

August 26, 2011

A letter from Seigan Ed Glassing to The Olive Branch Facilitators to be read during an open circle.

Please do not make the same mistake that I made. I started practicing with Eido Shimano in 1985 and despite hearing rumors that he slept with his students; I didn't really want to believe that. I wholeheartedly trusted in my teacher, and whatever he did; whatever he said was a "teaching". When the first scandal occurred (that I experienced in 1993) although many Sangha members left, I stayed. I was a loyal monk, I was not going to quit and I was not going to judge him. I felt that it really wasn't such a big deal after all, whoever he had slept with was an adult too and capable of making decisions for herself. I scoffed at people, who seemed puritanical and snobbish, I learned elitism, I learned arrogance, I learned self-righteousness and I learned how to separate and compartmentalize. Perhaps you think, "Well, what's done is done, now lets move on." Or maybe "I owe Eido Shimano my life and I am grateful to him no matter what." To those who think this I would ask you to think. I ask you to be curious, to ask questions, to stand up to what you believe in. Study the history of the organization, read books such as "Sex and the Spiritual Teacher" and "Spiritual Bypassing". Please don't make the mistake that I did thinking that Zazen is all you need. Please don't keep your head in the sand of the Absolute; thinking that everything is OK when it is not. I enabled this kind of thought. Now I see things in a different way. The Teacher/Student was breeched repeatedly not just once...but for decades. Do not forget this. Many, many people suffered Sexual, Emotional, and Psychological abuse stemming from the actions of Eido Shimano. There was a culture of blindness regarding "the Teacher". I want it known in this meeting that there was definitely an effort on the part of some Board members, and Senior Students to diminish the gravity of the abuse, to sweep it under the rug and to protect Shimano after the scandal broke. This is why I left. I could not be part of an organization that talked about Compassion, Truth and Wisdom and yet so unwilling to actually *face* the Truth, *be* Compassionate and *wake up* to the Wisdom of reality. Part of the problem is an over attachment to the "Teacher". I see the same over attachment happening again with Shinge Roshi. Given the best of intentions, the ZSS became over the years cult-like in its worship of Shimano and good people have come to believe in the myths and stories told to them for decades. Stop it, stop the manipulation, deceit and pathology. I offer a few suggestions to those who want the Society to heal and move forward- take them or leave them.

- I want it to be known that in order to heal Trust must be restored. For this to happen the entire organization must acknowledge over and over again (NOT JUST ONCE) the terrible pain that was inflicted on women by both Eido Shimano and the cover-ups by past Boards. I want them to admit that there were repeated ethical breeches between Teacher and Student and that this caused great suffering. Face it, admit it, acknowledge it and don't ever get tired of saying it. Have it become a part of the mandala.
- A clear and direct Apology to the victims who suffered is warranted and this should be announced to the larger Buddhist community on the web in publications and in *teshiho*. This apology should be a permanent feature to the ZSS website.
- Reaching out to the abused should be priority.
- A healing and reconciliation meeting like this should be held again and again.

- A Ceremony held each year to acknowledge the pain, reflect, confess, purify and heal through ritual and spirituality the shadow history of the ZSS. Learn what “Fusatsu” is and incorporate into the practice.
- Many who left the ZSS are written out of history and/or attacked. I want this to stop, there are more people who left the organization throughout the years than there are people who stayed behind. None of them deserve to be character assassinated.
- I want the structure of the organization to be completely rebuilt from the bottom upward. I want the bylaws rewritten. I want a democratically elected Board.
- I want a separation of powers so that the new Abbot concentrates solely on the Spiritual teaching of students. The Abbot should not be the Chairman of the Board or associated with the ZSS Board or have voting powers.
- I want the Dharma Heirs to rotate as they do at San Francisco Zen Center.
- Finally, I want the ZSS to make a clean and final break with Eido Shimano disavowing any kind of teaching or visits by him in the future. He is history; don't rewrite it with golden myths, flowery lies and hero worship. Be honest enough and have the courage enough to see things and him as they are.