisocial personality disorder (adyp or Atu) is defined by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual as "...a pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood."

"Characteristics of people with antisocial personality disorder may include:


- Persistent lying or stealing
- Apparent lack of remorse[3] or empathy for others
- Cruelty to animals[4]
- Poor behavioral controls — expressions of irritability, annoyance, impatience, threats, aggression, and verbal abuse; inadequate control of anger and temper
- A history of childhood conduct disorder
- Recurring difficulties with the law
- Promiscuity
- Tendency to violate the boundaries and rights of others
- Aggressive, often violent behavior; prone to getting involved in fights
- Inability to tolerate boredom
- Poor or abusive relationships
- Irresponsible work behavior
- Disregard for safety

"Other common characteristics of those with Antisocial Personality Disorder include superficial charm, shallow emotions, a distorted sense of self, a constant search for new sensations (which can have bizarre consequences), a tendency to physically or verbally abuse peers or relatives, and manipulation of others without remorse or empathy for the victim. Egocentrism, megalomania, lack of responsibility, extroversion, excessive hedonism, high impulsivity, and the desire to experience sensations of control and power can also be present."

I think this description must be somewhat familiar to many of you.....

Many of us have experienced being under the spell of a teacher or person of authority. Some of us have seen our own students caught in the trance of positive projections. But our practice is about waking up and ending suffering, being real and being courageous in dealing with mara, and actualizing compassion, even a compassion that might seem ruthless. We have to realize that the three-fold training is clear on the matter of sex and ethics, physical abuse and sangha relationships, and the role of wisdom and compassion in relation to the three jewels. And we have to see our teachers in a totally realistic light, including their feet of clay.

I also want to say that it is not that Eido Shimano is a scapegoat for all other spiritual teachers who have violated sexual boundaries and engaging in sexually abusive (and probably addictive) behavior. I hope that by bringing this situation to the world's attention through Aitken's now-public archive, the NYTimes article, and the increasing storm of emails,

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Human Bodies
1 month ago

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Universalism
4 months ago

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inheritance
7 months ago

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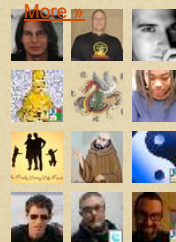
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Blog Archive

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▼ 2010 (398)

▼ December (28)

Letters from Zen
Teachers to the
Zen Studies
Socie...

blogposts, and communiques (including facebook), the sexual abuse of women by Buddhist teachers will diminish, if not end, through strong negative sanctions of those who have engaged in activities such as this.

Yet under the circumstances you find yourselves in, I think it might be difficult to stand up to someone like Eido, between the denial, guilt and shame associated with unconsciously enabling him, and the power dynamic between Eido and his students, coupled with cultural differences. But sometimes, we simply have to take a stand, and take a stand for the greater good, even though it is difficult to do. This is a time when I hope that the DBZ Board will do exactly this, and not fall into the pattern of denial and retreat that has prevailed at your center (and at many other Buddhist centers as well).

Like family members in dysfunctional families, it is important to realize that every one of us is complicit in some way, including the wider Buddhist community, as we all knew what was going on. At last, you are hearing from members of the greater sangha, and the message is clear: firmly and forever retire your founding abbot, forbid him to teach ever again, and formally forbid him to see students in the privacy of the dokusan room or in any kind of interview situation. I would also ask you to commit to adequate remediation for those who were subject to his predation and his sexual and physical abuse, and make public your stance in all this. If you do not respond responsibly, then you will be held accountable in one way or another, sooner or later. Even if you walk away from your board or your monastery (a form of denial), you will carry this history of abuse with you, and your passivity in relation to it.

To put it simply, Eido Shimano is an embarrassment to Buddhism, including all of Zen Buddhism, and Japanese Buddhism, in particular. I am concerned that if you, as his Board and monks do not take action, we will be sanctioning this kind of egregious abusive, gender-biased, predatory, misogynistic behavior in our temples and monasteries. We vow, as Buddhists to do no harm. I urge you to end the harm, and end it now.

The sexual abuse of women is no small matter globally. It takes profound commitment to deal with this issue. Humbly, i feel that we as Buddhists need to clean up the scene in our own backyard, and clean it up now. We all share this karma, and we must share the correction process as well. Compassion tells us that, and we have to not only listen but as well to act. Thus these letters you are currently receiving..... Please heed them, and heed them well.

I do feel deeply about this issue since so many women have passed through my zendo diminished and damaged as a result of having been subjected to sexual boundary violations by their teachers; some have been physically abused; others have been psychologically intimidated and then forced into sex. Some women were plainly deluded and hungry for acknowledgment, and in some way, power; others were coerced, shamed, and some were threatened; others were entranced and tricked. In the end, after all is said and done, most have wanted to abandon their Buddhist practice, finding Buddhism too passive and uncaring, if not dangerous.

As a result of what I have borne witness to in others and myself, as well as bearing witness to women who have been raped in the context of war or extreme family abuse, I would suggest here that we need to actualize a compassion that is more skillful and much braver at this time. I hope you will consider that standing aside might not be the best route in terms of

An Open Letter to
the Board of the
Zen Studies
Soc...

Eight Talks on
Baizhang's Fox
Koan

Thomas a Becket
Murdered

Elton John & David
Furnish
Announce the
Birth of T...

Singing Charley's
Great Adventure

Sunday and It's
Snowing...

In the Still of
Christmas Morn

A Providential
Invitation to a
Christmas Eve
Celeb...

A Buddhist
Christmas Eve
Eve Meditation

Happy birthday,
Ken

Wishing Everyone
a Blessed
Solstice

A UNITARIAN
UNIVERSALIST
CHRISTMAS
PAGEANT

Santa Claus, God
& Critical
Thinking: A
Meditatio...

Lost Your
Religion?

Io, Saturnalia!

WITH A BIT OF
DUST Reflecting
on Case Sixty-
One of...

Happy Birthday,
Bill of Rights

John's Feast

A Great Refusal: A
Small Meditation
on the 38th
Ca...

Belated Noticing
the Blogisattva
Awards Have
Been ...

Back from Rohatsu

Sitting Rohatsu
and Getting a
Little
Perspective

In Honor of the
Season: A

this situation with Eido Shimano. I hope you will be courageous and forthright and not take the road of compromise. For it has been compromise, I believe, and lack of ethical resolve that has given rise to our collective suffering in this situation, the individual suffering of the women who have been subjected to this abuse, and to the deep suffering in your sangha.

Joan Halifax
Founding Abbot
Upaya Zen Center

PS: By the way, one of your ex-monks has written to the AZTA that letters will have no impact on your decisions regarding Eido Shimano. I hope this is not the case. Even this monk's statement shows that he lacks the morale resolve to take a public step; it seems he, like others in your community, feels that there is no decent resolution and he is hopeless. I hope you do not share his sentiments, but have the courage to put an end to this abuse forever in your community.

From Myoan Grace Schireson, Roshi

December 30, 2010

Dear Soun Joe Dowling,

I am writing as a Dharma cousin to encourage you and your sangha to terminate Rev. Eido Shimano's teaching responsibilities and connection with the ZSS as recommended by the FaithTrust Institute October report . As a Zen person, I have given you the pith of my message first; the explanation of how I presume to involve myself follows.

I am a teacher in the Suzuki Roshi lineage, who has received Dharma transmission and the responsibility of the Mountain Seat ceremony from Sojun Weitsman Roshi, becoming Abbess for my temple. While I have not personally experienced the teaching power of Rev. Eido Shimano, I have also studied with the great koan master, Fukushima Keido, Kansho, at Tofukuji temple, Kyoto. Fukushima Roshi has also concurred with my discomfort over the sexual misconduct of Rev. Shimano. As a practitioner of koan, and now as a koan teacher, I understand the power of that method and the deep trust required in the relationship of student and teacher. In this regard I share with you the Zen expression: "Water drunk by the snake becomes venom, water drunk by the cow becomes milk". Our Zen ancestors know that practice can be used for harm and become harmful to recipients.

I am also a Clinical Psychologist, who has served as an expert witness in

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James Ishmael Ford



I am also a Clinical Psychologist, who has served as an expert witness in court. I have been in contact via the phone and internet, and also face to face, with those who feel that Rev Shimano's misconduct has caused them deep and lasting pain. Meeting face to face with these students helped me to find their experiences credible. I hope that my witnessing has felt supportive to them and to you.

The Dharma is sturdy and can survive our mistakes when our collective wisdom is expressed. But we cannot turn away from mistakes. Covering up harm, versus publicly acknowledging and witnessing the survivors' suffering, has occurred in many cultural settings (political and etc)—it always results in more harm. Covering up, saving face, and denying wrongdoings will neither protect the Zen transmission in the West, nor will it nourish the Dharma. The Dharma thrives on our humility, ethical action and courage to each be a lamp unto ourselves. I implore you and your monks to take on the responsibility of the Dharma with the guidance of Roko Shinge Roshi and Genjo Marinello. Rev. Shimano needs to step down and away from ZSS. This is the highest compliment to your teacher—your faith and confidence in practice that is now your own so he can retire.

May Rinzai's "man of no rank" come forth and lead the ZSS back to the practice of integrity. I have been teaching on Rinzai's very relevant expression at my New Year's retreat, and I have shared my concerns and this communication to you with my sangha in an effort to express the Dharma.

With many bows for your service in Dharma,
Myoan Grace Schireson, (Ph.D.)

From Dosho Port, Sensei

Dear Joe Soun Dowling, ZSS Board, and Dai Bosatsu monks:

I am writing in regard to the retirement of Eido Shimano Roshi and the installation of Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat Roshi as your new abbot. Congratulations on taking this important step!

I've been following the American Zen Teacher's listserv regarding your difficulties, especially this past year, and attended the meeting at Chapin Mill where Roko and Genjo shared some of the circumstances and complications of your situation.

Eido Shimano's recent letter to the NYTimes disappointed and saddened me. I concur with my colleagues on the many points that have already been expressed.

The one point I'd like to emphasize is that for the future of Eido Shimano's dharma lineage, and immediately for the sake of Roko Chayat's tenure as abbot, please remove Eido Shimano from all teaching venues and from residence in your centers.

Any other action at this time is likely to set-up Roko for failure, reflect poorly on your own integrity and that of American Zen.



Your best chance to redeem the past now appears to lie in a clean and definitive break with Eido Shimano.

Respectfully,

Dosho Port

Abbot of Wild Fox Zen and dharma heir of Katagiri Roshi

From Kyogen Carlson, Roshi

December 30, 2010

Joe Soun Dowling
Zen Studies Society Board President
New York Zendo, Shobo-Ji
223 West 67th Street
New York, NY 10065

Fax: 212-628-6968

Dear Mr. Dowling and Zen Studies Society Board:

I know that many of my colleagues are writing and faxing you regarding the transition at ZSS, specifically Eido Roshi's role there in the future. I share the views of my colleagues with regard to this, and I don't feel the need to repeat or rephrase what has already been said very eloquently. I would, however, like to add a few points of my own.

First, how this is handled will affect not just Eido Roshi and Zen Studies Society. It will affect how the whole Zen tradition is viewed in this country. That is why so many of us are compelled to address this. Buddhism has gained too high a profile for things like this to go unnoticed.

Next, I realize that Eido Roshi and other Japanese teachers view matters from a "public face" and "private face" perspective. While we can respect this and personally work with our teachers allowing for this, the Zen tradition **must** adapt to the American cultural landscape. That means bringing the public and private into harmony. Anything else will not do. That will be difficult for Eido Roshi, but the transition from west to east demands sacrifices from all who take up the work.

Finally, I believe Eido Roshi's Dharma legacy is in very capable hands with Rev. Shinge Chayat and with Rev. Genjo Marinello. Because of this his Dharma will continue through them, and perhaps others. The question, then, is about Zen Studies Society. Will ZSS come through this in a way that it can play a significant role in American Dharma in the years to come? I believe that how this matter is handled is critical to that question.

Sincerely,

Kyogen Carlson, abbot
Dharma Rain Zen Center

From Nonin Chowaney, Roshi

Joe Soun Dowling, ZSS Board President, and the Dai Bosatsu Zendo monks

I am writing in regard to the current situation at Zen Studies Society and Dai Bosatsu Zendo. I am a Zen Buddhist teacher and have known Roko Chayat, Shinge-roshi, for many years. I was much pleased and relieved to hear that she has been named your next abbot. I have the utmost confidence that she has the ability to guide your organization during and through these difficult times.

I have also known Genjo Marinello for quite some time. I have the utmost confidence in his ability, also, and I am hopeful that he can take a leading role on your Board of Directors.

I have been privately offering my support to Roko and Geno since the latest sexual scandal involving Eido-roshi broke a few months ago. I felt that the ZSS Board addressed the issue positively and productively, especially by engaging the services of the Faith/Trust Institute and following most of their recommendations. However, I was dismayed that Eido-roshi was still allowed to teach at your practice places. For if the allegations of his sexual misconduct and his abuse of authority are true, he should not be allowed to teach anywhere.

I was further dismayed to read the letter that Eido-roshi has written to the New York Times, for it shows that he is unrepentant and cancels out the letter of apology that he wrote earlier. His offenses have been ongoing, and if he is left in any position of any authority whatsoever, he presents an ongoing risk not only to students but also to ZSS and DBZ as a whole.

The general Zen Buddhist mahasangha in North America, Europe, and in Japan is quite aware of Eido-roshi's transgressions and has been for some time. Lately, as a result of the NY Times article and letter and increased

activity on the internet, more Zen Buddhist practitioners and the general public at large have also become quite aware. If this situation is allowed to continue, the institutional integrity of ZSS, DBZ, and all of its affiliates will continue to be undermined and harmed, perhaps irreparably.

I ask that you please remove Eido-roshi from all positions of authority at SZZ an DBZ so that true healing can begin for all those who have suffered and are suffering and that Shinge-roshi, Genjo, and all others involved can get ZSS an DBZ pointed in the right direction, for the good of your sangha, for the mahasangha, and for the Zen Buddhist Dharma.

With hands palm-to-palm,

Rev Nonin Chowaney, Abbot, Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple

Cc: American Zen Teachers Association listerv group

From Sallie Jiko Tisdale, Sensei

December 30, 2010

Dear Mr. Dowling and the Board of Zen Studies Society:

I am writing as a sister in the Dharma, a teacher in American Soto Zen, and a member of the American Zen Teachers Association, to urge you to remove Eido Shimano from authority *of any kind* in your sangha, and from any contact with students.

I have been aware of the difficulties involving Eido Shimano for some time, and feel deep dismay and discomfort at the current situation. I am frankly shocked that the situation has gotten this far.

I understand that he has been of great importance to many people and to American Zen. However, the damage that has been done by his misconduct may be of equal importance. His students and sangha have collaborated for many years in excusing and covering up this misconduct. This situation must stop for ZSS to have any credibility in the American Zen community. I know Genjo and Roko and feel respect and compassion toward the integrity of their practice and qualities as leaders in your community. This does not, unfortunately, relieve the sangha of ZSS and, especially, its board from responsibility to completely remove Mr. Shimano from power, including contact with senior students. I can't imagine Roko or any other ethical teacher could succeed in a community which continues to minimize, hide or otherwise ignore such serious acts.

I could not possibly recommend that any student study at ZSS until the Board acts firmly, publicly and irrevocably to dissociate from Mr. Shimano and work to repair as much as possible the terrible injuries he has done. His recent letter proves that he has not accepted the situation and will not protect the community.

I work as a health care professional and I am aware that such situations are terribly painful. But I also know that if Mr. Shimano had acted as he has done in another profession – in academia, health care, law, or business – the result would have been devastating to him and to anyone who

protected him.

I trust in the Dharma regardless of all human frailties, and I ask that you all reach into its great well at this time for the strength to do what is right.

In the Dharma,

Sallie Jiko Tisdale

From Taigen Leighton, Sensei

Rev. Taigen Dan Leighton, PhD

Ancient Dragon Zen Gate

1922 W. Irving Park Rd

Chicago, IL 60613

Joe Soun Dowling

ZSS Board President

New York Zendo Shobo-Ji

223 East 67th Street

New York, NY 10065

To the Zen Studies Society Board and Monks practicing at Dai Bosatsu,

I am reluctant to interfere or even comment in the affairs of any other sangha. As Guiding Dharma Teacher of a small sangha currently, and as a long-time member of the San Francisco Zen Center sangha, I have a deep appreciation of the difficulties of manifesting and enacting the Buddha Way in our modern American context.

Nevertheless, I am moved by the efforts of Rev. Genjo Marinello, the current struggle of the Zen Studies Society, and the flawed responses of Rev. Eido Shimano to urge you to now completely remove Eido Roshi from any position of authority at the Zen Studies Society. His ongoing damaging transgressions over many years and his unrepentant attitude now continue to damage all of American Zen, as well as the Zen Studies Society.

I feel deep sympathy for all of you, and for how difficult all this must be. But I believe that the Zen Studies Society can only become a worthy support for Dharma and practice now if you find the courage to sever all ties with Eido Roshi.

With sincere best wishes,

Rev. Taigen Dan Leighton

From Susan Ji-on Postal, Sensei

Joe Soun Dowling

Zen Studies Society Board President

New York Zendo, Shobo-Ji

223 West 67th Street

New York, NY 10065

Dear ZSS Board and Monks of Dai Bosatsu,

For the past 30 years I have been dismayed by the shocking reports of sexual misconduct by Eido Shimano Roshi. As an ordained student of the late Maurine Myo-on Stuart, she personally shared her direct knowledge of this. In the early 90's a number of women who had suffered great emotional turmoil came to the Empty Hand Zendo, then at the Meeting House in Rye, and so I experienced direct accounts. In 1994, I believe, there was a gathering of Western Buddhist Teachers at Mt. Madonna Center in California, and Aitken Roshi gathered a group of teachers who had heard directly from women who were harmed, and we drafted a letter to the ZSS Board asking for Eido Shimano Roshi to resign.

In recent times I have been strongly supportive of Shinge Roko Chayat and Genjo Marinello in their efforts to provide strong healthy leadership for Zen Studies Society. Most especially, I supported the plan for some outside intervention to resolve this issue fairly and honestly. Now with Shimano Roshi's letter to the New York Times, it appears that the advice of the FaithTrust Institute is not being truly followed. With this new turning, I cannot help but speak up.

It seems essential that Shimano Roshi resign from all positions of authority at ZSS. If there are some senior students who really want to continue their studies with him, then they can find another location and do this on a private basis, not under the umbrella of Zen Studies Society. Charismatic and powerful teaching without strong holding of the Precepts is dangerous. From the time of the Buddha, not causing harm is the primary vow. I can only urge you to take firm action now – for the sake of your own sangha, the victims of abuse, and the future of this most precious Dharma.

Palms-together,

Susan Ji-on Postal, Sensei

Empty Hand Zen Center

New Rochelle, New York

From Barry Magid, Sensei

Dear Joe Soun Dowling, ZSS Board, and Dai Bosatsu monks:

In light of Eido Shimano's letter to the NY Times denying any cause and effect relation between the accusations of misconduct and his stepping down as Abbot, it is clear to me that he is unrepentant and heedless of the reactions of his fellow teachers of the wider Buddhist community. The burden of truth is now on the new Abbot and the Board not to permit a whitewashing of the history of ZSS to occur in the service of allowing Eido Shimano to save face and go gracefully into retirement.

In addition to making clear that Eldo's misconduct is the direct cause of his stepping down, I would hope that both the Board and the new Abbot would now do what Eido Shimano has never done - take personal responsibility. This should include publicly acknowledging their own past reluctance to recognize the legitimacy of the charges repeatedly brought against their teacher by so many women and that their own failure to act has made them complicit in Eldo's misconduct. Like the parent who refuses to recognize their partner or relative has been abusing their child, the Dai Bosatsu community - as well as the larger Zen Buddhist community of which I am a part - must accept that they have been "failed witnesses," guilty bystanders who through their own denial have enabled a pattern of abuse to continue unchecked.

I hope the new Abbot of Dai Bosatsu will give voice to her own personal and our collective sense of failure to have acted in a way that might have prevented so many women from being harmed in the name of the Dharma.

gassho

Barry Magid MD

Ordinary Mind Zendo
New York, New York

From Hogen Bays, Sensei & Chozen Bays, Roshi

To the Zen Studies Society Board of Directors and the Ordained Sangha at Dai Bosatsu Zendo,

We are writing to ask that Zen Studies Society and Dai Bosatsu Zendo take strong action regarding Eido Shimano. We strongly recommend that as soon as the new Abbot is installed, that both the Zen Studies Society and Dai Bosatsu Zendo formally disassociate themselves from Eido Shimano, as recommended by the Faithtrust Institute in their consultation, and not allow him any further teaching role under your auspices, or in your buildings.

We have heard first-hand the stories of several of the women that Eido Shimano sexually seduced and assaulted over the course of over thirty years. Their experiences and other accounts make it clear that:

1) Eido Shimano is a predatory sex offender (not an opportunist or someone who has wandered across boundaries once or twice).

2) Eido Shimano is untreated and unrepentant, his offending is ongoing, and therefore he presents a continued risk.

3) The decades of suffering caused by his behavior has been tremendous and far-reaching.

4) The women (and men) he has offended have not had a chance to receive the kind of witnessing of their stories and institutional support that could begin their healing. When they have approached the ZSS Board in the past, the response of the Board has led to further psychological trauma.

5) Because of the way his resignation and current events are unfolding, victims and their supporters have renewed and deep distrust that there will be any attempt at justice-making or restitution for his past wrongs, or any meaningful change in Eido Shimano's behavior in the future.

In other professions Eido Shimano's behavior would result in removal of a professional license (medicine, law and psychotherapy) and criminal and/or civil prosecution. Legal prosecution may still happen, particularly if current survivors feel that Zen Studies Society has not acted appropriately to prevent misuse of power and victimization in the future.

We cannot recommend strongly enough that ZSS and DBZ dissociate themselves completely from Eido Shimano, and specifically not let him use any of the ZSS or DBZ facilities for any purpose.

We also recommend that as soon as possible in the New Year the teachers, Board, ordained sangha, and membership of ZSS and DBZ receive at least three days of training specific to the issue of misuse of power by spiritual teachers (sexual, monetary, etc power) from people trained by the Faithtrust institute.

This is an organizational issue, and the entire organization needs to be educated to truly understand how serious these issues are and how to work together to prevent them in the future. The survivors, at the very least, deserve to see that the organization is making a credible effort towards education and prevention.

We also recommend a "Truth and Reconciliation" process similar to that in South Africa to help bear witness to the suffering, which is poignant and ongoing. Please also consider what can be done in the realms of justice-making and reparation for past wrongs. There are professionals who have been trained in these processes and could be of great assistance.

We wholeheartedly support the Zen Studies Society Board, Abbot Shinge Chayat and Genjo Marinello in beginning the New Year with Zen training centers that are dedicated to relieve, and not increase, the suffering of the

world. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance as you go forward with this difficult but necessary task.

Jan Chozen Bays

Hogen Bays

Co-Abbots

Great Vow Zen Monastery

Clatskanie, Oregon

From Wendy Egyoku Nakao, Roshi

1 January 2011

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

Dear Joe Soun:

On this first day of the new year, I want to take a few moments to write to you as the abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles. I offer bows of appreciation for the good news of the installation of Roshi Shinge as Abbot of ZSS and DBZ.

I am writing to voice my support for terminating Roshi Shimano's presence and teaching at the ZSS in light of his sexually predatory and unrepentant behavior. I urge the ZSS Board to boldly and courageously recognize that Roshi Shimano needs help and to find a course of treatment for him.

I urge you to facilitate the ongoing and thorough education of everyone at ZSS and DBZ on all facets of why this behavior has been so devastatingly harmful for the women involved and frankly, for everyone in your Sangha and the Maha Sangha, and why it is not to be tolerated in any way.

I urge you all to fearlessly stand in the fire of directly looking at the organizational-and-sangha-culture structures and behaviors that have protected this dynamic and enabled it to exist for far too many years. Perhaps this will be the most painful part, but I know, from my own experience, that when you stand in the fire and are unflinching in your investigation leaving no stone unturned, a path of liberation emerges and a vista comes into view for a deep and broad maturing in the Dharma.

I implore you to work tirelessly to take care of the people in your Sangha (including those long gone from your properties because they were harmed or could no longer bear to be part of your culture) in all the ways that Zen people, who hold close the vows to end suffering and the Great Vows of Bodhisattvas, are committed to do. Please do not fear losing buildings and grounds or even your organization at the expense of taking care of the Sangha treasure.

As the abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles for these past 12 years, I know first hand the effort that is involved in healing a Sangha and creating a viable Zen practice place that truly serves the wholeness of human beings.

Finally, I offer my support in whatever way it may be useful to Roshi Shinge, Genjo Osho, and yourself.

Hand to heart across the miles,

Wendy Egyoku Nakao, abbot
Zen Center of Los Angeles
Month of New Beginnings

From Bodhin Kjolhede, Roshi

Dear ZSS Board,

Eido Roshi has besmirched the name of Zen long enough, and is now an open sore to the maha-Sangha. It's high time you exercise your authority and demand that he retire. Enough is enough.

Bodhin Kjolhede

From Zoketsu Norman Fischer, Roshi

Mr. Joe Soun Dowling,

ZSS Board President

New York Zendo Shobo-Ji

223 East 67th Street

New York, NY, 10065

Dear Joe,

I am writing in support of the many other American Zen teachers who have already written urging you and the Board to disassociate yourselves completely from Eido Shimano.

As a former abbot and leader at the San Francisco Zen Center, I lived through our troubles there with Richard Baker Roshi. So I appreciate the pain and complexity of what you are dealing with. I understand that expressions of dismay and outrage that reference professional standards and psychological syndromes, while probably true and certainly important, do not fully capture the reality that you face. Despite Eido's many serious transgressions, I am sure that in your experience, and in that of others in the sangha, he still appears, at least in part, as a powerful and wise teacher, and that to cast him out may well feel like betraying your own practice of these many years.

My own experience is that this is not so. To be faithful to a teacher and a teaching is to do the strong and difficult thing when required to do so. Though he may resist it with all his heart, there is no doubt that what Eido needs and wants from his students is toughness and honesty in times of crisis. No doubt this is what he himself has always tried to manifest. Now it is your turn to give him the courtesy and respect he deserves by being strong and awakened in your response to his conduct. Though your excluding him will be difficult for him, I think it will also be of great benefit. He deserves this expression of courageous love and appreciation – you can do what you need to do without demonizing or diagnosing him. Not to respond strongly and clearly is to collude with him at his worst

rather than to assume his best. It is time to cut through with kind, simple and straightforward action.

I think we in the West have been mistaken in imagining that in Asia teachers control their sanghas absolutely. This is not the case. Teacher misconduct is not tolerated anywhere in Asia, and the disciplining of teachers is not inconsistent with the necessary respect and obedience for the teacher that is essential for Zen practice. The reason teacher misconduct is not tolerated in Asia is no less true here: bad conduct that goes unaddressed weakens the entire Dharma community. This is why so many letters from Zen teachers have been filling your mailbox: your problems are ours. The days of American Zen lineages as closed family systems is over. Zen practice cannot survive unless we realize that we are responsible to each other – and that we are here to support each other.

Know then that you and the ZSS Board must take this strong action not only for Eido, and not only for yourselves, but for us as well. And know that many of us stand ready and willing to support you in whatever way you need.

Thank you for reading and considering this letter.

Yours,

Zoketsu Norman Fischer

Former co-abbot, San Francisco Zen Center

Founder and teacher, Everyday Zen Foundation

From Les Keido Kaye, Roshi

January 3, 2011

Mr. Joe Soun Dowling,

ZSS Board President

New York Zendo Shobo-Ji

223 East 67th Street

New York, NY, 10065

Dear Joe,

At an American Zen Teachers Association (AZTA) meeting in 1995, I met a woman who told me she was practicing with Eido-roshi. She also explained that, some years earlier, she and her husband stopped practicing with Eido-roshi when they learned of his egregious sexual relations with his female students. She went on to say, "But I went back to complete my training." I was surprised by how casually she admitted that she placed her personal ambitions above her ethical standards.

It has become apparent that too many of Eido-roshi's students felt the same way. Over the years, they continued to treat him as their spiritual teacher, while being aware of the harm he was creating for naive and vulnerable women. And by remaining silent, they encouraged his behavior.

In our daily lives, most of us make decisions we feel will be in our own best interests. It doesn't always work out, and problems arise, for a number of reasons, including: lack of information, mistaken assumptions, poor judgement, and emotional needs. But serious Zen students make their best effort to be mindful of the trap of self-orientation, guided instead by a world view that puts emphasis on the well-being of others, rather than on themselves. They aspire to live authentically, according to their true nature and to Buddhist teaching, which emphasizes a high morale standard in the conduct of daily affairs.

Eido-roshi's past behavior has now been exposed. And the notoriety can only increase in the coming months, due to media attention and social networking, such as Facebook and personal "blogs." The latter has already begun.

The ZSS board and Eido-roshi's long time students need to separate themselves completely from him, disavow themselves of his past actions, reach out to the women who have been harmed, and apologize for remaining silent. This is the only way you can start fresh and regain credibility.

Les Kaye (Keido),
Abbot

From Eido Frances Carney, Roshi

January 3, 2011

Mr. Joe Soun Dowling
Board President
Zen Studies Society
New York Zendo Shobo-Ji
223 East 67th Street
New York, NY, 10065

Dear Joe Soun:

As I am traveling at this time, I write but a brief letter to join the Mahasangha in voicing

concern about Eido Shimano whom I have personally met only once. It's a terribly sad

thing to come to this, but many women have been injured by the sexual misconduct of

Eido Shimano, and the Mahasangha is injured if the ZSS board and the Dai Bosatsu

Sangha fail to take strong action such that no further injury might occur. It is appropriate

for the Mahasangha to protect women from injury and to protect the Three Treasures.

With all kindness and protection of the Three Treasures, remove Eido Shimano from

all teaching possibilities, dissociating itself from him, so that the Zen Studies Society

and Dai Bosatsu Zendo may regain balance.

I have no doubt that your new and extremely capable Abbess Shinge Roshi will

bring forward all the necessary actions, elements, and activities that will bring about

healing for all concerned. My sincerest wishes for everyone's recovery, for

tranquility of daily practice, for fulfillment of all relations

In Dharma,

Rev. Eido Frances Carney

Abbess, Olympia Zen Center

From Zenki Mary Mocine, Sensei

Mr. Joe Soun Dowling

President, Board of Directors

Zen Studies Society

233 East 67th Street

New York, New York 10065

Re: Eido Shimano

Dear Mr. Dowling,

I am the Abbess of the Vallejo Zen Center, Clear Water Zendo. I trained at the San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara. I'm writing to add my voice to the many that have contacted you about your former abbot, Eido Shimano.

While it may well be true that maintaining Rev. Shimano in any role could open the organization to legal challenges, (I used to be a lawyer) I don't think that sort of thing is a reason for a dharma organization to act or not act. I think we need to act or not act based on our bodhisattva vows.

I know that sounds grandiose but it is also simply our practice. In this instance, it seems to me that the way is clear, though difficult. After reading Rev. Shimano's purported letter to the Times, I felt it became straightforward and simple: he is very damaged and should not be "sponsored" to teach in any way by any dharma organization. As Norman Fischer said, perhaps a clear break and clear message from you will be of help to him. I hope so. Nothing else seems to have gotten through his denial. Bodhisattvas are not saps, in my view. Sometimes they must set boundaries and make difficult decisions that hurt people. I think this is such a situation. I hope that you and the other leaders of the ZSS can find the strength of such vows to protect the current sangha as well as to reach out to those harmed in the past. They are your sangha as well, after all. Finally, as others have said, you represent all of us in this.

We stand with you and your new abbot, Shinge Roshi and will support you in the new beginning that we hope is dawning in New York. Our hearts go out to you in this difficult time. Thank you for your efforts in the dharma.

Warmly,

s/

Zenki Mary Mocine
Abbess, Clear Water Zendo

From Ruben Habito, Roshi

Mr. Joe Soun Dowling
President, Board of Directors
Zen Studies Society
233 East 67th St.
New York, NY 10065

Dear Mr. Dowling,

As Head Teacher at Maria Kannon Zen Center in Dallas, Texas, I respectfully add my voice to those of other Zen teachers, my Dharma sisters and Dharma brothers of different lineages, in support of your efforts to make the Zen Studies Society and Dai Bosatsu Zendo move forward with a clean start toward being a vibrant and respected and credible community of Zen practice.

Eido Shimano Roshi's ethical conduct, mainly the reported sexually predatory behavior already noted during the time of his tutelage with the late Robert Aitken Roshi, and more seriously, through the years that he continued in a position of responsibility as Zen Teacher and Abbot of Zen Studies Society and Daibosatsu Zendo, is at the center of public scrutiny and furor. At last summer's (2010) annual meeting of the American Zen Teachers' Association held at Rochester, New York, the Zen teachers gathered there voiced our support and encouragement for Shinge Roshi, now your new Abbot, and Genjo Marinello Roshi, in their efforts to work with you and the rest of the Board and your entire zen community to do what is best for all concerned, and also made some recommendations to them in this regard in a friendly and collegial way.

I join my Dharma sisters and Dharma brothers in encouraging you and your Board, with the leadership of newly installed Abbot Shinge Roshi, to continue taking steps so that your Zen community will be freed of any taint of whitewashing, condoning or appeasing any kind of unethical and harmful, not to mention possibly legally and criminally reprehensible behavior, even by someone to whom you are all beholden in so many ways. I join my fellow Zen Teachers in urging you to dissociate yourselves formally and publicly from Eido Shimano Roshi, and to take all steps necessary to make this truly effective and credible to the public and to all in your community as well as to all of us who value and cherish the practice of Zen as a path of transformation of self and of society.

Yours in the Dharma,

Ruben Habito (Keiun-Ken)

From Chikudo Lew Richmond, Sensei

January 4, 2011

Dear Joe Soun,

Regarding the recent distressing news regarding Eido Shimano, I am relieved and gratified that something is finally being done and that the Zen world is finally speaking out. I have known about Shimano's conduct since 1981, through private correspondence and conversation with Robert Aitken Roshi, and in the decades that followed I have seen allegations repeatedly surface, followed by some flurry of activity, and then nothing. This happened many times.

It is not easy to deal with the malfeasance of one's own teacher. As a Board member and teacher at the San Francisco Zen Center, I was one of the people instrumental in confronting Richard Baker, then Abbot, about his misconduct. That confrontation eventually led to his resignation and departure. (All of this has been recounted in detail in the book *Shoes Outside the Door* by Michael Downing, which should be required reading for any individual or Sangha in a similar situation). It was the most difficult thing I have ever done. Exhausted from the effort and ashamed of my own inability to act sooner, I too resigned and left. I took off my robes and went back to being a very private citizen. I also contracted a life-threatening illness. It was terrible. The whole experience derailed my Zen practice for the better part of a decade.

When I look back now and ask myself, Was it worth it? My answer is yes, absolutely. Whatever modest abilities I now have to function as a Zen teacher I attribute largely to that time in 1983 when it became necessary to take a stand--along with my dharma brothers and sisters at the San Francisco Zen Center.

One observation that might be of use to those who have been harmed or victimized: there is nothing that cuts through fast talk faster than a civil lawsuit. It is also worth noting that the Zen Studies Society, like all Buddhist centers, does not exist in some parallel universe, it exists in the state of New York, with its laws and courts. Of course, Buddhism has its own laws as well. Shakyamuni Buddha himself laid down the Vinaya, the standards of conduct for the Sangha, and in every sect and every school, those standards have been honored down to the present time throughout the Buddhist world. If we are true to our practice and to our lineage, we must rise to that standard, whatever the cost. Some would say that the secular courts are not the place to adjudicate spiritual matters. That is what the Catholic Church professed too. They were mistaken.

Chikudo Lew Richmond

Abbot, Vimala Sangha

Mill Valley, CA

Posted by James at 12:54 PM     

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