

*This is a letter I just posted to the AZTA (American Zen Teachers Association). I am not a particularly senior or influential member there at all, so it will likely mean next to diddly squat. However, I am ashamed at myself for being silent too long. I am ashamed too that ... once again ... there seems to be a consensus gathering among many "teachers" to allow the Sangha involved to handle this internally, and work out some kind of "honorable departure" for Mr. Shimano.*

*Rev. Kobutsu Malone told me about this case a couple of years ago, asking me to join in doing something. I stood silent, because it was "not my teacher, not my sangha, not my problem". However, now that the details are crystal clear ... on the wrongdoing and the years of cover-up ... no one can stand silent. Mr. Shimano must not be allowed an "honorable exit", the Sangha that covered this up for decades can not be allowed to handle it and "work it out".*

*I am posting it here and at Treeleaf as the best places I can think of to say this. Shame on us if this is papered over again ...*

January 9, 2011

Dear All,

I will briefly speak as a newer member of this organization, junior to many people here whom I respect whose opinions may differ. For the first time since joining this body, I am ashamed.

This is not a normal case of a teacher who, perchance, had an affair with a student, or a drinking problem, or bought himself a BMW with Sangha funds, or other like personal or minor fault. Nor is it something that happened over the short term or recently.

Instead, this is the story of a teacher who engaged in case upon case of serial sexual abuse for decades, all while his Sangha and students looked the other way and covered it up, all while many here knew yet chose to do nothing. I know that Mr. Shimano is too just a victim of greed and ignorance, the real culprits here. However, at the same time, a teacher of the Precepts who intentionally acts again and again, over decades, to harm the innocent, showing little if any remorse in case after case, repeating the harm over decades with no self-reflection ... is a kind of monster in our midst. Shame on us for not decrying this in the strongest terms, allowing any kind of "honorable exit".

Thus the calls of "give them more time to work it out" are about 10 years too late. They have had years, and chance upon chance. To "give them more time" and allow a "graceful exit" for Mr. Shimano is not the right answer here. He must be condemned by all of us in the strongest and most unambiguous terms, we must deny him any respect (his years of service do not outweigh the damage done here), the members of this organization must denounce the years of cover up, we should publicly admit our own role in not doing enough. Moreover, we must now publicly turn our backs on Mr. Shimano. Furthermore,

we must turn our backs on the ZSS ... treat them as persona non grata ... unless and until they exhibit real reforms.

If it were a case in which such events had happened but once or twice, or nobody in the organization knew, or there had not been cover up after cover up for YEARS then my opinion would be different. However, this is our moral equivalent of the child abuse scandals plaguing the Catholic Church. If we allow Mr. Shimano to make a graceful exit, if we allow things to be papered over again ... our own shame is compounded.

Our students are watching. Right now, opinion I am hearing among people observing is that the "teachers of the Precepts" look like a bunch of hypocrites trying to protect their own.

Shame on all of us.

Gassho, Jundo