

From: "Andy Afable" <[REDACTED]>
Subject:
Date: January 6, 2011 10:19:01 AM EST
To: "'Kobutsu Malone'" <kobutsu@engaged-zen.org>
▶ 1 Attachment, 44.0 KB

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Dear Rev. Malone,

As of today, January 6, 2010, the fallout from the "Shimano Scandal continues. As more letters come in from students and teachers of Dharma, I hope the Archive you have set up continues to be an unimpeachable source of information on Eido Shimano's "sayings and doings" and how they affected the Zen Studies Sangha as well as the maha-Sangha.

Please post this letter on the archives. It is dated August 30, 2010. It has some bearing on many of the recent letters from many teachers, and I hope it can be posted with the current documents dated January 2011.

Andy Afable,

Transmuted dharma heir of Eido Shimano

August 30, 2010

To the Board of Directors,

The Zen Studies Society, Inc.
Soun Joe Dowling, President
Shinge Roshi Sherry Chayat
Genjo Marinello
Yuho Carl Baldini,
Shoteki Chris Phelan
Zenshin Richard Rudin

Dear Directors,

Thank you for your considered reply to my last letter.

Nothing Eido Roshi has done, including inspiring many students over the years, can mitigate the sheer enormity and historical depth of the accusations against him. Because he has been so identified with the Society, the reputation of the Zen Studies Society has been equally besmirched. If you think this is an exaggerated response, please take the time to reflect on the archives available on the internet. *If you do not ask the abbot to step down, you are clearly applying ethical standards to him that are exceedingly below the professional standards used to judge clergy, doctors, and therapists.* In a manner of speaking, Roko and Genjo participate in a group practice (as dharma teachers) with the abbot being the third and primary member of the group sponsored by the Zen Studies Society. I am disturbed that the two dharma heirs on the board, who I'm sure have done a good measure of pastoral counseling when called for, are evading their professional responsibility in allowing the abbot to continue his position and duties as the spiritual head of the Society.

In addition, an organization like SNAP has taken notice what is going on at ZSS has expressed its position. I strongly endorse their position, and I urge all the directors to read their insight and approach to the current situation.

http://www.snapnetwork.org/snap_statements/2010_statements/081910_zen_studies_society_announces_ethics_investigation_snap_responds.htm

I am also disturbed by the way the ethics committee has been set up. Please give me a contact person at Faith Trust institute where I can have a person I can express my concerns to without going through the filter of the ethics committee. At this point the ZSS is claiming it can investigate itself. Many people think otherwise. You need an ethics committee or ethics inquiry committee that can proceed without review or oversight from the board to

have any kind of credibility, especially from those who consider themselves victims. Do you honestly believe that anyone with serious grievances will approach the ethics committee the way it is set up?

You have given me short passages that endorse the board's course of action. I wish rules of confidentiality did not prohibit my providing you with statements from people who were deeply hurt and are still aggrieved. In my letters to you, I speak for their cause as much as anything else.

As you try to save Zen Studies and the Abbot, you are going through what many past boards have experienced before. People leave because they cannot abide the situation; people remaining on the board are divided and become indecisive. I think the departure of Banko and Seigan is sad, as they could provide perspectives that come from their long experience in DBZ and Shoboji. An old sangha supporter and benefactor, going back to the 70's, communicated to me his apprehension that "there is no decision maker left with any credibility."

Because you were all handpicked by Roshi to be on the board it is difficult to imagine that any of you has much credibility. Your most pressing task is to assure the survival of the Zen Studies Society. If you feel you are in over your head and cannot contribute to assuring the survival of the Society as you try to deal with numerous agendas that have to be dealt with (governance, ethics, financial re-structuring) please stay on to help in the effort of finding more suitable board members before you leave so that the Society has a chance to continue. My fear is that as more problems and situations accrete that are focused on the Zen Studies Society the board will continue to be at a loss simply because it does not have the credibility, practical resources, and clarity to proceed.

In the past I suggested to the abbot the names of potential board members from the Society's sangha that could serve the Society well because of their maturity and their professionalism. My suggestions were laid aside. Just imagine, Fujin was asked to be on the board, this admirable nun who had absolutely no experience and no thoughts on how an organization should run. I mention this to make the point that in being handpicked, you were not picked because you were the best and most mature people to help the Zen Studies Society. You may be the very people who, lacking independence, can lead the Zen Studies Society to its final dissolution. There are people in Shoboji who can be called upon, but I suspect at this point you will have to turn to the larger Buddhist community as well to seek competent help.

If you haven't read it yet, I urge you to read Eshin Brenda Lukeman's latest thoughts on the withdrawal of the abbot from the Society. It is a recent posting on the Robert Aitken blog. Here are the thoughts of a respected therapist and very senior student who is able to propose, with courtesy and kindness, why the abbot should withdraw.

There must be full respect for each member of the sangha and their needs and experience. Without a real respect for kindness and truth, it's not real practice. And, an individual who does not respect these values, and cannot be counted on to live by them, in my opinion can not be given any power at all over the lives of others.

In order to regain some sense of honor and viability, it seems clear that the best course of action would be for Eido Roshi to take time away for a period of serious reflection without all the pressures, power and responsibilities he has had to undertake. This would give him a chance to face his situation and life fully, and make the changes he needs to make. It would help restore faith for everyone in the truth and efficacy of Zen practice. Otherwise it all begins to look like a sordid game we've all been caught in.

<http://robertaitken.blogspot.com/2010/05/eido-tai-shimano-roshi.html#comments>

The withdrawal and resignation of the abbot as the spiritual teacher/representative of The Zen Studies Society will accomplish two things. First, it will show the world that the Society is an ethical organization and will therefore give the ZSS, through the board, the encouragement to think openly and move towards renewing itself. It will be that pivotal turn that will change people's attitudes towards the Society. The DBZ/Shoboji sangha will be relieved that at long last "the roshi problem" has been resolved decisively. I believe there is a groundswell of support there waiting to support you. Second, it has a practical consequence that is not too apparent. (I believe that as more declarations are made in the blogosphere, and as people vent their grievances, I would not be surprised if in the months ahead the Society will be a defendant in litigation.) I think the withdrawal of the abbot from the Society will forestall the expression of these grievances that potential plaintiffs feel can be satisfied through litigation. They will feel somewhat assuaged the abbot has resigned. The reasons I give you above would not carry any weight but for the fact that the withdrawal of the abbot from the Society is long overdue.

There will be students who will want to have continued access to the abbot for their koan studies. Surely the Zen Studies Society can provide a place and a schedule so they can meet the abbot, without the sponsorship of The Zen Studies Society.

The refusal of the abbot to address the Aitken summons (of May, 2010) has turned countless people against him and the Society. The board has done the Society great damage with the phrase "unconditional realm", and has communicated to many practitioners that the teaching of the abbot (and the Society) is extremely solipsistic. "Practice in the midst of activity is infinitely more difficult than the practice of stillness" (Hakuin)

Interlude

When Kanzan Egen arrived in Myoshinji, the temple was in ruins. When it rained water would come streaming down where the roof tiles were broken. One day it rained hard. As water flooded the floor, two monks ran to the kitchen and returned with the biggest pots the temple had. The pots immediately filled up with water and spilled onto the floor.

A third monk ran to the kitchen and returned with two large noodle sieves, one in each hand. He held the sieves under two of the big holes in the roof. Water simply coursed through the sieves.

Addressing the first two monks, Kanzan said, "You useless monks!" Turning to the third monk, he said, "Excellent! Excellent!"

--A story told by Yamakawa Sogen Roshi, in a Dai Bosatsu Teisho.

I will close by suggesting that Roko publicly deny the allegations that she had an affair with the abbot. I will be happy if the allegations go away. I am not a rumor monger. The (alleged) affair was reported to me *many* years ago by women who were present in that women's meeting in the guest house in 1993. I have never alluded to it except in my last letter to you, since it seems pertinent to the recently published ethics guidelines of the Zen Studies Society. I consider these women honest and unimpeachable as well, so I give credence to their account of what happened in that meeting. (By the way, I have never intimated that Roko's marriage broke up because of the alleged affair.) There were not many women in that meeting, so it should be fairly simple for Roko to write them a letter denying any affair, with the view that that same letter can be made public with the women's responses. This will end the rumors. Otherwise, Roko's silence will be interpreted—not as Vimalakirti's noble silence—as tantamount to an admission and as well an inability to face ethical scrutiny. Her ability to face scrutiny at this time is important since she is in line to be the spiritual representative and public face of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and as it is, the Society is already under siege.

Please provide a copy of this letter and my previous letters to the board to the abbot.

Sincerely,

Andy Afable