

DaiAn

January 5, 2011

Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat
Abbot
Zen Center of Syracuse
Syracuse, New York

Dear Shinge Roshi:

I am writing at last in response to an email I received from you a while back asking for the support of the Zen Center of Syracuse sangha as you take on an additional role as Abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. As you can see, it has taken me a long while to gather my thoughts and find words to express them to you.

Early last Spring I discovered the details of Eido Shimano's long history of remorseless anti-social behavior, including the sexual exploitation of his female students over a period of several decades. I also learned that you and many of your colleagues had been aware of his conduct and dangerous propensities for many years. You nevertheless continued as his student and sent your students to study with him at Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

Being a survivor myself, this information affected me profoundly. I wish that this information could have been in some way been shared with me when I joined ZCS and became your student, rather than having to be hit with it out of nowhere. My immediate reaction combined all of what one might expect from a survivor: Shock, anger, fear, shame and profound sadness. It made me ill. As an attorney who has spent almost thirty years serving abused and powerless people, my reaction was *outrage*.

I sensed immediately that I could not continue to sit at ZCS. I wrote to you, the Board and some close sangha members with a vague description of what I was experiencing. I should have said more, but I could not find the words and was afraid of a reaction. My heavy family and professional responsibilities allowed me to believe that I had the right to just walk away without confronting these issues head-on. I did not want to become the center of unwelcome attention (again) by addressing the sangha directly, fearing that mine would be a lone voice crying out in the wilderness.

I have spent many months investigating, studying, discussing, sitting and reflecting, asking the question: What is right action in this case? I also waited and watched to see what action you and the ZCS would take, but was disappointed not to hear your voice among the many who called for Eido Shimano's removal. (If I am not aware of something, I do apologize.)

Now I have learned that I was not the only student who had grave misgivings about Eido Shimano. I learned that these misgivings had been expressed before the sangha and with you in private. I now know that I should do something in solidarity with this student, and with all of those who have been harmed by Eido Shimano, by writing this letter and unequivocally telling you where I stand: I cannot support you while you continue as Eido Shimano's student and make no public stand calling for his removal from all influence and presence at ZSS and its affiliates.

I urge you to add your voice to those of your fellow AZTA teachers and the innumerable voices elsewhere in the Maha Sangha who have publicly called for this action.

If you were to ask for my support in such an endeavor, I would give it freely.

In any event, I remain grateful to you and the ZCS sangha for introducing me to zazen and our precepts, which have proven them immeasurably valuable.

Let True Dharma Continue!

DaiAn