

An Olive Branch

-a project of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh

Ethics in U.S. Buddhist Groups free webinar series - 2015

The Issue

Buddhist groups in the United States have been rocked in recent years by misconduct on the part of honored teachers - misconduct which, in some cases, had been going on for many years but was kept secret by teachers, boards, sanghas, and the victims themselves.

Many Buddhist organizations appear to lack ethics statements and grievance procedures. Teachers, students, and governing boards seem unaware of their governance responsibilities and potential liability when misconduct occurs. Without robust ethics statements and strong governance, misconduct usually results in chaos and long-lasting damage to individuals and organizations.

Opportunity to Learn about the Issue

An Olive Branch is offering a series of free webinars to increase awareness and adoption of ethics statements within Buddhist communities in the U.S. The scope of the term "ethics" includes all aspects of ethical behavior such as student-teacher relationships, handling money, and power dynamics. "Buddhist communities" includes all schools and traditions practicing in the U.S.

Each webinar will be presented by a prominent teacher, practitioner, or expert on ethics and will be facilitated by *An Olive Branch*.

[To Register click here](#)

or here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5978340851340523522>

Featured Presenter on January 27, 2015

Shinge Roshi, Abbot of the Zen Studies Society, will participate in an interview on January 27, 2015, from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Shinge Roshi will share her first-hand experience living through a sangha's pain and confusion caused by misconduct and then leading the re-building of that sangha and its board.

Shinge Roshi is also the Abbot of the Zen Center of Syracuse, Hoen-ji. She was the first American woman to receive transmission in the Rinzai School of Zen Buddhism. The Zen Studies Society (<http://www.zenstudies.org/>) is based at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji monastery near Livingston Manor, NY and at the New York Zendo Shobo-ji in Manhattan.

Dealing with the Aftermath of Sexual Misconduct in Religious Organizations

Suffering sexual abuse at the hands of a spiritual leader represents an egregious violation of trust. Such abuse leaves life-long scars on its victims - scars including depression, anxiety, dissociation, conduct disorders, aggressiveness, loss of self-esteem, self-destructive behavior, and interpersonal problems. In cases where the abuse occurs in a religious context, victims may also experience profound damage to their spirituality. Unless treated, these consequences can be debilitating for victims and their families.



Sexual abuse by clerics also generates tremendous conflict that can rip spiritual communities apart because different groups within the community respond differently to the news of the abuse. *An Olive Branch* recommends the use of *forums for compassion* to help repair the damage. To read the full article click [here](#).

An Olive Branch strengthens organizations by helping leaders understand the role of conflict in organizational health.

- *To proactively address conflict, we offer dispute resolution training and help organizations design ethical governance procedures.*
- *To respond in the midst of disruptive conflict, we provide processes for healing and restoring harmony.*

An Olive Branch brings the calming influence of a neutral third party, inspired by the tradition of Buddhist teaching that stretches over 2500 years.

More information: [here](#).

Contact

Rev. Kyoki Roberts
412-99-Olive (412-996-5483)
info@an-olive-branch.org
124 Willow Ridge Road, Sewickley, PA 15143

To: leslie@an-olive-branch.org

Re: Ethics in American Buddhist Groups Confirmation

Dear Leslie,

Thank you for sending me more information on your upcoming webinar.

I am very surprised to learn that, as your first "prominent" spokesperson from the community, you have chosen Sherry Chayat, a long-time student and dharma successor of Eido Shimano.

The Aitken Archives were the initial core documents of the Shimano Archive. They were first distributed in 2008 and then published on the internet in 2010 where they have been widely available to the Zen community. They alone provide overwhelming evidence for decades of abuse by Shimano resulting in the immeasurable suffering of many victims. The evidence has only grown since then.

Ms. Chayat was made Roshi in 2008 by Shimano. Then she was installed by him as an Abbot in 2011 when he stepped down.

In 2012 [she told Jeff Shore](#), "The reason we are in such a mess is that we believed in a manipulative sociopath." In 2013 she signed a letter containing these words: "While we fully acknowledge and are deeply saddened by this incident [*singular!*] and allegations of other ethical breaches on Eido Roshi's part, we do remain grateful for his visionary work in founding New York Zendo and Dai Bosatsu Zendo and for his five decades of inspiring teaching."

I would like to hear Ms. Chayat explain how she could make such seemingly contradictory remarks within a matter of months before she shares her wisdom on rebuilding a sangha ravaged by unchecked sexual predation facilitated by the complicity of members like herself. I think the community would benefit more from Ms. Chayat modeling integrity by owning and explaining her blindspots and denial over decades, and from her stepping down from her all leadership positions.

Patricia Ivan

Adam Fisher <genkakukigen@aol.com>

January 26, 2015 at 10:25 AM

To: info@an-oliv-branch.org

Tuesday's webinar

To: An Olive Branch

Based on the glowing announcement of Tuesday's (tomorrow's) 'webinar' with Shinge Roshi (transmitted Zen Buddhist heir of Eido Shimano and abbot of Zen Studies Society) and her willingness to share her 'first-hand' appreciations of "living through a sangha's pain and confusion caused by misconduct and then leading the rebuilding of that sangha and its board," I thought the following might be relevant to an open and honest discussion since an authenticated lineage often touted as critical in Zen Buddhism:

Myoshin-ji has received many inquiries regarding its relationship with Zen Studies Society in New York ever since the publication on 20 August 2010 of an article in the New York Times regarding the behavior of the Society's former director, Eido Shimano.

On the occasion of establishing the Zen Studies Society, Eido Shimano stipulated that the Society was to have no relationship to Myoshin-ji or any other branch of Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism.

As far as Myoshin-ji is concerned, all along it has had no connection with Eido Shimano, his activities or organizations, including Dai Bosatsu Zendo and all affiliated Zen Studies institutions, nor is Eido Shimano or any of his successors certified as priests of the Myoshin-ji branch of Zen or recognized as qualified teachers.

--19th Dec. 2012 Myoshinji school of Rinzai Zen Buddhism

Source: http://www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20121221_Myoshinji.pdf

But maybe not.

adam fisher

Kobutsu Malone <kobutsu.malone@gmail.com>

January 26, 2015 at 2:45 PM

To: leslie@an-olive-branch.org

Webinar

Dear Leslie,

I have received information on your upcoming Webinar from numerous people. I must say that I am stunned and deeply disturbed by your choice of Roko Chayat as a featured presenter.

You are obviously very poorly informed about the real situation in selecting Ms. Chayat for this position. I, and many others (particularly injured survivors of Eido Shimano) are deeply disturbed and profoundly offended by your action in this matter.

I have been approached by a number of people asking about my perceptions surrounding your efforts. In all honesty, I have informed people that I can in no way support the efforts of your organization along these lines.

I would urge you to become better informed about Ms. Chayat's involvement with Mr. Shimano and her erratic, dishonest, immature, and irresponsible handling of it.

Sincerely,

Rev. Kobutsu Malone

Olivia Perrine <olivia_s_perrine@yahoo.com>

January 27, 2015 at 1:12 PM

To: Kobutsu Malone <kobutsu.malone@gmail.com>

Reply-To: Olivia Perrine <olivia_s_perrine@yahoo.com>

Fw: today's webinar - important

On Tuesday, January 27, 2015 1:04 PM, Olivia Perrine <olivia_s_perrine@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Leslie,

I am registered for this afternoon's webinar but have decided against joining for several reasons. You may, however, read any part of this email during your webinar.

First, I am a woman who had to leave residency at Dai Bosatsu Zendo for all the reasons many other woman had to leave. That leaving was layered in slandering of myself and other such typically cruel strategies used by Eido Shimano to disempower such students. This was regardless of having taken vows which include the three refuges of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. I have had long and continued conversations with others so abused within ZZS. Such women (and men for other forms of exploitation) were not essentially more vulnerable than many other students. How vulnerable, for example, must a person feel in order to deny repeated reports of abuse? It is incorrect to say in your description of the webinar that "even victims themselves remained silent". Every "victim" I have talked to went to great personal length to make known what happened to them.

There is a strong tendency to pathologize women who were for the most part in the wrong place at the wrong time. Women have carried the burden of such categorization for long enough. It continues to be interesting to me that even now there is an over emphasis on the "victimized women" over the extreme sociopathic behaviors of Eido Shimano. This continuous labeling of vulnerable, weak, mentally unstable women is only consistent with Shimano's legacy of slander. It includes slandering of men as well.

Second, choosing Shinge Sherry Chayat for your lead webinar is bothersome. Shinge was one of the last of Shimano's students to take a stand for removing Shimano from ZZS. In fact, back in the 90's a retreat was offered for women and women victims of Eido Shimano. That retreat was scheduled to take place in a neutral location. However, it was changed by Shinge back to Dai Bosatsu while Shimano was in residence in his upstairs apartment. Several women declined to participate.

Many of us who followed the unfolding of events after Robert Aiken's May, 2010 blog challenge to Eido Shimano had the gift of witnessing Genjo Marinello's transparency in moving from denial to taking a stand regarding Eido Shimano. This process included criticism from board members, including Shinge, and outright betrayal and lies from Shimano himself. This transparency gave a window into a process of leadership that included self-evaluation and even questioning of the legitimacy of "lineage". I have no doubt that Shinge has suffered and that she has been through her own process of self questioning. However, it was not made transparent to most of us as it was by Genjo. I have no direct communication with Genjo. My bringing this out is not because I personally know Genjo – or vice versa.

Third – I am not a scholar of Japanese Zen Buddhism, but there is an article in the Shimano Archive dated 1/10/06 by Dale S. Wright, "Satori and the Moral Dimension of Enlightenment". It attempts to answer the question many of us have. How can a be a person hold both a so called title of "enlightened" and commit morally devastating insults to students and to the well-being of his own organization? This is worth reading. Western Buddhism will not thrive without a component of self-reflection and moral insight and strength. It makes no sense to me to continue a legacy of "leadership" that continues to confuse "non-duality" as separate from striving, even if incompletely, toward right relationship with all sentient beings.

In peace,
Olivia