

Facilitated Weekend at DBZ: One Participant's Reflections

By Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz

The weight of what we were doing felt almost unbearably heavy at various points. Forty people - mostly long-term students of Eido Roshi and/or Shinge Roshi who've been coming to Dai Bosatsu Zendo for up to 50 years, but some who've studied for just a few months or who stayed away for many years - coming to the monastery to try to understand and process Zen Studies Society's painful history. I came away from the weekend with an even deeper admiration for Shinge Roshi, and with enormous appreciation for the three facilitators from An Olive Branch. This is my personal reflection on the experience.

I first came to Dai Bosatsu Zendo in 1997, have done kessei twice and have attended many, many sesshins there. For me, Dai Bosatsu Zendo is a place of beauty and liberation, and at the same time this past year has been one of learning about events, accusations, actions, dynamics, and injuries I may not have faced before. For a week before the meeting, I helped to develop a timeline of events in ZSS history for the group to use. This work opened my eyes. Also, we received mail that was very hard to read and deal with. This mail was read at the meeting, so each participant heard it. The preparation weeks were emotional and stressful, as has been the year since Eido Roshi announced his resignation from the ZSS board and the abbacy.

The process brought to us by An Olive Branch was uniquely suited to our situation. One piece flowed into another. Kyoki's "severe" opening, where she gave information about the seriousness of sexual misconduct by spiritual teachers, including Buddhist teachers, was criticized by some and welcomed by others. This led us to serious consideration of the question: What ground rules would we follow?

Next, the timeline exercise allowed us to examine and question the critical events of the last 50 years. Not everyone was familiar with the history, so this exercise was critical. Many people added events or questions to the timeline and shared deep feelings. This set the stage for the modified Samoan Circle, a moving exercise that took most of the afternoon on Saturday. This exercise gave me a greater sense of how others feel and think about the events and dynamics that have affected us so much. The Consensus Workshop on Sunday proved to us that regardless of our points of view, we could work together. Each section was effective in itself, and they flowed in such a way as to increase our understanding and commitment to each other.

The process provided a welcome container for my feelings and thoughts, allowing me to engage as fully as possible in listening, not responding or reacting. Often, it was only during a break that the "heaviness" of it all came to my awareness. I roomed with two young women, and I remember telling them that I wished that they didn't have to know about or grapple with all that we were hearing. Perhaps the spontaneous wish that others could be shielded (young or not) was my way of acknowledging the pain I felt. I am fully

aware that youth is not synonymous with innocence or with freedom from pain and suffering, and they let me know that my concern was misplaced. They were just as much a part of everything as we old ones.

After listening deeply and openly to one another, the Consensus Workshop on Sunday allowed us to come together in new ways to frame questions for further consideration. First, we identified burning issues. Then, in pairs, we pinpointed important questions or issues. From that came eight overriding questions for the future. The process built trust and commitment among us. My most fervent hope is that we will find ways to involve caring Sangha and others in addressing these questions.