

Re: Sexual misconduct by Buddhist teachers (was Eido Tai Shimano)

by **Carol** on Thu Jan 06, 2011 4:42 pm

"Demonizing" ... "moralizing" ... "diagnosing" ... "enabling" ... "excusing" ... "participating" ... "condoning" ... "denying" ... "amateur psychologizing" ... "cultish acquiescence" -- these are some of the labels we have used to condemn and/or dismiss one another's perspectives here. If it is hard for us -- most of whom have not been involved and do not know the people involved -- to listen, to hear, to consider perspectives that differ from our own, then think how very much more difficult this must be for those closer to the situation who have all been so deeply wounded.

I once walked away from a teacher I adored because some areas of his conduct were troublesome, and worse, because of his treatment of those who challenged him on it -- berating, labelling and ostracizing them. He clearly suffered from paranoid delusions in my not-so-amateur opinion. At the same time, I have no doubt that many times this teacher had a clear-seeing eye and much wisdom and compassion. He had in fact been deeply instrumental in my own awakening, and the love and gratitude I feel towards him is immense. I do not see these two things as contradictory. I would have stayed had there been some way for me to help him open his eyes and heart to what he was doing -- but there was none that I could find, sadly, though looking back I sometimes think "if I had done or said this or that, it might have reached him." Hindsight ... and not being a Buddha, I made mistakes.

I think it is most important in these situations to be open to how it is for others ... to deeply open our true dharma eyes to the suchness of each one of us as we struggle and suffer with the great challenge and mystery of life. "Ah, so that's how it is for you," said the monk in the koan when another monk saw it differently. Each monk described his specific and particular experience, and the other heard and acknowledged it. If we can do that, then none are left out of our compassion and wisdom can find fuller expression through our actions.

Eido Roshi, to me, is a tragic figure ... someone who lost his way in emptiness sickness doubtless because of many causes and conditions. To see this in no way diminishes the harm and pain he has caused others. And to describe his sickness in no way demonizes him, IMO, but instead helps to understand and take appropriate action for the benefit of all involved, including Eido Roshi himself. You see a person so identified with the deluded creations of his mind that he cannot find a way out, cannot find the path to liberation because he believes he has already found it. This happens to all of us, to a greater or lesser extent, whenever we believe we have found the "truth" and that there is no further inquiry needed and nothing more for us to see or do about the great matter. Eido Roshi's case is an extreme one, that's all.

The fact that he is a Roshi, was given dharma transmission by an eccentric but widely revered Zen Master (who may subsequently have attempted to repudiate him, though I understand it is not possible to revoke dharma transmission in the Rinzai lineage), has established a great dharma center in the west for passing on the Japanese Rinzai tradition, has had many students, and has given dharma transmission to some of them ... all compound these problems and create karma writ large. His illness didn't just affect him and his immediate circle of family and friends, or even just his sangha and students, but is affecting many many people who care about the dharma and its transmission in the west.

It is a good thing that this is arousing a great inquiry. I hope it brings many people to look deeply into our own projections and beliefs about Buddhism and Zen and teachers and students and what enlightenment might mean and the twists and turns along the path ... and to engage in radical honesty about who we are and how we are all in this together ... leaving none out of our hearts ... while still cultivating a clear eye towards conduct and taking clear action where needed to protect the vulnerable, heal the sick, awaken all beings, step through every dharma gate and to fully embody the great Buddha Way.

The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences ... What can that possibly mean? In our tradition there are three great bodhisattvas

-- Manjushri - great wisdom, Avalokiteshvara - great compassion, and Samantabhadra - great action -- all are necessary.

Nine deep bows,

~Carol

PS, I'm most moved by the letter from Wendy Egyoku Nakao, Roshi, posted over at [James Ford's blog](#). She is the one who stepped in to pick up the pieces at ZCLA after Maezumi Roshi's disgrace and she knows whereof she speaks.

“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”

This solitary brightness hears, understands and teaches the Dharma. ~Linji