

Dear Friend,

How are you?

I hope this letter finds you in good health.

I am writing to ask for your help. I am a Zen Buddhist. My teacher Eido Shimano Roshi<sup>1</sup> has run into some cross-cultural problems. [Roshi is an honorific title meaning old teacher given to the spiritual heir of Shakyamuni Buddha ]

He came to America a poor monk and through the donations of many, he established two zendos, one temple in New York, one monastery in the mountains. There were two great scandals. Some people claimed that their sexual affairs with him endangered their spiritual practice. You might expect that students who grew up with American values would just leave. In this case, instead of leaving, they seized control of the legal entity and forced him to retire making his income dependent on his not teaching, seeking thus to end his teaching activities in America and the world.

### **The Cross cultural divide**

Many of Roshi's students would like to continue on. They reasoned perhaps like me, that even if the rumors are true,

- The Buddha said to investigate your teacher 30 years before becoming his student
- If they don't want to study with him, leave, is there really a need to hold him and the ashes of his teachers hostage?
- The true structure was that students should have gone to Japan and begged Roshi to teach them, thus dealing with cross-cultural differences. The fact that he made it easy and came here, does not mean he should become an American
- Zen was never a politically correct religion. One day, Roshi said to me, the people that hurt you were great Bodhisattvas (angels) who robbed you of your evil karma. Imagine saying this to the descendent of slaves, of holocaust victims? There was never any way for the cultural divide between Asia and America to go smoothly
- Zen is also radical, a by-any-means-necessary and follow-your-intuition-beyond-logic activity. I suspect that if these rumors are true this is what must have happened. In some lay Buddhist commentaries, in order to save all beings, acts that may be considered illegal would be duty.

## **The Challenge**

The leaders of the legal entity are not bad people. I have known some for 10 years. For whatever reason, they lost all reason. They say things like "Trust me. I am wise because I studied with Eido Roshi but he is not fit to teach." No one can

talk to them. They are running the organization to bankruptcy as without Roshi teaching there are not enough student income. They seem to care more about pleasing outsiders than the dues paying members. The set up is such, Roshi's faithful students would have to fight a lengthy legal battle. And Roshi is over 80 years old.

Roshi still wants to teach and his students miss him. Can you please help? I thought if a generous individual or a group of generous individuals could replace his retirement income, he would be free to teach.

His retirement income as I understand it from one serious source is \$100,000 a year. Use of a 2-bedroom apartment in Manhattan with monthly upkeep fees of \$3-8000/month, 4-6 all-expenses paid trips to Japan, Health insurance for himself and his wife. It seems to me he could get all these things himself with \$500,000 a year. Assuming he lives to be 120 years old, there is a formula that can calculate a sum that if deposited now in an annuity account would yield that amount yearly.

It would be great if this were a trust based out of England, a freely given trust with no strings attached. If there was no “not-for-profit” or “tax benefit” drama associated with it.

Using the present value of an annuity calculator available at investopedia (<http://www.investopedia.com/calculator/AnnuityPV.aspx#axzz1dtAZJaiB>). Using an interest rate of 1.30%, **US \$15.52 million** invested today would be able to guarantee that annual payout for 40 years. Could you do donate this sum for the Dharma?

I think of the millions who tasted Zen maybe 100 , 200 students remain. They probably could with dues pay for a preaching location.

This would free Roshi from being a hostage, Dharma from being a hostage. The ashes of Zen treasures Nyogen Senzaki and Soen Nakagawa Roshi as well as countless wonderful students would still be hostage.

Doing this might earn you disregard. Asked if there was any merit to helping the Dharma, Zen Patriarch Bodhidharma said “None whatsoever”

Humbly begging for your help,

Contact information

Roshi's trusted Student: Mr. Zensho Martin Hara

Thank you very much for your help. May Dharma  
bless you.

Sincerely,

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With great gratitude to Eido Roshi.  
This is written without his consent, approval or  
knowledge.