



Genjo

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All Sangha Meeting at DBZ

by [Genjo](#) on Thu Aug 11, 2011 2:09 am

Dear all,

I want to pass on a link to an announcement from Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat Roshi, Abbot of the Zen Studies Society (ZSS) and Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ).

http://www.daibosatsu.org/pdf/ZSSMediation_Site.pdf

In this announcement she speaks of the upcoming all Sangha meeting to be held at DBZ August 26-28. This meeting will be moderated by facilitators from An Olive Branch (see: <http://www.an-olive-branch.org/about>) with the intention of providing a safe place to be heard, to heal and to express hopes for the future. One of the primary facilitators will be Barbara Gray, PhD. <b9g@smeal.psu.edu>. I spent a couple of hours with her on the phone going over events since last May, and found her to be highly intelligent, motivated, and compassionate. If you are reading this and feel you have something to offer to process of healing and recovery at ZSS, please email her with your thoughts prior to the meeting, or better yet, please consider attending yourself.

I wish I could say that I had high hopes for this meeting in NY, where all view points could be heard and the focus could be on a positive healthy future for the organization, but given the fact that Eido Roshi is still welcome on ZSS property during this time of transition (all be it highly restricted access with no teaching), I fear the organization as a whole is still too attached to the past. I fear no one who has been abused or injured by that past will be willing to participate in this upcoming meeting. We shall see.

In order to really turn a corner for a healthy future, I wish Eido Roshi would volunteer to stay away from both ZSS properties for a year or more. As he is far from willing to do so, I think it falls to the ZSS Board to insist on at least some moderate hiatus. It was because the majority of this Board would not insist on taking this step that I could no longer continue to participate as a ZSS Board member myself.

In the course of investigating Eido Roshi's ethical breaches over the years it became clear to me that in addition to having many "affairs" with students, he at times actively and aggressively pursued some of the most psychologically vulnerable and vastly younger female students.

As I have said in a previous post, "given that the power dynamic can often be great between a spiritual teacher and their students, and if it is the case that the teacher is pursuing aggressively a much younger vulnerable student, such actions are so lopsided as to border on rape. I wish I had not heard stories like this and worse concerning Eido Roshi, but I have. If they are true, and I personally believe they are, then indeed the scars from such encounters can easily last a lifetime."

As I see it, the organization bears some responsibility to address these wounds directly. Even though I suspect Eido Roshi greatly assisted many more people than he harmed; nevertheless, to move forward, I believe the ZSS administration must do more than restrict his presence on campus for healing and growth to be possible.

At the upcoming ZSS Sangha meeting, I will try to put forward the following ideas: I believe it would be wonderful if the organization one day becomes a Mecca not only for serious Zen practice and training, but a safe refuge for those who have been harmed by such abuse of authority and power. To get there, I think, 1) The Board should insist on at least a moderate hiatus of contact with Eido Roshi, 2) the organization must quickly enact more democratic bylaws, where the board is directly accountable to the practicing membership, 3) The Board should issue an open organizational apology for the ineptness of previous administrations to adequately address serial problems, 4) I would love to see ZSS actively organize workshops and seminars on and off campus to help restore and heal the sangha, especially those who have suffered the most.

Even with my expressed doubts, those who will attend this upcoming meeting will be serious about setting a positive course for the future of ZSS. Please support us as we make our best efforts in this direction. May the restorative power of True Dharma flower throughout American Zen because of our efforts.

With palms together,

Genjo

Abbot of Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji (Chobo-Ji) temple, Seattle, USA; psychotherapist and certificated spiritual director.

<http://www.choboji.org>

