

DaiAn

January 5, 2011

Board of Trustees
Zen Center of Syracuse
Syracuse, New York

To The Zen Center of Syracuse Board of Trustees:

I am writing at last in response to an email I received from Shinge Roshi a while back asking for the support she takes 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 respond.

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. Apparently Shinge Roshi and many colleagues have been aware of his conduct and dangerous propensities for years, but Shinge Roshi continued as his student and has sent ZCS students to study with him at Dai Bosatsu Zendo even so.

Being a survivor myself, this information affected me profoundly. I wish that I had been made aware of this background in some way when I joined ZCS and became Shinge Roshi's student, so that I wouldn't have had to get hit with it out of nowhere. My immediate reaction combined all that 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, and I have not returned. I wrote to Shinge Roshi, 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 wish that I could have stayed and taken a stand as a member of the Board reflecting what I believe to be right action. 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 Shinge Roshi would take, but was disappointed not to hear your voices among the many who have called for Eido Shimano's removal. If there is something that you have done that I am not aware of, I do apologize.

I understand that many believe that Eido Shimano has a rare gift as a teacher. That seems like a doubtful proposition to me, given all the harm he has inflicted, without remorse. But even if he has a rare gift, how can that overshadow the harm he has caused or justify the risks that have been taken? As an Assigned Counsel criminal defense attorney and an Attorney for the Child in New York, I have encountered many people with anti-social personalities in my practice. I have learned much of value from them, but cannot fathom holding out such a person as a trustworthy leader and teacher.

If this lack of understanding is my failing, then so be it. But I have learned that other ZCS students have expressed serious misgivings, as well. So now I realize that I should speak in solidarity with them, and with all of those who have been harmed by Eido Shimano, by writing this long-overdue letter and unequivocally telling you where I stand:

I cannot support or remain a member of the Zen Center of Syracuse while Shinge Roshi continues as Eido Shimano's student and no action is taken to sever your association with him.

I urge you to add your voice to those of the 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 Shinge Roshi and the ZCS sangha (I miss you very much) for introducing me to zazen and our precepts, which continue to prove themselves of immeasurable value.

Let True Dharma Continue!

DaiAn