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Subject: ZSS Affairs
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Kobutsu,

You probably do not remember me, but I remember the great work you did with inmates in the 90s, and am glad to hear your voice of reason in this mess. I just learned last night, from Soun's email announcing Dec-9th's events, what was going on. Ekyo filled me in quickly, but don;t have much background on recent events.

That said, my main motive for writing is (a) to preserve this tradition, (b) help everybody (we're all, every last one of us victims, including Roshi), and (c) to preserve ZSS if they are willing to come clean.

I wish I had Jiro's email. I would send him a note of thanks for standing up as a bell of reason, yourself included.

The Board has always been the problem, and their actions hurt Roshi just as much by enabling his narcissistic behavior. I live in Seattle now (11 years), and have not seen Roshi in that time, although there have been one or two letters.

Let me know if I can help in any way.

I posted the following in the Aitken blog.

Peace, Bro,

Tenshin

A Rainy, November 21, 2010

I see so many old friends posting here. On one hand it makes me so happy, and on the other it saddens me due to what it has taken to bring everyone together.

First, I want to thank Aitken Roshi and Jiro Osho-Roshi for taking the steps they have taken. Why? Not because I believe in a good lynching (and I say this as a warning to

us all), but because they are (I believe) acting out of, at its root, great compassion. It is compassion for the victims, but also compassion for Eido Roshi. To use a Christian metaphor, there are souls here to be saved. Aitken, Jiro, and others like Kobutsu take difficult action for the first time I have seen around this debacle in the 30+ years I have been involved with ZSS/Shobo-ji/Kongo-ji.

I raise this point because I myself am a victim of abuse by a family member, a person whom I trusted and who should have protected me, and I understand some of the nuances of the power play that is involved in this behavior.

What I want folks to remember is that in most cases the abusers were themselves victims, and they are hopelessly caught trying to unravel the karmic tentacles of the abuse. While I in no way condone what has gone on, I will not give into a lynch mob mentality to deal with this and I will not give up my compassion for any of the victims or for Eidoshi.

I sadly know who some of the victims are. I also know of one married Nordic woman who most of the ordained male residents at DBZ slept with during her Kessei – this was during a difficult period in her life, which is what led her to DBZ. I also remember clearly that Genjo Marinello and some of his Sangha attended Sesshin while this woman cried her way through the entire week. She left a blasted hulk.

How Genjo can state that he had no clue that anything was remiss after having his pores opened by a week-long sit, yet be clear enough to be a teacher is an incongruity I will leave everyone to noodle with privately on their own. In the least, I think it makes his position on the ZSS Board untenable.

To be clear, I am not implying that Eido Roshi had anything to do with this woman, but clearly there was a weak atmosphere at DBZ where monks had no difficulty reconciling their precepts with using a woman as a receptacle for their spunk. This was Fuck Follies Part IV or V – I've lost count.

Second, the lynch mob mentality, and the anger, the hurt, must be let go. What is at stake is not just the future of the Zen Studies Society, but also the future of the Dharma in North America.

I do agree that ZSS has to ABSOLUTELY clean house, and should take Jiro up on his offer to help. Jiro has probably done more for DBZ than anyone except the Carlsons and Bill Johnstone, and I have always had great admiration for his integrity, his actions, and capabilities. I also will do whatever I can do to help.

In the vein of cleaning house, I also seriously question whether Shinge Sherry Chayat,

who is woven into this sad tale from almost the very beginning, is really an appropriate choice to lead the 1,400 acres into the future. By virtue of association, the appearance of squeaky clean is not there. Perhaps Denko, Jiro, Zenshin, Zenrin – all human beings with their individual quirks – would be cleaner choices to move forward – of course, that is assuming any of them would be willing to play Act II. This brings me to the following.

The Board, while taking decisive action, needs to move mindfully through this minefield, and not risk doing something stupidly and in haste. Soon, this means you. There are a number of moves I think the Board needs to take to come out of this on both the moral and legal high ground, to restore credibility to the institution and to develop a culture of transparency. Put another way, as Jiro mentioned in one of his letters, to remove your heads from the sand.

First, I recommend that the Board be seated with individuals who are squeaky clean.

Second, I recommend expanding the size of the Board to include outside Directors from other institutions.

Third, the bylaws need to be changed so that the Abbot (and Former Abbot, if ever reappointed) have either non-voting positions on the board or in the least can never be Director, Treasurer, or any other position of power. The Abbot should be entirely focused on the practice and his/her students.

Fourth, a suggestion I made to the Board in 1996 that fell on deaf ears at the time, ZSS/DBZ/SBJ should annually publish their financials like any other good non-profit – Hozo-san is an expert in this area, and can help the Board through the not-for-profit territory and requirements.

Why all of this? Transparency and credibility need to be re-established. I have donated to ZSS for the past fifteen years and, I, for one, would like to know where my donations are going.

A comment to a former ZSS Board member who commented, sarcastically, that no rape had occurred here. Sorry to bust your bubble, but if a victim is not in a mental state from which to grant consent (e.g., intoxication, in a subordinated power relationship with the abuser, unconscious, etc.), then it is assault. I say this, in addition to my suggestions to the Board, because those 1,400 acres, plus East 69th Street are going to look mighty attractive to attorneys looking for damages.

This is where I come back to the fact that the aim of clearing up this whole mess

should be to protect the Dharma in North America and, as a subset of that, to protect ZSS, Kongo-ji, and Shobo-ji. And this is where I ask that all of you looking for blood to quench your anger, to stop and think how you can very easily alter and possibly destroy this very fragile transmission from Rinzai and Dogen to our continent.

This is a sad state of affairs. My teacher has been impeached, and more importantly, the North American Sangha is in great discord.

There are many victims here – in fact, everyone is a victim. Besides the damage of the assaults, there is an even bigger damage that the Board can help partially heal. All these denials have the impact of making victims feel crazy or wrong because people are telling them either it didn't happen, or they asked for it, or other forms of mind manipulation. This is the ongoing emotional damage that victims carry for their lives.

If Zen Studies Society came entirely clean, took the recommendations of some of the more astute people in this forum, this alone would help the healing process for the victims. The feeling of being "crazy," would then have a way to reconcile itself with the true reality of the situation.

If the Board does not do this, then it is just twisting the knife once again in each of these victim's hearts, and by this action, the Board becomes an enabler and extender of the pain felt by everyone in this situation.

So, do the right thing. Be adults. Let us all look for reconciliation and drop the lynch mob mentality, so that these teachings may root more deeply in our soil.

Finally, let us feel gratitude for all those who have come before us. While it is the name of a song, this Unbroken Chain must continue – particularly due to the shape the world is in today.

With Heart,

Tenshin D.S Hill